

Looking Ahead: My Future as a Learner

Edith Erickson - July 6, 2014

As someone who has always enjoyed and treasured learning new things, my future most assuredly includes more learning. This love of learning will continue as always, but my future learning will be shaped by my experiences in the Master of Art in Educational Technology (MAET) program at Michigan State University in addition to the other educational experiences of my past.

Small Scale Learning

By nature, I am a problem solver. If there is an issue, be it technological or otherwise, I enjoy the challenge of being able to find solutions to problems. Through my studies in the MAET program, I have been able to find new tools and avenues to use in problem solving. The program has provided me with experience using new tools, but even more importantly, MAET has inspired me to seek out new and innovative technologies to implement in my own professional practice. This desire to learn about new tools and techniques has left me hungry to find the next great thing to make my job as a teacher more streamlined and effective.

One way that I focus my learning is by setting goals. Having goals is very important to me in terms of remaining focused on my long term plans. I hope to be able to teach courses online and eventually work with an educational technology firm, so maintaining proficiency with and knowledge of new technologies will be vital as I move forward as a professional in the field of educational technology. I plan to continue this learning by utilizing my personal learning network (PLN) as well as using online resources such as MERLOT (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Teaching Online – merlot.org), educational blogs and wikis, and my favorite, TED Talks (ted.com). The best part of these resources is that I can use them as I have the time or need. The learning is totally shaped by my learning needs and goals.

Online Learning

I was first introduced to online learning as an undergraduate student, but did not understand the scale to which this technology could be used until I plunged into my graduate program. Not only did this technology work in terms of logistics (I live about four hundred miles from East Lansing - the location of Michigan State University), but it also fit my learning style, schedule, and career goals. As an introvert, I felt more comfortable sharing with and learning from the others in the classes than I would have in a traditional classroom. This setting, one

that many can argue is impersonal, has inspired me to pursue more online connections to strengthen my personal and professional goals for learning. I have connected to classmates, professors, and educational figures via Twitter and learn more each day as I view the ideas and insights tweeted. These connections have been imperative to shaping my learning and will continue to be vital as I continue as a lifelong learner.

In addition to being an online learner, I plan to share my learning online by teaching online courses. Learning is not truly meaningful, in my opinion, until it can be shared with others. That is why I am a teacher! Much of what I learn, however, is not really relevant to share with my third grade students. Being able to teach online would not only allow me the chance to share with others what I have learned throughout the courses of the MAET and my experiences, but it will also provide the opportunity for me to learn more as well.

My Future as a Learner

After completing my master's degree in just five short semesters, during which time I gave birth to my first child, Charlotte, while also working full time, I feel that my formal education will be put on hold for a little while. To put it simply, I am tired! I would like to spend the next few years focusing on learning how to be the best mother possible and spreading my love of learning to her, something that would be extremely difficult with the stress of more classes. Down the road, I would love to continue taking more classes, possibly even working towards a doctorate, but for right now I am happy to spend my time outside of work with my little one. This, however, does not mean that I will stop learning. I will continue to network online with others that I have met through the MAET program, as well as through formal educational networks, such as the Discovery Educator Network. Additionally, I will be seeking out new and innovative technologies to incorporate into my classroom.