

Mastering Technology Amidst Life's Changes

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Becoming a Spartan

I began my teaching career at Edisto Elementary School in Orangeburg, South Carolina in the fall of 2008 after just completing my bachelor's degree from Baker College in Owosso. After getting three great years of experience, I returned home to Michigan where I was blessed to be hired at the Catholic school in my hometown, where I have worked for the past three years. About a year into this new job, however, I started feeling like I wanted something more. I had some professional development opportunities, but nothing that I really connected with or got excited about. I took some steps outside of my school including joining professional organizations such as the Discovery Educator Network (DEN) and the Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning (MACUL), but one of the most formative was my decision to work on my master's degree.

In the fall of 2011, I mustered all of my courage, decided on a program, and applied for the Master of Arts in Educational Technology program (MAET) with the goal of making myself more marketable to leaders in the educational technology field, and to also expand my earning potential. Little did I know how much this decision would impact my teaching and professional relationships, beginning with my first MAET course and carrying through the program, and I can assume beyond as well. I have always been good with technology integration, but MAET gave me even more tools to incorporate into my teaching. Maybe more importantly, are the human connections provided by the program. I have expanded my personal learning network (PLN) to include teachers from around the world, knowledgeable and passionate professors, and other members of the educational technology community.

I started my first classes in the winter semester of 2013. I was off to a fantastic start, sailing right through my first two courses when the universe stepped in and my husband (who also started graduate school at the same time) and I found out that we were expecting our first child, a wonderful blessing as we had been trying for a baby for quite some time! Obviously



though, this raised a lot of questions about whether to continue with the program and how to manage work, a baby, and graduate school, but in the end, we decided to stick with it and just do the best that we could. I continued with my plan of taking two courses per semester, managing to work on papers and assignments up until the day our sweet Charlotte was born, and getting right back to work within a few days. Since then, I've maintained the pace and am proud of being able to reach the end of the program, having created an amazing little human in the process!

Teaching for Understanding with Technology

CEP 810 | Craig McMichael | Spring 2013

In my first class in the MAET program, “Teaching for Understanding with Technology” (CEP 810) introduced me to many of the benchmark ideas that would carry throughout the MAET program. These ideas include the TPACK framework, personal learning networks, and creative uses of technologies. Throughout the course, we were able to apply the ideas learned into projects, such as the creation of a special interest group, or SIG. My group selected flipped classrooms and used technology tools, such as Google Sites and Voki, to showcase and support our learning. In creating our SIG, we utilized social media, including Twitter, to share our thoughts on flipped classrooms, and ultimately shared our learning on the topic through the creation of a [website](#). This early collaborative experience set the groundwork for the rest of the program and modeled how online collaboration can be effective in creating equity in group projects.

In using technology as a tool to support learning, we learned concretely the importance of having the right mindset for technology integration. We were instructed to choose the focus of our special interest group first, then used the technology as a means for showcasing the learning. We did not shape our lessons based on something “neat” we found and wanted to use. We intentionally chose to present our SIG through a website because it seemed the most efficient and effective way to meet the required assignment.



Applying Technology to Issues of Practice

CEP 812 | Melissa White | Summer 2013

Of all of my coursework, CEP 812 was probably my favorite and most meaningful. The course focused on using technology to solve problems that we find in education. It was very hands-on and allowed me to be creative in each assignment. Some of my favorites were a [Complex Problem Screencast](#), the [Preserving Digital Culture VoiceThread](#), and the [Passion and Curiosity Project](#). Problem solving is a huge part of being a teacher, and one of my favorite things about my chosen profession, so being able to marry this with my love of technology made this an important class for me.



In my biggest project of the semester, I was given the challenge of solving a “wicked problem” facing education and technology. My group chose the very interesting idea of preserving digital culture for future generations. We devised a number of techniques for preserving this valuable information from a variety of aspects, including financial, educational, artistic, and historical. As a teacher, I chose to focus on the educational impact and possibilities of preserving our digital culture. Part of my plan included involving students in the process by instructing them in the importance of backing up data as well as empowering them to be archivists by using resources such as K-12 Web Archiving to back up important documents and files.

Teaching Students Online

CEP 820 | Ann Heintz | Fall 2013

CEP 820 focuses on the techniques that can be used to teach students in the online learning environment. As part of the course, I was asked to create an online course. I was responsible for choosing the content, creating lessons and assessments, and choosing a method of delivering the content. I opted to focus on the states of matter and to format my online course as a blended class, making it more applicable to



my current position. The [final course](#) was presented through a website created through Weebly.

This class, while intense at times, was vital in shaping my views of online learning. Previously, my experiences with online learning were limited to the student perspective as an undergraduate student. By looking at online learning from the instructor's perspective, I was able to see how online learning could be used with students in my own third grade class. While there are struggles to online learning, such as hardware and reliable internet connectivity, online learning provides an excellent platform for reaching students in a different way.

Technology and Leadership

CEP 815 | Ben Gleason | Spring 2014

Technology and Leadership, CEP 815, went beyond technology integration in a single classroom and set to strengthen skills in leading others in technology use. Throughout the course, I worked to create a [sustainable plan](#) for solving a problem of practice in my school with a technological solution. I focused on the low performance in math and found that the use of a program called "First in Math" could stand to be a low cost tool to help remedy the problem. In addition to just finding the program, I identified the resources available, created a budget, and determined the program to be effective based on research.

More than any other, I feel that Technology and Leadership is a class that will help shape my future in education and provide me with valuable tools to advance in my career. It is not enough for me to master technology just for use in my classroom. I need to be able to share what I know with other teachers if I am going to make a real change in education. This class has prepared me for that task so that I will undoubtedly find success.

Looking Forward

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.

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.

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 and the Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning. Additionally, I will be seeking out new and innovative technologies to incorporate into my classroom. I am so thankful for the experience provided for me through the MAET program and I cannot wait to see what is in the next chapter of my life.