

Lindsay C. Earnest
CEP 807
Goals Reflection Essay
06/11/15

From Dreamer to Life-Long Learner

I first heard about the Masters of Arts in Educational Technology program, also known as MAET, during a teacher preparation course while I was still finishing my undergraduate degree at Michigan State University about 4 years ago now. Someone from the graduate program had come to speak about the different graduate programs offered through MSU once we finished our internship year and had credits to transfer in to any of the given programs. As soon as I heard the word "technology" mentioned I was sold—I knew the MAET program would be the program that I had to go into!

Before that day, I hadn't really seriously considered getting my masters degree. It was in the back of my mind but my honest thought was that I would graduate, finish my internship, and go teach full time. I didn't really think a master's degree would be something that important to me. After our class that day, a master's degree became more and more of a dream of mine. I loved technology. I loved computers, phones, Ereaders, iPads, and iPods, and I loved figuring them out, not just using them. Up until that point I had always tried to incorporate some technology aspect into my lessons in one form or another, whether it be PowerPoint or a song or a short video, not knowing how important technology can be when it comes to teaching and learning. I wanted to continue to learn how technology can impact education and not just in a superficial sense of using a computer in my classroom but rather on a deeper level and how it can impact student engagement or higher level thinking. Things just seemed to make sense that day and I started to get really excited at the possibility of getting my masters degree in something that I actually enjoyed and thought would make an important impact in the world of education.

My journey in the MAET program didn't start right away, though. I went on to teach high school Spanish and didn't want to be too overwhelmed by taking graduate courses given that this was my first year managing my own classroom. Therefore, I waited. However, I struggled that entire first year of teaching. After much reflection, I realized what was missing. I was teaching, which I loved, but I was missing being a learner. Every day I learned something new from my students and co-workers, but I knew that my journey as a learner still wasn't complete and that it was my responsibility to finish what I had started during my internship year.

After being in the program for a year and a half now and reflecting back on my initial goals that I had hoped to achieve, I realize that the goal itself, to be an active learner, hasn't changed. However, the definition of being an active learner in this context has changed now that I have quite a few courses under my belt. When I began this program I was looking to the program itself to fulfill my needs of learning—I expected the program to do all of the work. What I have learned over the course of this program, more so than ever, is that learning never stops. This is something that I have known and preach to my students every year, but through this program, I really put this practice into action. I found myself actively seeking out articles and educational resources outside of my courses because I was so encouraged and inspired by what I had been doing as part of the program. Now, I was truly being an active learner and not because I had to be as

part of a master's program, but because I was excited to be learning in order to take when I had learned and apply it in my own learning practices as well as in my classroom with my own students.

Although my initial goals were pretty minimal and straightforward, I have developed additional goals along the way that weren't present at the beginning of my journey in this program. When I applied to the program, I was strictly thinking that I would use this degree to support my background in teaching and apply what I've learned in my Spanish classroom. However, throughout the program and more so now than ever, I am considering other jobs, such as an Educational Technology Implementation Consultant or Specialist, which I might be interested in moving into rather than limiting myself to just teaching Spanish. Where I work now, for example, doesn't have any position of the sort but I know they are interested in having professional development sessions about educational technology and they are constantly encouraging teachers to incorporate technology into their lessons, but the teachers don't have anyone to help them do so properly. For this new academic year, the school is adding computer classes to the middle school curriculum and the principal said that she might be interested in having me help with or teach one or two of those classes given my background in educational technology. I'm now considering the more possibilities that this program has brought me whereas before I was really set in my ways and hadn't considered working in or teaching anything but Spanish. Therefore, I'm excited with the opportunities that I now have available to me because of my journey in this program.

I now feel more comfortable taking learning into my own hands and not relying on a program to influence me to learn. Although I may not continue learning in a formal program setting once I finish my MAET degree, I do know that I will never stop learning as an educator and am encouraged to keep doing so now that I have the proper tools to do so.