

The Growth Continues

Being a member of the Educational Technology program has presented me with many ways to connect with other educators and improve my teaching by incorporating technology in more meaningful ways. Throughout my tenure in this program, I have been motivated by my instructors to continually grow which shows in both my classroom and my “down time” on the Internet. As I graduate from the program my motivation to learn and improve as a teacher must be self-driven. To keep myself from becoming stagnate with my work, the three areas I will continue to push myself forward in are developing a stronger personal learning network, modeling in science, and being part of the educational technology community.

A personal learning network (PLN) is arguable them most powerful tool at the disposable of a teacher. It is a self-constructed space where I, as a teacher, can connect with like-minded educators and people in education. I have been building my PLN over the past several years but I want to leverage it more so I can improve and revamp my science curriculum as well as classroom practices. My school is currently in the process of switching to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and there have been very limited recourses put out by the State of Michigan Department of Education to help teachers implement the new standards. By expanding my PLN, I am looking for other sources to draw curriculum ideas and alignment from. In the foreseeable future, my PLN will be the best resource I will have access to in order to guide my implementation of NGSS. To improve my PLN, I will need to make use of social media to find other educators and organizations that are implementing NGSS. I can find groups on Facebook such as Kesler Science Professional Learning Network, Ed Tech Collective, and Wayne RESA – Science. I can also follow more hashtags on Twitter like #miscichat, and #ngsschat. By actively participating or following these resources, I will be better prepared and feel more confident in implementing NGSS in my classroom.

Another area I want to learn more about is modeling in science. As the state science standards shift from the Grade Level Content Expectations to the NGSS, the way science is taught to students needs to change as well. Instead of asking students to consume, watch, verify, and recall science concepts the students need to create, explore, discover, and reason about the concepts they are learning. This shift in mindset and delivery starts with the teacher and how the teacher creates or sets up the lesson. To better prepare myself for this shift I need training on how to create and implement lessons that demand these things of students. The Michigan Math and Science Networks along with the American Modeling Teachers Association host a multi week training during the summertime called Modeling in Science for

teachers who are interested in creating discovery based science lessons instead of standard textbook lessons. By investing in the modeling mindset, I feel my students would have a more authentic science experience and see a deeper value in understanding science. Taking advantage of this opportunity can only help my students.

As I leave the Master of Arts in Educational Technology program and continue to grow as a teacher, I do not want to forget the philosophies, concepts, and ideas that I have gained/embraced from my experience in the MAET program. Therefore, my third future goal is to stay current in the educational technology community. There are many avenues I can follow to achieve this. First, I can use my PLN to stay connected with educational technology groups. Second, I attend educational technology focused conferences and trainings such as the Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning conference, ed camp, and nerd camp. Third, I can take the one-week Educational Technology refresher course offered through MSU. Leaving the program doesn't mean that I should leave behind the ideas and knowledge that I have gained.

In something as active as education, where every day is different and we are constantly trying to prepare our students for their futures, not settling and continuing to grow is a must for educators. By making a plan to further develop my PLN, learn about modeling in science and implement it in my classroom, and staying current in the educational technology community I can assure myself that I will be constantly reminded of the importance and power of using technology in the classroom to help students achieve their learning targets.