

A Whole New World of Teaching

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When I applied to the Master of Arts in Educational Technology Program, my expectations of the program were to be taught how technology can be used in my classroom. My experiences with the coursework, instructors, and fellow students blew these expectations out of the water. The Educational Technology program is designed to introduce graduate students to the benefits of technology in education. Not only did the program accomplish this goal, but I also learned so much more. The program also provided me a wealth of knowledge and resources in different areas related to technology: psychology, leadership, research, mathematical content and various teaching practices.

Never did I expect that completing this graduate program would open my eyes to the reality of the teaching professional and push me to set higher achieving goals for myself and my students. Yes, my original goals of increasing technology use in the classroom and becoming a leader in my community have been achieved, but now I strive for so much more. Being “just a teacher” is no longer good enough. I want to be someone who changes what teaching looks like in my school. I want to develop a curriculum that our students will be successful with. I want to encourage my coworkers that it's ok to make changes within the classroom setting. I want to show my students that I can accommodate my lessons to fit their needs as a learner. I want to encourage my students to explore how math works through technology and collaboration with their peers. My ultimate goal is to show students how to overcome their misconceptions. The only way we learn is to work through our mistakes. It seems like a lot for one person to take on. Can I make change over night? No. But is it possible to make a dent in some of these things? Yes.

Throughout my time in this program, there have been six courses that made a significant impact on my professional goals and teaching career. Each of the following sections goes into specific detail on why these courses made an impression on me as an educator and as a leader in my community.

CEP 810: Teaching for Understanding with Technology

CEP 810 covered many theories of learning and understanding related to teaching with technology. The most commonly referenced model for teaching with technology was the Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework. One of the first things I learned in this program was that the TPACK model was key to successful integration

of technology into the classroom. Teachers should not assume that every piece of technology they are using is being used effectively. There is a relationship between each form of knowledge (content, pedagogy, and technology) and teachers must be aware of how these combine to effect the usefulness of technology in the classroom. As a classroom teacher, this framework has made me more aware of how I integrate technology into my classroom. I created a [lesson plan](#) that was used to teach surface area of three-dimensional figures to twenty-first century learners.

Switching jobs halfway into the duration of this program, I was able to use the TPACK framework to rework the way I use technology based on my new community of learners. Understanding how to successfully connect the content you are teaching, best learning practices, and technology will allow students to find better opportunities in their learning. Technology should not be used in a classroom if it's not used appropriately. One tool that I've found immensely important to use in the education is Google Classroom.

CEP 800: Psychology of Learning in School

Having a psychology background, my interest in this class was very high. Digging into psychological perspectives on teaching and education allowed me to connect with how students are learning in my own classroom. I had two assignments from this course that really changed the way I looked at my own teaching style. The first, and perhaps most beneficial, assignment from this course was the "[Digital Story Telling](#)" project. The second assignment was to create [a lesson](#) that showcased student's ways of thinking through [audio interviews](#). Both of these assignments gave me a greater appreciation of a student's learning background and the progress they make throughout their education.

I have become very conscious of how I ask students to participate in their own education. I now completely avoid yes or no questions, and instead ask students to dive deeper into their own understanding. "I don't know" isn't an acceptable answer. Forcing students to believe in themselves encourages more participation. Asking students to explain the process behind their thinking allows that student, and myself, to get a better understanding of what misconceptions, if any, are present in a student's knowledge. In math, it's helpful for students to understand why a formula works, where it comes from, and if answers are reasonable. Writing down thought processes have become a daily routine in my classroom.

CEP 820: Teaching K12 Students Online

I may have implemented more of what I've learned from this class over any of the others. I have always believed in incorporating technology in

my classroom. Not having access to much technology when I was in school, I struggled with the proper technique for successful implementation. Is it relevant to what the students are learning and not just a “filler” activity? Does it encourage collaboration and communication amongst students? Does it support English Language Learners or students who struggle in a math classroom?

Before taking this course, I had created countless classroom websites, signed my students up for accounts on educational mathematics websites such as IXL and Khan Academy, and implemented the use of videos and apps to engage students. What I never had was a system behind this implementation; just random resources I had acquired that got assigned when there was time in class. Bringing everything from what I learned in the time I spent in this class, I now have resources to guide my students' learning with a hybrid classroom. For each lesson, students are given extra resources to help them learn, practice and be assessed on content. This also opens the door for immediate feedback on their progress. Students have access to all aspects of what would be taught in the traditional face-to-face classroom, as well as what is available online.

TE 846: Accommodating Differences in Literacy Learners

The course provided me with an insight to a whole new side of education. Being a secondary education, mathematics major, I never had a course in my undergraduate program that taught me about reading and writing strategies. I was completely overwhelmed when I began the case study on a literacy learner. Through collaboration with colleagues and much research, I learned how focusing on different reading, writing and vocabulary skills and how strategies implemented by teachers can impact how learners develop.

By completing a case study, I was introduced to several developmental processes and assessment strategies that support literacy learning in students. Focusing a great deal on sight words and fluency recognition, I was able to make connections to how development in these areas could affect a student when learning math. Students who have struggles with literacy are also going to have a hard time with the Common Core Mathematics Standards today. The real-life application problems I ask my students to complete involve a lot of reading and understanding involved. Because of the level that literacy skills affect my students' mathematical skills, I work closely with the English-Language Arts teachers within our school.

CEP 815: Technology and Leadership

I've always thought of myself as a leader. Being the oldest child in my family, I played the "bossy big sister" role at an early age. At least that's what my sister said. Looking back, she was probably right. When I was old enough to know better, I wanted to be a role model to her. I became involved in just about everything I could at school. I got excellent grades. I played sports. I tutored and volunteered in the community. Even with being so involved, I was a quiet leader. Public speaking frightened me. How could I become a teacher if I couldn't stand in front of my peers and give a 10-minute speech?

Throughout college and early in my teaching career, this fear disappeared. It took me a while to feel comfortable and educated enough to make knowledgeable contributions to conversations during staff meetings. After taking the Technology and Leadership course, I've learned how I can be more of a "quiet" leader in my community. Of the seven styles of learning we covered, being a Diplomatic Leader fits my personality best. I want to bring my colleagues together to determine how to teach with the best intentions of our students in mind.

Because I am not as vocal as others, I've displayed my leadership skills in other ways. I've begun giving virtual Professional Developments on different technologies that can be used in the classroom. Finding ways to share the knowledge I have about technology and education is important to me. I want my administration and fellow coworkers to believe in me and allow me to continue showing them new resources and teaching strategies that best support our students. By making positive connections with those in my school community, I really believe I can make positive changes within our district.

CEP 805: Learning Math with Technology

When looking through the courses offered in the Educational Technology Program, this one stuck out to me. What could be more perfect for a math teacher who loves to incorporate technology into her teaching? Although this was the last course I took before my capstone, I looked forward to it throughout the entire program.

By looking at the Common Core State Standards and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards, I was able to focus specifically on how I implement these standards into my own classroom. I spent countless weeks putting together a "[Mathematics Tools and Resources](#)" site that supports secondary mathematics students. I use these tools with students in my classroom. Virtual manipulatives, videos, online practice resources and educational research reading are provided.

What I've found to be most beneficial from this class is the ability to break down resources found online to determine how they can support students in my classroom. Does a tool allow for exploration of a concept? What proficiency standards does it support? Can students collaborate or communicate with one another? These questions are always considered when I look for resources to implement into a lesson. I want my students to use virtual manipulatives to see relationships in mathematical concepts (fractions, linear equations, etc.). I also see the benefits behind students practicing skills through online tools: exploration, immediate feedback, collaboration, and communication. This blended style of teaching and learning allows my students to grow and use the experiences they have outside the classroom to help them succeed.

It's hard to put everything I've been able to take away from this program into one essay. I couldn't possibly begin to describe the impact each class has made on me professionally and personally. I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. I wanted to make an impact on countless lives through the educational field. Each day I go to work feeling more confident than ever before. I implement new teaching strategies, have an abundance of new resources at my disposal and collaborate more with colleagues. My students are more successful in math and everyday life at school because of the education I received during the Educational Technology Program. I look forward to continuing to implement the strategies and resources I've acquired and pushing technology into education.