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10/22/13

...And Beyond!

If there is one thing to be said about the MAET program, it is that the time sure does fly! It feels almost surreal to think that I am weeks away from finishing my Masters and being officially “done” with school. While in the midst of the whirlwind that is Michigan State University’s MAET, I regularly felt that I barely had time to come up for air and think beyond some possible actions I could take in my own classroom based on what I had learned. I experienced so many new ideas, technologies, tools and people; it was often hard to keep it all straight!

Now that I am closer to the end, this capstone course has allowed me the much-needed time to sit down and actually reflect on where I have been, and imagine where I can go. As I mentioned in my Reflections essay, I’ve begun to realize that I would ideally like to take my new skills and knowledge outside my own personal classroom, and begin to apply them on a bigger scale. I consider myself a lifelong learner; I have always been eager to learn new skills or concepts and build on those I already know. My hope for my future is to take what I have learned here in the MAET program, along with my eagerness towards learning more, and work with other educators to enhance learning for students through technology. I have spent so much time and effort building up a network of fellow educators, as well as amazing teaching tools, and I would like to put them to good use!

Although I feel eager to declare myself done with formal schooling myself, I find myself thinking of ways to stay in it. As I have raced through this program on high speed, I often wished I could be learning more about library sciences at the same time. As the library “ask we know it” disappears from school buildings, and is replaced by media centers and the like, I see that librarians are being asked to do what we ourselves are learning in educational technology.

It has felt like a natural progression to now focus my teacher’s lens on libraries, because I have frequently wished during this program that I could work with students closely, in a library or research setting, to help them learn incredibly useful skills through technology programs that are readily available online. Higher education and the workplace are becoming increasingly technology-based, and I personally have felt in my own classroom that I am not yet doing an adequate job of preparing students for the impressive task of learning or working in an online world. Sure, students know how to go online and do a variety of things, but I feel that I could have a bigger impact if I was in a position to specifically work directly with students through educational technology, which is a luxury most “regular” teachers do not have.

This is definitely an idea that is still percolating in my head, and it is a bit overwhelming to be thinking of embarking on another degree when I’m not even done with this one yet, but I believe personally that it is only natural for us educators. Educators love learning! I believe I will always want to keep studying and exploring the things I am passionate about. Thinking about being *done with school* is more intimidating to me than the first day of high school. How am I supposed to learn everything I can if I am on my own?

The real answer, though, is that I am not on my own. The personal learning network I have developed over the last year and are still with me, as is my better-informed self. I know now how to research local and upcoming professional development opportunities. I am aware of websites and people that can help keep me informed in this ever-growing world of technology we educators live in. I know how to test out new tools and technologies myself, and evaluate them for affordances and constraints in the classroom. I know about TPACK, and how to apply it to my own teaching and learning, to make sure I am getting the most value out of my lessons. In short, I am ready to be done with the MAET program! While I can't believe it is already time to say goodbye, I feel that it has done an excellent job preparing me for whatever road is ahead of me, be it in the classroom, library, or some place I haven't even imagined yet.