

Synthesis Essay  
CEP 807 - Spring 2018  
Morgan Counsellor

My master's degree in Educational Technology has been a huge accomplishment to complete in a year's time. One year is not long, but I feel as if I have accomplished a tremendous feat in that amount of time. I completed my first full year of teaching, and upon beginning my second year of teaching, I grieved the loss of my mother. I debated taking another year off to focus on my new career of teaching and also considered taking a break for a while after the death of my mom, but I was to continue to further my education and I knew she would not have wanted me to give up. I had been fearful that if I waited too long to go back to school or stopped going that I would lose motivation to go back altogether. I also decided to complete it in one year, instead of spreading it out over a longer period of time, meaning that I was a full-time student each semester. School has always been a top priority in my family, and I did not want to let anyone down. This was challenging, but I've always had a strong work ethic and although there were times I did not think I could do it, my advisor promised me that it could be done. I have always had the strong desire to learn, from a young age. My parents could never keep a book out of my hand and I absorbed every bit of knowledge from my teachers growing up. I have learned much about teaching, education, design, learning, and more in the year I spent at Michigan State doing my master's.

I am unsure if my path will continue to lead me down the road of teaching, due to wanting to learn and grow in other aspects of my career, but I know that I will continue to have the desire to educate myself. Although I have earned a master's degree, I will continue to adapt myself to the needs of my students or the needs of the job I have, if I do not stay in education. As a part of applying to the program, I knew in the back of my mind that it may open the doors to other opportunities outside of teaching in the public education sector. I have always had a passion for technology and learning, so what better degree to have than this one? I had previously considered the fact that I would be able to do other jobs other than teaching, but never seriously considered it. I now have the goal and the desire to make the transition from public education to another sector. I have gained skills in the areas of leadership, collaboration, technology, and training that would serve me well outside of education. I have been looking in to jobs in corporate training due to my background in teaching students and adults. I also have been interested in pursuing the role of a technology coordinator or curriculum developer due to my experience with technology and still wanting to make a larger, positive impact on a community. The MAET program shaped me into a more well-rounded individual by not only allowing me to create meaningful experiences for my students, but teaching me valuable skills suitable for other career options.

I had a personal goal and a professional goal when I began the pursuit of my master's degree. One of my personal goals to meet through the [MAET](#) (Master of Arts in Educational Technology) degree program was to simply obtain a master's degree. From the time I was

young, a master's degree had always been something I wanted to achieve. I have always been motivated to gain knowledge. My parents used to have to beg me to stop reading long enough to eat dinner, so I knew that obtaining a master's degree was a way I could prove that I had gained even more knowledge through a public university. One of my professional goals when I began the program was to advance my lessons for my students in the area of technology. I have always had a strong interest in using technology to enhance lessons and I was looking to further increase my knowledge of the technological world. I know that children in our modern day world are so adept with using technology, that it comes almost second nature to them. Students want to use technology and I believe that that's how they best learn now. It isn't so much about a teacher giving them facts anymore, but allowing the students to find their knowledge, and technology is the vehicle to do that. I also knew that this degree program would allow me to be a leader in the technology education area at my school. This is still a goal of mine and something I have been able to achieve because of the knowledge I have gained in my courses at Michigan State. In the past year, I became a technology coach in my district, which has allowed me to gain leadership skills by sharing my knowledge and educating my peers.

One of the courses that had an impact on my education was CEP (counseling, education, psychology) 815: Technology and Leadership. This course opened my eyes to examining the issues our schools and districts may be facing when it comes to the use of technology in education. During this course, I learned what it would be like to be a technology leader who was responsible for managing relationships between technology, teaching, and learning. Before this course, I had no idea what it meant to be a technology coordinator for a district. I knew that we had a technology coordinator in my district, and I thought her job may be fun, but I was not aware of her responsibilities. During this course, I created a vision statement for my district that would promote the integration of meaningful technology tools centered around our philosophies regarding educational technology. This was especially meaningful because I had never done something like that before. The vision statement I crafted of the adoption of technology tools is still something I believe in and would love to make come true. In completion of this course and project, I learned the important aspects of making a compelling vision statement and argument that would appeal to stakeholders of the community. I believe that I am now equipped with the tools and knowledge to be able to create a vision statement and thus, be able to lead a district towards a common goal with technology.

Another course that had an impact was CEP 800: Psychology in Learning in School and Other Settings. CEP 800 examined the different uses of technology and the relationship between the components of TPACK (technological, pedagogical and content knowledge) while also considering various learning theories. It was important to learn the aspects of TPACK because it is widely used by educators as a framework to technology usage. By utilizing backwards design and considering TPACK, I created a technology based grant proposal for transformative learning that applies to the learners in my classroom. I used design thinking to create and implement a science, technology, engineering, arts and technology session for a technology conference, in which I teach educators how to effectively use Genius Hour in their classrooms. In both of these projects, I learned the importance of creating authentic learning

experiences, while also considering how people learn. I learned how to set up an outline for an event and be able to feel more confident in that moving forward. I now plan to sign up to lead sessions for events around the area.

CEP 811: Adapting Innovative Technologies to Education also made a difference in my education at MSU. This course resonated with me because it introduced me to the maker movement. The maker education movement encourages play to discover new learning, which means that anybody at any age can be a 'maker'. The Maker Movement allows students and people of all ages to remix and "DIY" (do-it-yourself) to experiment and create. This allows students to collaborate and have meaningful, authentic experiences every day. During this course, I was tasked with using a Makey Makey kit, which is a kit that allows you to hook up a controller pad to everyday objects which then hooks up to a computer, to modify a piece of everyday material into a technology tool. This class allowed me to explore how you can repurpose anything with technology and learning in mind. I created a lesson plan using the Makey Makey kit, which resulted in an increase in confidence when it came time to use these with my students.

Upon completion of CEP 811, I wrote a grant proposal using DonorsChoose.org to purchase a class set of MakeyMakey kits. I was fortunate enough to receive the funds and have been using them with my students throughout this school year. They have helped to transform the ways the students think of themselves as learners. While using the kits along with Scratch software, I am no longer the teacher, but the students teach themselves. I have become the facilitator and the students work with their partner to sort out obstacles. I would not have discovered this type of learning and been comfortable with it if not for this course. I believe this is the type of learning that is most valuable to the students because they are in charge, not the teacher. It is the change in that schools need in order to adapt to the ever-changing job market.

The MAET program opened up a world of creativity. The rubrics and the majority of the assignments were open ended to encourage creative thinking. While there were standards we needed to meet, I was able to explore my own thoughts and push my knowledge of technology further. This was tough for me as I typically find comfort in having exact guidelines. I was forced to confront my comfort zone and "color outside of the lines". The concept of having to come up with my own ideas and create authentic experiences was a challenge for me and an area that I really grew in during my time in this program.

This master's program also encouraged me to be a reflective learner and educator. I found that I was taking knowledge from my classes and actively applying it with my students every day. It was interesting to see how I could take what I learned and test it out the next day with my students, which made my own learning more concrete. My classes were online, but I felt very involved in the learning community. I was fearful when I began the program that it would differ vastly from my undergrad experience, where I was able to meet face to face with my peers every day. However, I had many opportunities to talk with peers, brainstorm with professors, and revise my work to get effective feedback. The revision process was extremely helpful as I

was able to revise any work after I received feedback. This helped me grow as a professional learner and find areas of improvement and use that reflective knowledge for the future. The MAET program may have been online, but it showed me how connected people can become online via video chats, twitters, and other tools available now.

If I end up continuing my career as a classroom teacher, I have learned many skills to help address technology challenges for my students. However, if I choose to take a new route, I feel I am equipped with skills and knowledge to help me be a leader in technology. Since I plan to be a lifelong learner, the earning of a degree does not mark the end of my exploration of educational technology. As I continue to move through the journey of learning, I know that I am more than capable now of creating meaningful experiences through technology and showing others how to do the same. I can say that I am proud of myself for continuing my education throughout tough experiences, and completing it during hardships means that this degree means more to me than simply being a piece of paper.