Kaylie Quimby
CEP 807: Capstone Course
Synthesis Paper

Personal Growth Reflection
The Change

The Master of Arts in Educational Technology (MAET) degree program at Michigan State University (MSU) has taught me a lot about who I am as an educator and how I view technology use in the classroom. Before starting the program, my goals were to learn how to effectively and purposefully use technology in my instruction as well as incorporate technology into all aspects of my professional life. These are still goals I work on today, but the MAET program has given me the ability to dive deeper into experiencing new technologies and theories that will grow my understanding in these goal areas. During the last three years I have participated in many learning experiences that have opened my eyes to the world of effective and engaging technology integration. I am thankful for these learning experiences as they have become very valuable as school districts move into remote learning for the health of students and staff. I have created a Maker space prototype, reflected on my personal learning network (PLN), identified and solved an educational wicked problem with a think tank of other motivated colleagues, worked with a literacy learner to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in reading, and many other meaningful projects. Along the way, I consistently reflected on my understanding and learning throughout the MAET program. This reflection helped me to take the time to identify what I was learning and the impact it had on me as an educator. I think reflection and what I do with this reflection is what can make me the best educator I can be.

A quote from John Dewey states, "We do not learn from experience… we learn from reflecting on experience." This quote accurately represents my journey through the MAET program. Before starting this master's degree program I was looking for new experiences to help differentiate my professional career from those around me, but I was not reflecting on how these experiences changed my thinking and perspective of how education is being done in the world today. I did not reflect enough on how these experiences could be adapted to my instruction in the classroom. The MAET program not only allowed me to learn from other educators' and professors' feedback on assignments and projects, but it most importantly helped me learn from my own reflection of my completed work.

The MAET program has changed my approach to teaching. I have grasped that learning is about exploration, inquiry, questioning, and examination of different topics, ideas, and beliefs. Teachers should recognize the learning differences between students and seek to deepen their knowledge through technology and experiences. Teachers need to teach metacognitive strategies to help deepen understanding as well as share the importance of content to their students. As it relates to my professional teaching responsibilities, I have learned that technology can be used to keep organized and present data in an informative and expressive way. I have learned that technology is a great tool to collaborate with colleagues and share ideas with parents on how to improve student performance. The MAET program has shown me that technology can not only help my students improve their performance, but I can grow and adapt as their teacher as well.

There were three courses in the MAET program that made the most impact on my educational outlook on pedagogy, evidence-based practices, and technology use. All three courses were under the Counseling, Educational Psychology and Special Education (CEP) category of the master's degree program and happened to be taken in the same summer semester in 2018. Each of these courses are highlighted below detailing what impact they have made on my instruction and thinking moving forward in my teaching career.

Three Impactful Courses

Course #1: CEP 810- Teaching for Understanding with Technology

The first course that impacted me as an educator was the CEP 810 course focused on teaching for understanding with technology. This course taught me that using digital media in the learning environment is very important, especially for inquiry, exploration, and play. I created a 21st century lesson plan that gave students many opportunities to use technology to enhance their learning through exploration and experimentation. I learned that technology can guide students to self-efficacy and independence. I feel that technology is a gateway into exploration and inquiry and I want to continue to learn more about how to master technology tools to better myself as an educator.

This course has taught me the importance of technology integration to enhance learning, creativity, exploration, and sharing. Technology can be a tool used to teach new skills, as observed in the Network Learning Project. The use of YouTube videos and online help forums can solve problems and teach people skills they have always wanted to master. In my professional practice I plan on incorporating YouTube videos, help forums, and other technology tools into my lesson plans so that students are able to explore, answer questions, and create end products that they are proud of. It is my responsibility to provide these tools for my students so that they can navigate and identify valuable information that will enhance their learning experience.

Course #2: CEP 811- Adapting Innovative Technologies in Education

The second course that was very important in shaping who I am as an educator after completing the MAET program is the CEP 811 course. This course focused on adapting innovative technologies into education. I developed a new way of thinking during this course and it all has to do with repurposing the use of technology tools. It is important to integrate technology use in the classroom in new and innovative ways. The most obvious use of technology, like computers and iPads, aren't the only ways that technology can be integrated into the classroom. The repurposing of items with the use of technology tools allows for students and educators to be creative and explore new possibilities within the already set curriculum. Before this course I would not have thought about repurposing technology to play different roles in my classroom. This new thinking about using already existing technology and items will positively affect my instruction. I will be more open to creating lessons that incorporate technology and allow my students to explore. I plan to take a back-seat role in my students' learning and allow them to explore, create, make mistakes, learn from their mistakes, and proudly share their work with others.

The "Repurpose" Acrostic Poem above has words that express how I view repurposed technology in my classroom. As educators we are able to **reuse** and **recycle** technology in new and inspiring ways. Students feel **unified** with one another as they **explore**, **play**, **participate**, **experience**, and **share** technology throughout the lesson with one another. Repurposing will create an **open** environment for risk-taking and innovation that I can't wait to welcome with **open** arms in my classroom.

Course #3: CEP 812- Applying Educational Technology to Issues of Practice

The final course that left an impactful mark on my teaching is the [CEP 812](#) course, applying educational technology to practice. The CEP 812 course taught me the importance of questioning. According to [dictionary.com](#) to question means to ask, inquire, challenge or dispute. These are all qualities that I continue to work on as a teacher and try to instill in my students as they are learning. This course definitely challenged me in this way to integrate these qualities into the assignments and in my daily teaching life. I was pushed far outside my comfort zone as I worked on a solution for my [educational wicked problem project](#)- allowing failure to be as powerful a learning mode as success. I learned the importance of questioning educational policies. I now question why and how I implement educational practices into my personal pedagogy. I take the time to research evidence-based practices and work with my personal learning network to find the best practices to meet the needs of my special education students. As I navigated this course I came to the conclusion that questioning allows my students and colleagues to explore new ideas and ways of thinking. A question can open a world of possibilities, creativity, and innovation just like when opening a paint can to reveal a beautiful color. Questioning can guide us to more questions or potential solutions.

I learned the importance of being a lifelong learner as an educator. To always want to learn the newest technological advances and pedagogy to teach students. To seek out and question educational structures and ways of doing things. To reinvent my classroom structure and activities to meet the needs of all my students.

As a teacher I need to continue to show my passion for this profession and my students. The most challenging part will be to make sure I continue to be curious and question what is around me and always better my instruction, the way I present my content, and how I incorporate technology into my classroom. Questioning, passion, and curiosity are ideas that I strive to implement in my own life, not just in the classroom. To question why I feel certain ways using "why", "what if", and "how" questions to get me to a possible solution. To continue to have passion and curiosity to try new things and be adventurous with the people in my life. To continue my happiness in a world full of judgement.

Conclusion

The Master of Arts in Educational Technology degree program at MSU has taught me many things that have changed my view of education. I have learned that education can be engaging, inspiring, and inquiry-based when the right technology is involved and creativity is invited into the classroom. Technology can be repurposed to meet the needs of the assignment while still aligning with the [Common Core State Standards](#) that instruct the important content

students need to be taught in each subject area at every grade level. Repurposing technology also helps students and teachers to become more creative and solve solutions to problems they never thought possible. This program has also shown me the importance of challenging educational ideas and searching for evidence-based practices to best meet student needs. I now seek out programs and professional development that integrate technology so that way I stay up-to-date with the best practices for my special education students. I have started to ask higher-order thinking questions as I think about why I am doing what I am doing, what could I do better, and how can I implement the best practice into my everyday instruction. I have learned that I must model these challenging thought processes for my students so that they will be able to learn and master them as well. It is vital that I go out of my comfort zone and question the world around me if I expect my students to do the same. I want students to not be afraid of making mistakes and challenge thinking as well as inquire why things are the way they are. Technology opens a whole new door to exploration and questioning that is wonderful for student growth and creativity.

References

Positive Success Group. 2018. *15 Quotes to Inspire Self Reflection and Look into the New 2018.*
http://www.lifecoachingcourses.ie/2017/12/15-quotes-inspire-self-reflection-look-new-2018/

Question. 2020. Dictionary.com https://www.dictionary.com/browse/question?s=t