

Begin Again...

When I decided to become a teacher, I knew I was making a commitment to lifelong education for myself and I was looking forward to it. I was excited to continue my education long after receiving my bachelor's degree simply because I knew that any education I pursued would make me a better educator and it would help me improve my craft. My year long internship created a starting point for my continued education beyond my undergraduate coursework. My work during that year set up wonderful opportunities that would be helpful when I was ready to continue coursework toward a master's degree. After time to get situated with my career and finances and much deliberation over which path to choose, I decided to pursue a [Master of Arts in Educational Technology \(MAET\)](#) and was accepted at Michigan State University once again to begin my journey. This program was exciting, full of wonderful knowledge to obtain and easily accessible for me as a student and full time educator. After being accepted I was extremely excited to get back to a setting where I was the learner and let my education begin again.

I made my program choice for many reasons. A financial perspective was big for me. I knew that I didn't want to go into more debt as my bachelor's degree was paid for in mostly loans that I had taken out in my name. Another degree from Michigan State University's College of Education was very appealing to me so when I found that it was the most feasible option to finish a master's degree that I had started during my internship, I jumped at the opportunity. Michigan State also offers programs completely

online and I was able to take one course per semester in the comfort of my own home without having to travel to a campus. I chose educational technology because of the growing importance of technology in the classroom. I had worked with new technologies and wanted to learn how to improve my pedagogy with these tools. This program was not a let down in any sense of the word. It helped me see the benefits of technology use in education that go beyond just using different tools and programs. I knew I had made the right choice, during my first week of my very first class. My journey in this program has certainly not been breezy but it has been well worth it and it has left me with skills and long term goals to improve my pedagogy and continue my educational journey even further.

I began this program with a series of [certificate courses](#) that would help to earn me a [Educational Technology \(NP\) Endorsement](#) so that I can teach Teaching for Understanding with Technology (CEP 810), Adapting Innovative Technologies in Education (CEP 811), and Applying Educational Technology to Issues of Practice (CEP 812). The combination of these 3 courses was an excellent introduction to my work as a master's student in educational technology. I learned many of the basics that I would be building on in later courses. [CEP 810](#) introduced the importance of learning theories and digital culture and it taught me the beginning principles of being a digital citizen in an educational setting. We began an educational blog and explored how social media can influence educators and serve as a valuable resource for learning about technology. [CEP 811](#) continued to teach us about our digital presence and taught us how to, as the course website puts it, "repurpose the world around us." We were

expected to use what we had previously learned as well as what we were now being taught to create learning experiences for students. [CEP 812](#) was the final building block in the certificate program. In this course we looked at how technology could help us solve existing problems of practice. We looked at specific problems of practice and we worked toward possible solutions by using what we learned in course lectures and reading about solving problems in smart ways. Together these courses got me off to a running start to learning about technology and its benefits in education.

Another course that had profound influence on my learning in the MAET program was [Technology and Leadership](#) (CEP 815). This course taught me how to think about educational technology from more than just a classroom teacher's point of view. I learned how principals and administrators think about technology and I learned about different kinds of thinking (missional and instrprobumental) and the pros and cons of using each. I also gained knowledge on the different types of leaders that can emerge in educational settings and how the strengths and weaknesses of each type of leader shape and give result to different situations. CEP 815 taught me about the type of leader that I would like to be in an educational setting, whether I choose to maintain my role as a classroom teacher or take a different career path with an administrative position dealing with educational technology. This course also taught me about the opportunities that are now mine for the taking. I now know more about the careers and educational positions that I can pursue with my master's degree and I have reflected on how I will approach these opportunities if I ever choose to take them. Most importantly, I learned how leaders approach problems of practice with the use of different

technologies. Several times in this course I was asked to take off my classroom teacher hat and think like an educational leader such as a building principal or district administrator. I was surprised at how difficult this was to do because my usual role as a classroom teacher.

Teaching Students Online (CEP 820) was one of my favorite courses, yet quite possibly the most difficult and frustrating course that I have taken in this program. The sole purpose of this course was the creation of an online learning experience for students. I was asked to create a unit that students were to complete using a Course Management System (CMS) that students would eventually have access to so that they can complete a module that presents curriculum to them digitally. I chose to create a word study unit on vowel sounds using Weebly for second grade students. This course also taught me the benefits of teaching students online. We were presented with research about the growing trend of online learning and how it affects students who are immersed in this fairly new kind of learning. We were also asked to use one of the rubrics available for teaching students online as a guide for the creation of our module. As we created the module we reflected in our data notebook over a series of 5 entries that also served as a guide to our course creation. Creativity and reflection were the main goals of this course and we had to have sound reasoning for each decision we made. This course tested my abilities in the use of technology. It was difficult and frustrating at times but, with each step toward the completion of my module, I felt a sense of pride in the work I had done. My finished product is an online module called **Second Grade Word Study.**

As a conclusion to my master's degree I took the [Proseminar in Educational Technology](#) (CEP 807). This course served as a final reflection to my master's program and helped me create my online portfolio. I was asked to look back on the goals that I had for myself at the beginning of this program and how they changed in my [goal reflection essay](#) and I was asked to look forward to possible future educational experiences in my [future as a learner essay](#). Both of these pieces showed me what this entire program has done for me. Through this course I truly learned about the professional benefits of the MAET program. I learned how to give valuable and constructive feedback to my colleagues and use the same kind of feedback to improve upon the work that I was doing to finish the program. I felt that this course allowed me to put all that I learned and worked for into one complete and final project and I loved each and every second of it. It was demanding but also engaging and easy to complete. This course gave me a sense of pride over the work that I had done by giving it more meaning and greater purpose. It taught me the value of reflection and it served as the final stepping stone to receiving a master's degree in educational technology.

I am nearing the end of my master's degree program. I have worked hard and I am very satisfied with where my educational technology journey has taken me. This program has changed who I am as a learner and further shaped my values in education. The words beginning and end have been thematic throughout my coursework in this program. I have finally finished the work and am looking forward to receiving my degree

as the reward for all my efforts. However, with most journeys that begin in the field of education, the end is just another place to begin again. I am not sure that endings exist in education. High school graduation marks the beginning of college for future educators. College graduation marks the beginning of a teaching internship through Michigan State University which results in the opportunity to, at some point, begin a master's degree program. With the end of my master's program so close, I am looking forward to my next opportunity to begin a new academic adventure.

-By Erika Rochow