

Straying From the Path

Goal Reflection Essay

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It is interesting to think back to a time that was not that long ago, but yet, seems so far away. When I applied to the Master of Arts in Educational Technology (MAET) program in the spring of 2012, I wrote a goal statement as part of the admissions process. This caused me to think about why I chose a technology degree and why I thought Michigan State's program would help me with my future goals. Looking back at my goals from just over a year ago, my essential goals stay the same, but my professional and geographic plans have definitely taken a path I had no intention of traveling down.

When I applied to the MAET program, my goal was to work on my master's degree while substituting in nearby schools until my husband and I moved to our next base. I wrote my essay using general ideas such as, "...I have many opportunities ahead of me, and am sure that a master's degree in educational technology would benefit me, whether I choose to stay a classroom teacher, become a specialist, or teach children online." However, my frame of reference for the program was largely based around technology, early childhood education, and literacy at the time. I had been teaching Pre-Kindergarten for the last two years, and was very interested in ways technology could enrich the literacy experience for this demographic.

In the course of a year, my plan of completing my degree and applying for a job in a new location changed quite a bit, as well as my concentration on early childhood education, literacy, and technology. As it turns out, my husband did receive a new job assignment, it just happened to be at the same base he had already been assigned. So, we did not move, and I decided I would like to have a new full-time job. By the time the dust settled, school had started, and I had expanded my comfort zone of possible teaching options. I happily accepted a job at a charter school teaching 3rd-5th grade math. This was not the technology-rich school I wrote about in my goal essay, nor was it the early childhood, literacy position I spent time thinking about in my first MAET classes. It has however, broadened my educational repertoire and allowed me to see educational technology in a new light. As I wrote then, I continue to strive to, "gain the experience necessary to not only comfortably use more of these tools in my own classroom, but also help my teammates," whoever, and wherever those teammates are.

Sometimes life takes us from the path we have planned out. In my experience, life *often* takes us from this path. However, straying from what was planned has brought me interesting, enriching experiences, and has not kept me from my goals.