

What Comes Next?

Future as a Learner Essay

June 2013

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I'm sure many people feel their job does not stop when they leave their workplace. Likewise, I feel my education does not end here, with the completion of my master's degree. I love learning, and was thrilled to be back on the student side when I began the Master of Arts in Educational Technology (MAET) program. Through my journey to obtain my MAET, I have gained skills in a variety of web 2.0 tools including screencasts, blogs, online lessons, podcasts, interactive presentations and more. However, I know that simply learning the current skills will not keep me up to date with educational technology for long. Technology is constantly changing, and what is cutting edge today, may not be used much tomorrow (remember Myspace?). So, the question I pose to myself is not, will I continue learning, the question I ask is, what will guide my learning? Earlier in the MAET program I created guiding questions for myself and my professional growth plan. These questions remain relevant today, and will guide my growth as a teacher, and a life-long learner.

Questions to Consider When Implementing Technology

Does the technology aid and enhance the learner's experience?

Will this technology teach the learner skills that will bring value to their life?

Does this technology make my life and/or the learner's easier or more organized?

I feel that creating and using these guiding questions when implementing technology in my classroom helps me to stay focused on what is important, the learner. With so many new tools available to us, there is a risk that we might become more focused on the technology itself, than the goal we are using it for. My goal is to create lessons that use technology as a tool to reach a goal whether it is showing understanding of a concept, or developing skills that will be useful in the workplace.

So, I have guiding questions, and I know I want to continue to learn, but... *what comes next?* For the coming year, I am planning on investigating apps for tablets and smartboards that I can use in my new position as a resource and inclusion special education teacher. I will be working with special education students who spend most of their day in the general education classroom, but who need additional support. I want to find resources that will help build connections and background information for my students. In my experience, tablets and smartboards have a great potential for engaging students in the material, as well as allowing them to interact with the content. I also hope to work with my peers in finding creative ways to use the limited technology resources we have to best help our students. Most classrooms at my

current school have two computers, and a smartboard with a teacher computer. I want to find resources that we can use in this setting that help us to reach content goals. I plan on reaching these goals through professional development and my own independent online research of blogs and articles. I also have found my peers from across the country to be a great resource, sharing ideas in the form of pins, facebook posts, and real life discussions.

But, what comes after next year? This is where the uncertainty comes into play. Most likely after next year my husband and I will be stationed at a new base. We don't know where, and we don't know when. We do know we will be moving, and it will be time for me to look for a new position again. The question I have to answer is, what kind of position will I be looking for? I find the concept of teaching online to be very intriguing. I had a great time building my own online course, and am considering moving in that direction. That being said, I love seeing my students on a daily basis and collaborating with my peers. *So... What comes next?* The honest answer is, I don't know. However, I do know I will continue to seek out professional development, explore the newest technology, and work with my peers to enhance the learning experience for whatever students I have.