

Where I Started

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When I applied to the Michigan State University Master's of Arts in Education program in April of 2010 I had just finished my first year teaching. I had a tough first year teaching and decided to move back home with my family in Michigan after a year living on my own in Colorado. I was not confident that I would be able to find a job back in Michigan so I thought it would be a great time to finish my masters. I was fortunate to land a job and started a journey of teaching and learning full time. More than two years later I have finished two more years teaching at different schools and different grades. I feel that I have been successful in achieving the professional goals I made when I started this program: continue education, increase student achievement, and increase student engagement.

As I complete my master's degree this summer I know that the courses I have taken have played a major part in continuing my education as an educator. I was surprised with how much of my coursework was directly applicable in my classrooms. There were many times that I went to work the next day with the list of things that I wanted to try in my classroom after reading for a course the night before. I have thought a lot about what I am going to do after I complete my master's degree. I will need to find other ways of continuing my education so I can continue learning and implementing ideas in my classroom.

Student achievement was very important to me as I started teaching and that is one thing that has remained important to me over the past two years teaching and working on my masters. Assessments and data analysis have been a huge part of monitoring the student achievement in my classroom. Through my master's courses I have found new ways of assessing students to monitor student achievement. Using assessments and data I have been able to see every one of my students make improvements in at least one area including; DRA, Dibels, and quarterly benchmark assessments.

Student engagement is still a very important part of my teaching but my thinking about the topic has changed over the past two years. When I began teaching I always thought of student engagement as center based activities where students rotated around the room. Many of the courses I took touched on student engagement and now my thinking of student engagement includes so much more than center based activities. Inquiry, collaboration, inquiry circles, book talks, and literature circles are a few to start with.

In summary, I feel that completing my masters was challenging but rewarding. I gained so much knowledge about teaching and working with students that I will use with me for years to come. I feel better prepared to positively impact students' lives and I want to continue working towards becoming a better and more effective teacher for my students. The goals I made over

two years ago are still important to me. Although these goals will always be a work in progress I have been successful in improving my teaching abilities and confidence in the areas related to the goals I made.