

HOW IT ALL CONNECTS

As I near the end of my master's program in Educational Technology (MAET) at Michigan State University I think back on why I applied, my goals, and think about how far I have come in such a short amount of time. Although I didn't state it in my application to the MAET program I know that a few things pushed me to apply and complete my masters quickly. Namely, I had waited and put off working on my masters for so long because of indecision towards what I wanted to study and fear of being a student again after many years not being in that role. I knew that I wanted to attend Michigan State University because I had wanted to as an undergrad. And having just taught virtually during a worldwide pandemic and during my undergrad almost minoring in computer science, getting formal training in how to properly and purposefully integrate technology in the classroom seemed like a natural fit. I applied, was accepted, and immediately discussed a plan to complete the program as quickly as possible.

I have always been hesitant to integrate even the simplest forms of technology into my classroom. Being a math teacher, one would assume that I would feel confident in and encourage my students to use a graphing calculator in the classroom - however generally this always felt like a burden to teach students all the different button presses to graph something correctly and then be able to actually see it on the screen. After completing almost all my coursework I now understand and see the value that incorporating technology into my classroom has for my students. We cannot escape technology integrating into our daily lives and for my students to be productive citizens they must feel comfortable and confident in their abilities to interact with new types of technology in different ways. Even if that just means they play with a new tool or in a new web space for a day or so the exposure to the technology, the interactions with their peers, and the collaboration in the classroom that comes from that translates to not only helping them be more marketable in the workforce when the graduate but also feel more comfortable attempting something new in a safe space. I also feel more confident in how I can support my students during their discovery of new technologies because I have played and mucked about within new technologies. Even if I do not know the answer to a question they may have, as long as I have fostered an environment that encourages risk without punishment and vulnerability to learn with my students, I know they will not hesitate to push themselves like I have pushed myself throughout my master's coursework.

Personally, I have always wanted to obtain my masters degree and while at first I didn't feel a strong pull towards a masters in educational technology I can now say that this really has been the perfect fit for me. This program not only encouraged integrating technology in meaningful ways, but encouraged educators to consider how students will interact with technology daily whether we integrate it or not and how we can support students of all contexts to grow and learn in a supportive, robust environment. As well as trying to connect each lesson to our students' larger context is really how we succeed as educators.