

# Just Keep Learning, Just Keep Learning, Just Keep Learning, Learning, Learning...

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***A reflective essay on my future goals for learning as a teacher, learner, and professional development leader.***

As an educator I am in the business of learning: Not only are my students learning, but I too continually strive to expand my learning in the field of pedagogy, technology, and the world around me. I believe, as educators, it is so important to seek out new and exciting opportunities to learn. Becoming a life-long-learner allows us to stay up to date on the current trends in the world of pedagogy, find new ways to engage our students, and make learning fun! The Masters of Arts in Educational Technology (MAET) program at Michigan State has allowed me the opportunity to achieve all of these things and more! I never realized just how much more information I would learn over the course of a year and a half. Technology is always changing and evolving as the years, days, and even minutes pass by! So many of the types of technology I used and learned about in my undergraduate degree has already been replaced with "better models".

As an educator we are in an important position to develop 21st century learners that have the skills necessary to function in our future world. With every new technology that is developed we are changing the ways students learn, communicate, and function in day-to-day life. In order to keep up with this trend we must be in constant pursuit of our goal to reach all students. By educating ourselves in the realm of technology, we can keep pace with the trends that are shaping the world of pedagogy and begin to use these in our classrooms to develop 21st century thinkers and learners.

One of the trends that I am looking to learn more about and implement within my classroom is flipped-mastery-gamification. This is the combination of three different trends flipped learning, mastery learning, and gamification. Two years ago I began the journey of flipping my math classroom. It completely "flipped" (no pun intended) my idea of learning and really pushed me to use a backwards design approach to my teaching (read more about backwards design here). While it completely flipped my idea of classroom teaching, the results I received from my students were better than I had ever hoped for: Students had better test scores, less anxiety and stress, more fun, higher homework completion, more collaboration in class, and even a deeper understanding of the content. After a few years of honing my skills at strategies of this pedagogical view, I have begun to look into mastery learning (read more about mastery learning here). I stumbled upon the topic of mastery learning through Twitter and a few teaching conferences. Because of the flipped format I have already created, implementing a mastery format should be relatively easy. Our district also recently adopted Schoology (a Learning Management System) where I will be able to house all of my classroom content. My plan is to continue to read blogs and complete more research on the topic of mastery learning to hone the format for next year's class. The third type of learning I also want to learn more about and incorporate (hopefully by this coming year) is gamification. This blog shows a teacher's journey through his process of first developing a flipped classroom, then moving to flipped-mastery, and finally on to a flipped-mastery-gamified learning environment. He shows that it took him 3 years to do each of these well. My plan this year is to focus on developing a flipped-mastery strategy, but also try to incorporate **some** of the gamified elements into the mix as well (using XP, having levels, gamifying some vocabulary, etc.). I don't want to overwhelm myself

and get in over my head, so I am going to have to do a lot of research, thinking, and discussions with other teachers to find out what will be best.

Along with changing the format of my classroom, one of my goals is to create a classroom environment where students are self-managed learners who continually progress monitor. One of the ways I purpose to do this is by focusing on short-term and long-term goal setting with them. Because of the flipped-mastery format of the class, I want students to advocate for themselves while focusing on their metacognitive skills. If students know more about how they think and learn, they will be able to assess and determine what it is they need to do in order to deeply understand the content. I truly believe that goal setting is a real-world 21st century skill that students aren't ever "coached" on during their time in an educational setting. It is always something that is talked about, but as teachers we need to direct, guide, and model these strategies that students can use. My plan is to have students set goals each week, progress monitor, and continually self-assess to see where they are, where they should be, and how they plan to get there. In order to do this I need to plan strategically, research on the best practices to implement goal setting in a middle school environment, and also reach out to other teachers who have used goal-setting in their classroom. This puts the accountability of learning the content on the student and not the teacher. It continually reminds them that they have a purpose and goal in mind.

Recently I began working as the instructional technology chair for my building. As part of this position I am in charge of creating professional development workshops, teaching staff about new technologies, and helping them implement these new technologies into the curriculum. This position is so exciting for me because I'm able to help others in a field I am so passionate about. One of the biggest challenges I've faced so far is trying to develop the "perfect" teacher workshop for technology. Technology has always been a sore spot for many teachers because they want to stick with what they are accustomed to already. Many teachers feel that they are digital immigrants and it will take them years to learn a new topic. Through a personal project that was started as a part of an MAET course, I followed Stanford's Design Model to walk me through the process of figuring out one solution to this problem. I tackled each of the modes of this process one-by-one over the course of a semester to come up with a polished solution to these difficult questions. Although the initial idea for this was fabricated through a project, I really would like to make it one of my future missions to put these ideas into place and create a few "Teacher Tech Labs" for my own staff. [You can read more about the process of how I came up with this idea here](#). All in all, I want teachers to feel comfortable and excited about learning new technology - not frustrated and unsure. I want them to be able to see the successes of other teachers so that they are more encouraged to implement technology within their own classrooms.