

The Evolution of “Play School”  
My Love for Teaching Hasn’t Changed, Just My Perspective...  
By: Mallory Pickens

Throughout my undergraduate career at Michigan State University I constantly heard the phrase “lifelong learner”. I really didn’t know what this truly meant until I made the choice to further my learning by pursuing a Masters degree in Education. In the teaching profession, just like any other profession, there is always more to learn. I made a promise to myself before I became a teacher that I wouldn’t get “too comfortable” in my profession where I stop pushing myself and that I would challenge my own beliefs and continue learning both inside and outside of the classroom. Following my journey as a lifelong learner, my perspective as both a learner and a teacher has continued to evolve. From playing school in my basement, to being a student in a classroom, to learning about teaching, and to finally applying what I have learned in my own classroom, I have come to the realization that a teaching profession truly is one that encompasses lifelong learning.

In February of my first year as a full-time teacher, I was asked to prepare a professional goals statement as part of my application to the Master of Arts in Education program at Michigan State University. I spent several days thinking about the “right” professional goals and looking back I realize that there is no right or wrong answer. Each year I learn a little bit more about myself, my curriculum, and my talents and things that I need to improve upon and things I want to continue to do each year. My initial focus was placed on what I wanted to accomplish within the classroom. I had hoped that over the course of my Masters program, I would learn different strategies to become a more effective teacher. Although, this goal may have been a little vague, I do feel like I have not only learned different strategies for effective teaching I have also had several opportunities to apply them in my own classroom and discuss them with my peers.

Additionally, I wanted to broaden my interpretation of my lessons and curriculum by using new theories and approaches to accommodate all learners and create meaningful learning experiences. This sounds like an impossible task for all lessons, one that would keep me up writing lesson plans until school starts the next day! In terms of reaching this goal, I learned a very important lesson in my teaching subject matter with technology course; that it is not about throwing as many different technologies or new theories into one lesson or unit, it is about choosing one that suits the lesson and doesn’t take away from the objective of the lesson. A technology or theory is one that should enhance the lesson and build upon already learned skills.

My motivation and over-arching goal of continuing on the path of a life-long learner doesn’t end with my masters. I have acquired more knowledge and resources over the span of this program that I feel I have so many different paths I wish to follow from here. My knowledge is something that I look forward to continuing to share with my colleagues and others in my profession through blogging and professional development opportunities. I will never forget the quote: “2 teach is 2 touch lives 4 ever” – sharing my love for learning and teaching truly can touch the lives of both my students and my colleagues.