

Although I am nearing the end of my Master's Degree program, my learning is far from over. There are many classes and trainings I have wanted to take, but have been so constrained with my Master's work that I haven't had the time. Once I have completed my Master's coursework I will be free to start learning other skills. Ironically, when I think about what I plan to do as a future educator and what I want to learn, I think back to a writing exercise I did a few weeks ago. It asked what I would like to learn if I could download it "Matrix style," instantly having the skills I needed. Thinking about what to write I became overwhelmed with all of the topics that spark my curiosity. Most of the areas that interest me fall within the field of education. However, there are some topics I would like to learn just for the fun of it and to make myself a well-rounded person.

The online learning platform offered at Michigan State has really changed the way I look at learning. In today's society everything is available at the press of a button and now getting an education is no exception. While I have always been a fan of face-to-face courses because of the social component, there is something very appealing about having the ability to do your coursework online. First of all, I know, no matter where I am (as long as I have an internet connection) I can access my work and course information. I find the use of diverse technologies to teach Master's content equally important. The improvements I have made to my teaching from modeling my instructors' methods are substantial. Although my concentration in the MAED program was on math and science, I made sure there was a very strong technology component in the courses I chose. My computer is a gateway to the unknown and I am eager to begin my next journey.

To start off, I would like to explore the 21 things for the 21st century educator. If you are unfamiliar with this program please visit their website here. I have been exposed to many technological tools during my graduate courses that I can utilize in my classroom. These tools have increased student engagement, understanding, and my ability to reach different learning styles. Every class I have taken has introduced me to something new and innovative, so I want to continue to learn about and how to use these tools. The "21 things" showcases technology well suited for the classroom and provides instruction on how to use and implement it. This will give me the time and resources I need to learn new applications and become proficient at technology I have already seen. Each resource has its own module, so as I work my way through the program I will develop skills in 21 different areas of technology!

Another program I have been excited about getting involved with is the Learnport Michigan Virtual University. The program information about this wonderful resource can be found here. The Michigan Virtual University (MVU) offers classes on a wide variety of subjects from Michigan history to adaptations for inclusion students. I like this resource because it has courses tailored directly to grade levels and specific content areas within the grades. It is based on the Michigan standards so, I know the content I am learning can be applied directly to my classroom. I have taken a few sessions of classes offered through the MVU, which is partnered with MSU, and have found them extremely informative. I am very excited about a current course offered for 3rd grade Michigan history. It covers information from the glacial period through Michigan becoming a state in 1837. My students are always interested in learning about Michigan, but not necessarily from a text book. Any way I can make history more real to them is great! Not to mention, glaciers are one of the slow changes to Earth's surface we study in science. I am sure this class will give me plenty of opportunities to teach across the curriculum.

In addition to becoming more knowledgeable in areas I can apply to my classroom, I would like to learn about topics that will enrich my personal life. My husband and I are planning to start a family soon and I am confident when I say that I have no idea what to do. I know absolutely nothing about being pregnant, having a baby, and raising a child. I am sure that many things will come naturally, but as someone who strives to be very competent in what they are doing, this terrifies me. I plan to spend many hours educating myself and encouraging my husband to do the same. I have always been very interested in how the brain works and develops, so it should be intriguing to learn about that process in a baby. There may also be areas that overlap between child development in young and middle aged children. This could prove beneficial in the classroom after all!

As a way to keep my students on their toes, I like to give them instructions in Spanish. My instructions are very basic, mostly because I do not remember a great deal from my high school Spanish courses. I would like to brush up on these skills so that I can teach my students the benefits of diversity. It would be fantastic if my course could be online or through some kind of portable media so the students could share in the learning experience.

My mother is a “master gardener” by trade. Her skills are very obviously learned and not hereditary because I have little to no knowledge of horticulture. I would love to know how to plant a successful garden, be able to determine plant and pest species, and harvest healthy foods from my own back yard. My first choice would be to “learn from the expert,” but my parents live an hour and a half away from me and cannot visit often. The next best thing would be to learn from my mom long distance through skype, face time, or other video chats because then she could see what I am trying to do or show me the proper way of doing something.

Lastly, (for now) I would like to become more skilled in music. My father plays the guitar and I have always wanted to learn how. I am also moved by the piano and will be inheriting the piano from my grandmother’s house that I used to play as a child. Even though I know nothing can substitute formal education, I have found some very interesting applications on my iphone that teach you the very basics of these instruments. They consist of a series of youtube videos and tutorials that move you through the parts of the instruments and how to play them. There will certainly be limitations to my ability since I won’t actually have someone to show me what to do, how to hold my fingers, how to tune it, etc. However, I believe if I am motivated enough to work through it, I can teach myself. The beauty of learning online is that I can pause at any time, come back to it when I want, practice when and where I want, and I can search for help if I get stuck.

I understand that my “wish list” of knowledge is rather ambitious. It will take me many years to attain all of this knowledge and I am sure my list will have grown exponentially by then. However, isn’t that the true definition of a “life-long learner”? Someone who is thirsty for knowledge and excited about the prospect of learning something new is what comes to my mind. My hope is that through all of the knowledge I gain I will be able to pass my love of learning on to my students and my own children.