

At the start of my career in 2006 I did not worry about what I was going to do in the future, instead I stayed focused on the present. I was a new teacher in a satellite school that had 1 room per grade and was a brand new Junior Varsity volleyball coach. I did not have time to worry about the future...just enough time to worry about surviving my new careers. I was overwhelmed with the amount of papers to grade, my practices and game schedule. I survived every small moment in order to look back at my first year with a certain amount of success.

Let me take you back...back to the beginning of my college career. I had never been an overly ambitious person. I finished my college career after an extended period of time, 2 Bachelor degrees, 4 minors, and 7 years later I had completed my student teaching and was ready for a 'real' job. I had fulfilled my student teaching requirements in a kindergarten classroom as well as a second/third grade multiage classroom. I enjoyed my time in the kindergarten classroom, but had found a true love of the third grade classroom. As a beginning teacher, I floated through the years focusing on my own classroom and students. I completed everything that was asked of me, but did not take an active role in any aspect of my school. I still continued to coach and be an active member of my teaching community, but took no leadership role.

The time soon came where I started to consider what I would do in order to fulfill the credit requirements to receive my professional certificate. I decided I would look into a reading Master's since that would benefit me the most in my classroom. I randomly perused different schools' websites trying to find a Master's course that sparked my interest. I stumbled upon the Master's in Educational Technology through Michigan State University.

This program afforded me freedom from books, courses taken in the summer, and the ability to expand my technology background. I wasn't a technology guru, but I was comfortable in many situations. The program was divided into three sections; a certificate, an endorsement, and a Master's program. The endorsement offered 21 credits which would allow me to complete my 18 credit requirements in order to receive my professional teaching certificate and since I would earn more than 20 credits I would earn a pay increase. I was intrigued enough to apply for the program and start that following summer with the first two courses. There are five courses that highlight a significant aspect of my college career through Michigan State University and have made me the leader I am today.

CEP 810 Teaching for Understanding with Technology and **CEP 811 Adaptive Innovative Technologies in Education** were my first two experiences in the Educational Technology program. Right away I realized the impact of these online classes. I was in charge of what I created and how I would use it in my classroom, keeping in mind the use of technology needed to be done in a meaningful way to add to my lessons. It was a complete turnaround from my past college courses that I had completed prior.

CEP 810 course objectives gave a good introduction into using technology in my classroom. We were expected to use Microsoft Office Products to create educational applications. I was able to create a [brochure for my wax museum](#) through Microsoft Word. I created a PowerPoint showcasing my

[welcome information to parents](#) that I was able to share during open houses. I used Microsoft Excel to create a [behavioral tracking system](#) that I used in my classroom. Later, I created a grade book through Excel that I used to keep track of my students grades. In a collaboration effort we were asked to create an analysis of Technology Innovation in the classroom. My group and I created a PowerPoint to showcase the emphasis on empowering students with technology within the classroom and lending importance to teachers to go away from being digital immigrants and move towards incorporating technology fully into their classrooms. I also created a personal growth plan where I had to look at myself and create goals towards using technologies in my classroom. Looking back now I realize that my technology background was truly just scratching the surface of what technology could offer.

This first course was a wakeup call to me. As I was becoming a student again after being away from a school setting for a number of years, I could also still be a teacher. I was able to take what I was learning and create pieces that I could actually use within my classroom. The switch from sitting through a class listening to an instructor, writing papers, and spitting the information back to the teacher via a test to a new way of learning by collaborating with other professionals, creating classroom ready activities, and responding to conversations pertaining to the readings expanded my readiness to learn and helped spark the leader in me.

The second course that I took was CEP 811, this course focused on adaptive innovative technologies in education. This was the first time I had heard of Web 2.0 technologies: blogs, wikis, podcasting, and photo sharing. Learning about blogs opened a wonderful world of possibilities within my classroom. During this class we used Edublogs to share our reflections as our web based collaboration. Using a blog gave me an idea for my own classroom issue that I was having.

My students worked on major writing pieces each semester and were expected to have published pieces at the end of those semesters. My students were not being exposed to quick writing pieces to gain a better understanding of the writing process. I decided to take my new found knowledge of blogs and create a blog that I used to collaborate with a colleague of mine in North Carolina. We spent one day a week on this process. We collaborated as a class on what our writer would talk about and then the writer completed their first draft on the subject. The writer took this writing piece through the writing process within one day and published their piece on our classroom blog. We specifically wrote about our Michigan History standards that we were learning about and used our web based collaboration blog to teach others about those standards. I am hopeful those students were better able to retain this information; I'm unsure of the outcome as I no longer teach at that school.

Blogging as according to Will Richardson's book, [Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and Other Powerful Web Tools for Classrooms](#), is considered one of today's newest styles of writing. He gives some ideas of blogging that stand true for my own blogging experience. First, blogs can be a great tool for learning. Second, blogs can create experiences that cannot happen in a standard classroom. Third, blogs can save the work for later reflection. Fourth, blogs support many different learning styles. Fifth, blogs expand the expertise of the subject being blogged about. Finally, blogs can teach students' new information that they will need in today's society. Reflecting on my classroom blogging experience I had ideas that I

would alter had I stayed at my past school. I am now working on a blog that I can incorporate into my new first grade classroom.

CEP 812 Applying Educational Technology to Problems of Practice was significant in my learning for two reasons. We focused on problems and technology based solutions. [My biggest concern is one that affects all schools in Michigan](#). With our Michigan History standards being moved to third grade, our students have a span of three years between when they learn about Michigan History and when they are tested on that information on the sixth grade MEAP. This was the problem I focused on as it affected every one of my third grade students and myself as an educator. I was able to solve this problem by creating a blog where my students collaborated and taught other students of similar ages about our state's history.

The second significant aspect of this class was the Special Interest Group Proposal (SIG). We were placed into groups and narrowed in on a focus of interest to us all. [My SIG group focused on online gaming](#). Our SIG proposal was that teachers could use online games to support instruction and reinforce the curriculum. We chose many free options because finances for teachers are typically not abundant. We also wanted to find games that would enhance students learning on many levels. This SIG webpage has been a fantastic resource of games for reading, social studies, math, and science. We linked the websites and added a short description of each site and any other important information for teachers at a glance.

While I created this SIG assignment for my CEP 812 course I still use the knowledge I gained in my classroom. I now use gaming in many different aspects. There are times when I use a game to introduce the students to a new topic; this style gets 100 percent student engagement and the students all truly enjoy the anticipation of it. I also use it as a review for the students before testing. I will also set up stations periodically and an online gaming site is always one of the options. Finally, I use online games that have reports e-mailed to me for intervention work. This allows me to monitor my students' activities and keep that information for any team meetings at a later date.

Being in CEP 812 and studying how gaming is beneficial to students allowed me to confidently apply to be a trainer in Compass Learning Odyssey. This program includes lessons, activities, assessments and reports to benefit student growth. As a trainer, I lead my fellow staff members down the technology road to help our students. This program grew from being a small part of our supplementation to being a large portion of how we helped our students. It was the progress monitoring program for our Response to Intervention program and was used daily with all teachers.

Finally, one of the last classes I am going to highlight is **CEP 815 Technology and leadership**. This class had me reflect on myself as a leader. This course made me think like a technology leader and not just as an educator. A quick fix for schools not integrating technology is to purchase the latest technology and hand them over to the teachers. This isn't the way to fix the problems in a school setting. My current school is doing exactly that; they earned a grant and are looking into buying Smart

Boards for all of the classrooms. As a leader of technology, I know that this will not solve problems within our school system.

I wasn't born a leader, but I gained confidence in creating assignments that I could incorporate into my classroom. This turned me into a team member who always took the technology road, which gave me a background that others did not have. Being the person who always turned to technology enabled me to use this knowledge to help others and gain a great deal of confidence while doing it. I was asked by my principal to create PowerPoint presentations in which she then used as a presentation for our school board. I was asked to create online surveys that were sent out to our students' parents, the students themselves, as well as our staff members to better help our School Improvement Team. I helped our Special Education teacher by creating a Google Excel Document to help her and her students' teachers track their students' attendance between classrooms. These are a few examples of how I was able to use technology to help others around me expand on their knowledge.

This role allowed me an expertise that I have been able to use to have my voice heard. I now take a leadership role in most teams I am on. I am an active member of my Professional Learning Community and a member of our School Improvement Team. Some of my ideas have impacted my school as a whole. Had I not had the unique experience that I have with MSU's Educational Technology courses I don't think this is where I would be professionally.

Along with becoming a technology leader I have also become a respected colleague. I was granted the opportunity to visit another school to learn about Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) by my administration. I was asked to attend conferences above others to gain knowledge about Response to Intervention (RtI) and bring that knowledge back to my colleagues. Finally, I was nominated as one of the teachers to attend a dinner where my staff was honored with a 'Teacher of the Year' award.

As I reflect on my courses while completing **CEP 807 Capstone Educational Technology**, I have realized how much I have learned and grown over the past five years. The information gained in each class has helped to make me into the educator I am today. Ultimately, the program gave me the confidence I needed to promote myself as a leader. This learning enabled me to look outside my own classroom to become a leader who shared my knowledge to help promote my own students as well as my school as a whole. I consider these courses to be irreplaceable and would encourage other teachers to look into taking these courses as well if they want to expand on their technology interests.

Education has become a fast changing world. I would rather lead in this fast paced environment, than be led. Even though I am finishing with my Master's in Educational Technology I will continue to take an active role as a technology leader. I will be looking into other avenues to continue to guide myself. I am no longer the passive learner that I was at the start of my college career; I now thrive on being the educator colleagues seek out for guidance. I can credit Michigan State University and this program for many of my leadership roles.