

The Journey Worth Taking

“The journey isn’t always perfect, but always worth taking.” - Kara Goucher

When I initially began my graduate work with Michigan State University, I sought a Masters program that allowed me to work within my limited time parameters and fulfilled my professional desires. I had been a full time teacher for almost three years, and the countdown clock for renewing my teaching certificate was ticking loudly. I was at a fork in my professional journey...but what path did I want to take for my graduate work? What way did I want to pursue with my career?

Unlike many teachers, I did not feel any desire to jump into administration or counseling. I could quite easily picture myself being in a classroom for my entire career, but becoming a reading or curriculum specialist did not sound especially appealing. I wanted to take a path that was less traveled...I wanted to be a trailblazer in a sense and do something that would leave a mark on education.

Recent county-wide funding had allowed local school districts to bring technology to classrooms. There was a distinct lack of training and know-how for most of the gadgets and software that was being implemented unless a teacher happened to be lucky enough to squeak into a training seminar. Technology and computers have been an ever-present part of my life since my early grade school years. I feel comfortable with the reliable changes technology has on society and education. When I stumbled upon MSU’s Master’s of Arts in Educational Technology, I was instantly intrigued. I figured I would take the three courses for the certificate program and decide if this was the course I wanted to set for my professional journey.

With each MAET course I took, my passion for technology was steadfast and I searched for ways to transfer my graduate work into my professional world, especially beyond my classroom. I became known as a techie within the elementary where I worked; someone a colleague could seek out for guidance or for technology questions. The more I found ways to share my acquired technology mind-set, the more I viewed myself as a technology coach or facilitator. My elementary was fortunate enough to have a math coach who was a teacher-mentor who would guide a designated set of teachers through the new math curriculum and standards. I likened my technology work to this position only in a more simplified and informal role.

A clear vision of my dream career evolved over a few semesters in the MAET program. I wanted to be a technology coach for educators and students. I saw myself working side by side with colleagues designing and implementing lessons with technologies to support learners in multiple settings. I dreamed of facilitating students’ exploration and mastery of ISTE standards while they pursued their passions.

Recently, I accepted a position that has enabled me to be closer to my dream career than I dared hope for so soon. I am now a middle school literacy technology specialist.. My new role melds MAET skills and knowledge within the role of educator (as a technology teacher) and media specialist (within the management of the media center). I work with teachers and grade levels to support a newly launched 1:1 Chromebook initiative, troubleshooting, seeking new apps and technology integrations, and whatever else pops up on any given day.

My professional journey as thus far not been the easiest or perfect, but I didn't go into education with the idea that teaching was easy. I'm blazing my own path...and it is worth every step.