

*Learning from my Past, Living in the Present, Hoping for the Future:
All Roads Lead to Education*

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As my graduate program at Michigan State University comes to a close, many thoughts run rapidly through my mind. Where do I go from here? Is this the end of my education or just the beginning? What will I do with this new knowledge and information that I have learned? How can I use it to better improve the lives of my students? How can I share it with my colleagues and peers so that others can be inspired like I have been? I never imagined that I would be part of the age of online learning; never even dreamed that I could earn a Master's degree from the comfort of my own home. Yet, it is about to be a reality. It is an eye opening experience that leaves me excited and hopeful for the future of education and lifelong learning for those that are as passionate about it as I am. I'd like to take a quick walk with you as I reflect on my past and ponder about my future, the future of education, and the future of our children.

My formal education thus far has been one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my life. When I was younger, I had no idea that I would enjoy learning as much as I do. I wasn't what you would call a "supporter" of lifelong learning. I was going to go to college, get the degree that my family told me I should get, and never set foot in another classroom; other than the one I was teaching. My experiences in my undergraduate education as well as my MAED program at Michigan State University have completely changed my opinion and I am excited about the future of my formal education. I have learned so much about myself as learner. Most importantly, I have learned that I don't want to stop here. Though it may be further down the road, I am excited for the prospects of going back to school for my Doctorate and enhancing my education even more. With technology being at the forefront of education, the possibilities seem endless!

My informal education has also made a large impact on my life as a learner and an educator. Some of the most exciting things that I have learned didn't happen from a college class. They happened by being part of a family of amazing educators, learning from my colleagues and peers, and most importantly, learning and experiencing true education from the minds and lives of my students. Being able to get out in the world and work with the youth of today has been the most amazing gift and I look forward to what the future will bring. Technology is at the forefront of education and I am so excited to be a part of this process! I started my journey through technology scared and apprehensive about what to expect and how difficult it would be. I spent many long hours practicing and even more hours going to others for help. It was all worth it in the end, and I am not even close to knowing everything there is to know! What's more exciting is that there will be newer developments for decades to come and I can't wait to be a part of that and involve myself in it as much as possible.

My students' education has always been and will always be my main drive for continuing my education. As a fourth year teacher, I look back often at my very first year of teaching. I was such a novice; so scared about not providing my students with everything they need to be successful. I spent so many long hours in and out of the classroom trying to creativity think up ways to provide my students with the best education possible. Every year has been better than

the last because of my lifelong learning. I develop new ideas every day and reflect upon things that might not have been successful in the past. I feel more confident every year and begin each September with more excitement than the last! Technology has again been at the forefront of this excitement. As we are now in the age of Elmo's, Smart Boards and online and digital education, it is evident that education as we know it has been changed forever. I am excited for the students of today and more excited for the students of tomorrow. The possibilities are endless. Years ago, the idea of that would have been frightening, but as I look back on my path of education, I have a newfound sense of hope.

My hope for the future:

I hope to spend every day thankful for what I have learned, excited about what today has to offer, and looking forward to what I have yet to experience. I hope to continue my education long after my degrees are completed.

I hope that my fellow educators are as excited as I am about the future of education and do their best to stay at the forefront of it all. I hope that they never stop wanting to learn more and take time to appreciate the knowledge they have and share with as many people as possible!

I hope that the students of today go on to be happy, healthy, and prosperous individuals. I don't expect them all to be teachers, or doctors, or lawyers. I just hope that whatever they decide to do, they do it with a passion that makes them excited about the future and hopeful for what is to come. I hope that they experience the magic of learning as I did and encourage others to search for it as well.