

Learning Continues for Those Who Seek It

By: Katy Jain

Even before I enrolled in the MAET program at MSU, I knew that even after my classes were finished, I would never be done learning. One of the most important qualities that good teachers have is an eagerness to learn new things and better themselves for their students. As someone who has taught in an urban area where education really seems to be a low priority, I know that being a well informed, top notch teacher is all the more important. Learning new strategies to engage my students is vital to keeping them in school and on track for graduating. And even though I will be graduating soon and my Masters classes are coming to an end that does not mean my learning stops there.

There are many ways teachers can continue to learn outside of graduate school and I plan to utilize as many as I can as I transition out of this formal online setting. The best part of the Masters of Educational Technology program at MSU is that I have learned about many of these resources through my coursework.

First of all, I will continue to use my RSS reader page to help me collect and sort through online publications concerning education, teaching, and my subject areas of social studies and computer literacy. RSS feeder pages bring the content to you. Then, you can quickly read through headlines and determine which articles are worthy of reading in depth. I do not have to go out and search on my own, the research is waiting for me when I login. This is particularly important in the field of technology which changes daily. I can stay easily informed without having to use too much of my precious time to do so.

Through my coursework I have also learned more about podcasts and virtual meeting software programs. For example the International Society for Technology in Education or ISTE holds an annual conference and offers remote attendance. Thus if flying to the conference is not an option, that does not mean I am left in the dust. I can attend workshops and communicate via moderate chat to participate. Organizations like ISTE promote the use of technology this way. By simply attending a conference online I can learn even more about teaching and learning with technology. I can also keep up to date on upcoming conferences through MACUL, the Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning. I am already excited to see that the Michigan Digital Learning Conference will be in Macomb, MI this fall, a location that is only a short distance from me.

Finally, some of the biggest resources to help me continue to learn about new technology are my colleagues and family. Within my district, I have met several teachers along the way who are equally as passionate about integrating technology into our district. Even though district reorganization has caused us to be placed in other buildings, technology has been a vital part of keeping us in contact and able to share new ideas and new technology tools and resources. Social media is also a great way to share new research and ideas and posting on Facebook and Twitter can get a large number of people brainstorming and collaborating. Just the other day, I posted about a lesson I was considering and expressed my concerns about it. Within minutes I had two other more experienced teachers giving me feedback and suggestions. That is powerful!

I also have to give thanks to my mother and my brother for keeping me on my toes concerning the latest and greatest in technology. My brother is a computer programmer. His knowledge is truly immeasurable and always helpful. He also has access to many new technologies and can tell me the actual usefulness of each new tool or break through. My mother teaches at a local community college in addition to her normal job in healthcare information technology. Often times she is given the chance to try new programs in her classes before I can acquire them myself. As a result, I get realistic advice on the affordances and shortcomings of the technology. There is nothing more helpful than listening to someone tell you, "If *this* happens, then do *this*..." So even though my days of formal education are coming to a close, I will continue to learn by tapping the resources around me and searching out new resources to try. A teacher's job is never done and nor do I want it to be.