

The Future Begins Now

As the completion of my MAET experience nears, I find myself looking towards the future. I will no longer be given articles that push my thinking as I integrate technology into the classroom. I will not always receive feedback on each one of my ideas. I will, however, continue to learn. My time with the MAET program has taught me that my teaching and ideas, like technology, will continue to evolve. By identifying the resources available to me as I exit this program, I am more confident than ever that I can effectively integrate technology and improve my students' learning experience for years to come.

Perhaps the most important way to ensure my future learning is to continue to collaborate with my colleagues in the MAET program. Over the past two years, I have been able to explore a plethora of technologies and consider their use in the classroom. I have studied technology both independently and in groups. I have also had the opportunity to build a network of support through my courses. Aside from the contact information I have collected over the past two years, I also belong to an MAET Facebook group. This group allows students from each year of the MAET summer cohort program to post questions, give ideas, and share encouragement. This is an invaluable tool that I will take advantage of in the future.

The second way in which I plan to advance my learning is through joining my school district's technology team. By joining this group, I will have the opportunity to grow as a leader and share my technology experience with other educators. It is important to me that I have an outlet to share my personal technology experience. Through discussing the benefits of technology integration, I hope to inspire teachers in other schools to begin using various technologies. I am also eager to join this group so that I can benefit from the knowledge of others. This is one way in which I will learn about new technologies, have the opportunity to pilot tools for the district, and be able to reflect on the effectiveness of technology in the classroom.

Finally, to continue learning and applying the best technology practices it is essential that I continue my informal education. I realize now that my education is just beginning. Technology is constantly changing and evolving. It seems that just as I am on the brink of mastering a tool, a newer version appears and I find myself exploring an entirely new technology. Although this could be considered the scariest part of integrating technology, it is what motivates me as a learner. To ensure that I am always integrating tools to give my students the best possible learning opportunity, I must consider the resources that I have available. Mason Public Schools has an entire technology department devoted towards finding and teaching new technologies that support learning. My school also provides each teacher with professional development for subjects of their choice. I am already planning to go to the MACUL 2014 conference, I will learn about the benefits of digital field trips, and I am attending multiple professional development meetings that teach how to best integrate iPads into the classroom. I will also continue to join online learning networks in the form of blogs,

videos, and articles that will allow me to learn about new technologies, reflect on my integration of technology, and push my thinking to become the best educator possible.

Through my journey with the MAET program, I have discovered a lot about myself as a learner. Before beginning this program, I was nervous about the constant changes that technology brings. I wondered: “Why should I even begin to master a tool if in a few years it may become obsolete?” This fear has diminished and is now a major motivational factor in my learning. I am eager to learn any and all technologies that will support the pedagogy and content associated with my lessons. If the tool will benefit even one student and allow him/her to better grasp a concept then I will adapt it to meet the learning needs. In short, any tool that provides a creative outlet and/or a better understanding of a concept is worth exploring. I have also learned that just because a technology is old does not mean it cannot serve a great purpose. By exploring a variety of tools, I am only adding to a bank of knowledge that I can draw from in future years to come.

My overall feelings about integrating technology have shifted throughout this MAET experience as well. While I find it beneficial to have a solid understanding of technologies that are available, I now realize that the content and pedagogy are just as important to my teaching as the technologies that are used. Tools can and should be repurposed to meet the needs of my students. I will no longer choose an engaging piece of technology and build my lessons around that particular tool. The concept of TPACK and finding the “sweet spot” between technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge has become my ultimate goal in my future teaching. I understand that online learning is becoming an option for more and more students who prefer a self-paced course. Through designing my own online learning course, I have become much more aware of the importance of determining pedagogy and content before technology. Technology is only beneficial if it supports the learning goals and is appropriate for the student.

The future is now. It is time for me to use my professional connections, take a leadership role with technology in my school, and join networks that will allow me to remain a life-long learner. My learning experience has only just begun, and I am excited for the future.