

A Journey to Purpose

As I near the end of my experience with the MAET program, I find myself reflecting on the goals I set in the spring of 2011. When I revisited my Goals Statement that I submitted for the MAET program, I was surprised to discover that although it seems like such a short while ago, my beliefs on technology in the classroom have shifted dramatically. I no longer am interested in compiling an exhaustive list of technologies to be used in the classroom, but rather, I find myself constantly asking: “What is the purpose?”

My initial goals for the program were easily attainable. At the time, I thought that being able to engage my students with technologies and learn about new tools for the classroom would be the extent of my learning in the MAET program. I am so incredibly grateful for the opportunity to explore technologies such as Voicethread, Glogster, Weebly, Wikispaces, and many more. My original goals were met by my mastering these tools. My students were more engaged than ever before. They used the tools to advance their learning, and they were utilizing new technologies. While I was excited to have met my initial objectives, it was then I realized that I was missing an important piece of the learning process that I had neglected to include in my Goals Statement.

It was during the Year 2 Summer Cohort that I added a new goal. My colleagues and I were encouraged to find the “sweet spot” of the TPACK model. This encourages educators to find the overlap between technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge. I was confident that I was using a variety of technologies, but I was teaching content based on the technology that was available. Essentially, I was teaching backwards. At this point I set a new goal for myself as a learner and educator. This goal was to consider the true purpose behind the technology: pedagogy and content.

The purpose of teaching with new technologies is to support the pedagogy and content knowledge in a way that promotes an authentic learning experience. I began making advancements in reaching this goal as I created my Dream It project. I quickly realized that by including each component of TPACK, my initial goals of student engagement and teaching technologies followed naturally. If the students are interested in the content because it is relatable and I consider the pedagogy of my learners, technologies can then be selected to support these aspects, allow for communication, and make the learning public. Only once every element has been considered can an authentic learning experience occur.

This journey allowed me to reflect on previous goals and has reshaped my teaching beliefs. Although my journey is ongoing, I realize that in order to create an authentic learning experience, I must first consider the purpose. No longer will I pursue technologies and base instruction on the tools. I will center my teaching on the TPACK model to create the best learning experience possible for my students.