

A True Journey Has No Real End

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There are so many things I want to accomplish in my future. As I get older and grow as a person, this list seems to get longer rather than shorter. Eventually, I want to travel to all fifty states, set foot on every continent (yes, including Antarctica!), read a long list of classic novels, learn to surf, and own a pair of Jimmy Choo shoes. With the exception of buying designer shoes, each of these lifelong goals seems like an adventure, different paths in the journey I'm on. With every experience I check off my to-do list, it seems like I add at least two more newly discovered opportunities. In many ways, my educational and professional journey is also an endless, ever-changing list of learning opportunities.

One task on my list I can begin crossing off is obtaining a master's degree. Taking on the work of an advanced degree whilst teaching middle school students was a daunting challenge. I wanted to make this a part of my journey, not create an endpoint on my professional timeline. So as I begin to check off this undertaking from my list, I'm also penciling in dreams and desires the MAET program has opened my eyes to. With my master's degree I'd love to become a prominent technology leader and expert in my school and amongst the other educators in my district. I know I would miss being in the classroom, though. Having opportunities to teach other teachers how technology can reshape their classrooms would allow me to still have those connections to students and educators. With my master's degree I will feel more confident and willing to present at our district-hosted technology conferences and professional development sessions. Add those to the list.

Because educational technology has slowly (but more quickly in the past few years), woven its way into how students learn and live their daily lives, I've had to find new ways to combine this with my passion for teaching students literacy skills. This task still remains on my to-do list. I'm not sure it will ever be checked off. As technological advances infiltrate almost every aspect of our daily lives, the ways students learn to read, write, and interact with others through tech-centered tools also changes. Continuous questions about my role as a teacher are scribbled into the margins of my journey. "How can I find ways to incorporate new technology tools while still infusing a love for rich, quality literature? In what ways will students experience literacy in the 21st Century? Are there newer, better ways to merge once written words with modern-day texts?" Circled, highlighted, and starred on my list is this: "Find answers to these questions."

In many ways social media, especially Twitter, has been and will be a great platform for finding answers to my questions. By following and interacting with other educators and technology experts, my professional learning network has exploded. When searching for solutions to seemingly unanswerable problems in the classroom or reaching out to authentic experts, Twitter has and continues to be a wealthy source of information. And while interactions on Twitter have helped me cross off a few of my educational chores, it has also spewed innovative ideas and the names of web tools all over my to-do list. If techy-educator tweets didn't make my head spin, the teacher-related boards on Pinterest helped create a "honey-do" list longer than hours in a day. The trick is sorting through all of this knowledge and combining it into a useful, technology-rich learning opportunity. I'm still learning how to do that.

Lastly, and perhaps the most daunting on my to-do list, is the desire to continue my formal education. Even though I love being a teacher, I truly believe this passion stems from the excitement of being a student. If anything, this program has shown me the endless possibilities technology can have on learning. Technology has the ability to bring the world and a relevant, diverse span of experiences to not only me, but educators and youngsters alike. At the top of my list is a task with multiple question marks around it. “???Get a Ph.D???” One of the best ways to keep learning, yet still have ample opportunities to teach others, is by furthering my formal education. Sometimes it seems like I can’t get enough; there has to be others out there who crave such knowledge and have questions that cannot really be answered. Again though, this creates more tasks than check marks.

I hope one day down the road of this journey I’m on, I can flip through the pages of my to-do list and see that I’ve been able to accomplish what many only dream about. My passion for learning about the world, the ways in which literacy and technology skills can spark dramatic change, and my obsession with really expensive shoes keeps me motivated as a teacher, professional, a person, and most importantly, a life-long learner.