

The Unknown to the Known

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Two years ago, in June 2012, much of my life would have been categorized as “the unknown”. At the time, I had already taught in two school districts, one where I taught full day Kindergarten for a year and the other where I taught half-day Pre-K for two years and would not be able to be full time again the next school year. So that summer I was job searching for a full time position and I was not sure what grade level I would be teaching next or for what school district. This also meant that where my husband and I would be living was somewhat unknown as it depended on where I got a teaching job. When I began the Masters program at MSU that summer, I looked forward to the opportunity to do my learning online as it would be easier to work around my work schedule as I was both teaching and working a part time job at the GAP. Yet as much as I wanted to take courses online, this was also an unknown as I had not done so before and didn’t know what to expect.

My goal was to complete the program before my husband and I decided to start our own family. I was very interested in MSU’s Masters of Arts in Education program because I could complete it in just a couple of years, it was available entirely online, and I could choose two learning concentration areas rather than just one. I wanted to enhance my skills in teaching and assessing literacy as literacy is the foundation of lower elementary instruction. I felt that this would be a good opportunity to build on my literacy minor from my bachelor’s degree, but I was most interested in the Special Education concentration. I did not want to teach Special Education but I did want to learn more about it. I was interested in learning about how to best teach students with differing learning abilities and behaviors in my classroom.

After a few courses in the program, I would say that my goal of taking online classes simply out of convenience changed as I began to realize how much I could gain from my professors and classmates in learning new technologies that I could incorporate into my own classroom. I would say that my goals to gain more knowledge in the teaching and assessing of literacy remained the same as did my goal of gaining knowledge in the area of Special Education yet my goals became more specific. Soon after starting the Masters program, in August 2012, I got hired to teach Kindergarten in Allen Park and this would be a position I would remain in for

the remainder of my Masters program (and hopefully well beyond!). Therefore, my literacy goals then became more focused on literacy instruction at the Kindergarten level which at times was frustrating as not all courses applied to early childhood teaching. As I began to choose my Special Education courses, my goals shifted from simply wanting to gain more knowledge about the field to wanting to take classes that would teach me more about Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), and students with very challenging behaviors as these were all things I encountered during my first year teaching Kindergarten in Allen Park (starting Fall 2012) of which I had little background knowledge about.

Now, as I near the completion of my Masters program, I would classify most things in my life and career as “the known”. I have remained in the same teaching position for two years now, my husband and I bought a house and are planning to start a family, and I am confident in my abilities to be successful in online courses.