

Professional Goals... Then and Now

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My journey into my Masters began four years ago when I was completing my student internship and finishing up my final courses in the area of Special Education at Michigan State. I was focused on working with students with disabilities; this has always been one of my top priorities and these classes were the foundation of what ended up being my desire to return to school. Two years later, I was in the middle of my second year teaching and I decided it was time to really start my Masters. I had my eyes set on MSU (of course) not only because of their *stellar* reputation, but also because I had the ability to choose my own courses and create my own experience. I applied specifically for the concentration in P-12 School and Leadership within the Master of Arts in Education (MAED) program. My goals at the time were a bit broad and not exactly crystal clear... I knew that I did not want to teach forever (not that there's anything wrong with that) and that I eventually wanted to get back to school full time at the doctorate level so that I may be a part of education research, education policy, or teach future educators all while concentrating on Special Education and Multicultural Education. I had high hopes that the program would help me find where I "fit in" as a student and a leader in education. In essence, I was relying on the program to help me figure out my long term goals.

I was not let down.

While I still cannot precisely articulate how I want to go about things, like oh- my future, I know what I **need** to do. *I know that I need to be engaged with education and social justice.* Above all else, the MAED program has taught me how to be self-reflective and how to think critically about the interaction between education and social justice issues. I envision quite a few ways this could play out... My number one goal is still to return to school at the doctorate level at a research university and be engaged with education and social justice. I would like to be able to work with schools and teachers to seamlessly incorporate research based practices and techniques into actual classroom and school situations. Eventually, I would also like the opportunity to work with future educators, perhaps as a professor, so that I may work with future students and hopefully as a catalyst for their own interest in the field of social justice education or multicultural education (as many professors have done for me). I had a unique and positive undergraduate and master's experience and, after further education, I would like to pass this knowledge on. Some days my goal is to operate at the building level and work to build a school community that is a pillar for social justice. Short term, I still plan to teach Special Education for at least 2 more years. Down the road, if/when I get to those goals mentioned above, I (and others) wouldn't consider myself legitimate if I did not spend years working at the classroom level.

Whatever may happen, the MAED has laid an incredible foundation for me to continue my work as a teacher and hopefully a leader. I am so grateful for the experiences I have had at Michigan State.