

## To Infinity...and Beyond!

If I have learned anything during my time as a professional educator, it is “to expect the unexpected.” This famous motto has helped me in managing and growing my students each year. When it comes to my plans for the future, however, there is nothing that I have not navigated or planned for. With that thought process in mind, my goals for the future are to further my development as an educator with both students and faculty.

Starting out as a classroom teacher in 2008 at North Saginaw Charter Academy - or NSCA - I made a promise to myself: I would never become complacent or rigid in my practices. My undergraduate work at Michigan State University taught me to see teaching as an evolving art; therefore, I would not be able to become stronger in my craft if I did not adapt to finding and institutionalizing best practices in the classroom. Each year, I have added a different tool for my proverbial teaching belt. Developing my pedagogy to incorporate literacy workshop, formative assessment strategies, and classroom management techniques has helped me to create a learning environment where students feel safe, comfortable, and challenged to bring their best every day.

Each year I have taught NSCA, I have had continued success with student engagement. As I was improving my understanding of teaching, I was also continuing to provide empathy, enthusiasm, and passion into my classroom. As a result, parents and students responded well to me, culminating in me receiving recognition for earning high marks in parent and student satisfaction on a yearly basis. My administration began to notice the work I was putting in, and started asking me to assist with other areas of the school.

From the very first day I was able to fill in for my vice principal, I was drawn into a different aspect of education. I was able to assist other teachers with disciplinary issues, interact with students outside of my classroom, and establish a good rapport with staff. I really wanted to help create the type of school culture I had only previously read about. My confidence really grew due to the positive reviews I was getting.

It was at this moment that I decided to return to the MAED program. My goal was to focus on growing myself as a leader of educators. I also wanted to strengthen my ability to teach literacy to a wide range of students. I took EAD classes, which gave me tangible ideas that I could take back to PD – Professional Development – presentations at my school. For example, we discussed creating book study groups, where teachers would read, discuss, and formulate strategies that could be beneficial to students. Seeing how well my fellow teachers took to this idea really gave me a jolt of energy that had previously been confined to my classroom!

Along with increasing my methodology (in regards to creating a positive learning environment), I also wanted to learn more about how to differentiate literacy to encompass all of my students. The issue in my classroom was not a gross negligence of my struggling readers. Rather, it was that I was not finding ways to challenge my students above grade level. Taking classes like TE 836 provided me an opportunity to fully understand and discuss literature on a deeper level. In turn, I was able to really challenge my

students to examine their thinking. My students last year thrived as a result of MY own aptitude to teach reading at a more advanced level.

If it was not for strategies and best practices learned in the MAED, I would not have been able to procure a job as Literacy Specialist; a job that entails me teaching differentiated workshop for Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as leading teaching learning at an administrative level. My goals aligned to give me a chance to explore a side of education I previously had no desire to take part in. While I plan on finding great enjoyment in my current job status, I also know that to truly become a spectacular educator, you have to grow and adapt with changes. Otherwise, what kind of educator would I be?