Who I Was...

Goal Reflection Essay

In 2019, I began my career as a full time educator in a large school district in Michigan. I decided not to begin thinking about obtaining a master's degree right away, as it was my first teaching job and I was overwhelmed by the thought of beginning teaching and participating in my own learning all at once. When the COVID-19 pandemic rocked our world, I began worrying about job security and money as an educator. That spring, I began thinking about how a master's degree could help me keep my job doing what I love.

When I began applying to the [Master of Arts in Education Program](#) (MAED) at Michigan State University, I was asked to think about professional goals I have, and how MSU's graduate program will help me meet my career and educational objectives. I thought long and hard as to what my professional goals were when entering this program, and to be completely transparent, my personal reasons for beginning the master's program are now hard to admit. I knew having a master's degree on my resume would help me gain respect from fellow colleagues and would help increase my salary in ways I knew I needed. I had never really thought about how obtaining a master's degree would help me gain so much more insight, knowledge, and skills I would be able to carry on with me for my educational career forever.

When pushing those factors out of my mind and truly focusing on the importance of earning my master's degree, I decided that my overall goal I hoped to accomplish by the end of the program was to focus on expanding my knowledge in literacy instruction and assessment. Since I was a young student, I have always had a love for learning and literacy. Now that I have become a first grade teacher, I realize that I can enhance my literacy instruction for my students immensely, with the help of a master's degree.

After participating in a variety of literacy, assessment, and technology based courses throughout this program, I feel I am exiting it as an overall more knowledgeable and well-rounded educator. I have learned how to find my students strengths and weaknesses in literacy, how to successfully assess my students in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and even how to integrate technology into my every day teaching. The knowledge and skills I have accumulated from my time at the MAED program, have not only helped me to become a better educator for myself, but will help all of the little learners that join my classroom for years to come. While obtaining a master's degree "looks good" on my resume and will help my salary increase, what I have learned in the MAED program at MSU is invaluable. An educators job is not only to help their students learn and grow, but also to make sure that they themselves are also learning, growing, and evolving as well.

I am writing this today to hopefully inspire other people to further their education for the *right* reasons. I am hoping my transparency leaves the person reading this thinking about why they may be making the choice to enter a master's program. Sometimes decisions we make in furthering our education may prove our judgement is clouded or help us lose sight of what truly matters. While completing a master's degree may help you gain respect from colleagues or help your salary increase, those factors are not what matters the most in the long run. What matters the most is that you, as an educator, are bettering yourself and gaining knowledge you can use for a lifetime to contribute to society and help others.