

Never Ending Goals

Kathryn Orr

When I was a senior in college at Michigan State University, I dual enrolled in undergraduate and graduate courses, and therefore was accepted into the Master of Arts in Education program (MAED) early at the end of my junior year. This had been a plan of mine since entering college because I had technically entered as a sophomore due to acquired Advanced Placement credits from high school. When applying to the MAED program, I had very little experience in the classroom, but I had already developed an idea of what kind of teacher I wanted to be upon graduation. Therefore, I set two goals for myself that I was determined to achieve through my work in the MAED program: learn how to foster individual student growth and learn methods for incorporating differentiation successfully into my classroom for all subjects.

Throughout most of my undergraduate classes, the concept of focusing on helping individual students grow and reach their full potential through active monitoring, differentiation, and extension activities was one that really stood out to me. When I was in school myself, I felt as though we, as students, needed to achieve pre-set goals rather than just grow from where we began the school year. If we learned the required content early, we were able to play games or sit out from other learning activities meant to reinforce or reteach the information. This led to me view the purpose of school as being to learn what the teachers told me to rather than it being to learn as much as possible. When I was reflecting on my own educational experience, I was realizing that by not participating in education activities solely because I had learned the required content, I was being deprived of opportunities to learn even more and grow as a learner. This realization led me to create these initial goals for myself in the MAED program.

Now that I have been teaching for a few years and am nearing the end of my master's program, I realize that the goals that I had originally set are ones that I feel that I successfully worked on through my chosen course work, however I will continue to maintain these goals for myself as long as I am still teaching. While this sounds like a negative thing since I am not indicating that the goals have been fully achieved, it is really a very positive one. There are always more methods to learn in order to help students grow as individual learners and there are always going to be different approaches that can be taken depending on the students involved, the content being taught, and the resources available to the teacher. Therefore, the goals that I originally set for myself are ones that I will keep for the rest of my teaching career in order to always be growing and learning in my profession. I have the belief that a teacher is never done learning how to improve her or his craft, rather they are continually growing right alongside their students.