

Knowledge Is Endless... Soak It Up!

One goal of my goals as an educator is to create a love for learning in my students to ensure that they want to continue their education. This does not mean they have to go to college, but rather that students understand the importance and value behind having and obtaining knowledge - understanding how this knowledge can help them in the future. To lead by example I have not stopped trying to learn. I started preschool at the age of four, graduated [high school](#) at 18, obtained a [bachelor's degree](#) at 22, earned my [teaching certification](#) at 26, took two years off formal education to learn about and experience the world of teaching, and will be completing my [master's degree](#) at the age of 31. If we want others to follow us, leaders must lead by example. I believe that I live to experience knowledge and growth every day and I can look my students in the eye and tell them how learning can help make them be successful in life. While I currently do not have goals to further my education level to a PhD, I do have smaller goals where learning takes place, such as learning to successfully use a [sewing machine](#) to make my niece play clothes, learning to play the guitar as I absolutely love the sound, and learning how to become the best landlord I can be --- I've heard rental income can be amazing! My students can see that I am constantly trying to learn and better my life, and while this helps me personally, I hope even more that it helps motivate my students to better their own lives.

Age 4 is when my formal education started, but I have to say that my love for learning must have began much sooner. My nickname is [Bug](#). My sister will tell you it's because I used to pick up rocks, find bugs, and eat them. While that may be true, it's not the reason for my nickname. There is a one word explanation: why. Once I began speaking, my favorite word was "[why](#)". I wanted to know and understand the world around me a little bit better. It's comical how many family videos exist, and in each one you can find me, bugging all of the adults, asking the question "why," trying to understand what was happening and in one example why zebras have stripes. The same question over and over again can be considered annoying, hence the nickname my father gave me, bug. I have never disliked my nickname, but rather have been proud every time I heard it. It's a constant reminder of how learning is important, even if it can be annoying and difficult sometimes.

Gaining my Master of Arts in Education from Michigan State University has been one of the proudest moments of my life for several reasons. First, because it makes my nickname giver, my father, extremely proud as I am third generation Spartan. Second, because no one else in my family has completed a master's degree. Third, because my students see me, see the value, see the hard work, and gain an appreciation of knowledge. Lastly, because this particular program allowed me to choose courses and focus areas, it allowed me to have a say in my learning. This resulted in personal success - I believe there is value and increased motivation when there is choice, connections, and when learning applies to a person's life. However this does not mean the process of gaining a masters has been flawless and perfect, rather it has been annoying and

difficult at times. I have spent many hours not playing with my dog, not going to sporting events, not hanging out with friends, because I had to stay home and read, make posts, process information, group chat, and complete writing and project assignments to turn in for my courses. Learning takes time and sometimes that can be frustrating. It can be easy to fail at education because it's difficult, I'm proud of myself for pushing through the challenges along the way. There is value in education, there is value in the process of learning. I found value in learning at Michigan State University through three impactful courses: [CEP 820](#), [CEP 817](#), and [ED870](#).

I think one of the most influential courses I enrolled in at Michigan State University was CEP 820 (Teaching Students Online). This course allowed the the opportunity to create a [flipped class](#) using materials that I currently use while teaching. When I could see that this class applied to my life I instantly was motivated to complete assignments and read more articles. This deepened my opinion of the classes I teach, my students need to understand how the knowledge I am teaching them applies to their life and how it can help them be successful later in life. I spent several hours [developing a class](#) on [Weebly](#) that allowed my students to learn background information about short stories during their own time, hopefully at home, so that time spent in class could be used to process, discuss, and check for understanding. Throughout this process I learned how much time, effort, and knowledge is needed in order to be a teacher of an online class. I originally thought that it would be easy but quickly learned that is not the case at all. Teaching online takes a lot of preparation, especially up front, in order to ensure success of the students. It also takes talent in developing communication and clear instructions. Many hours are spent communicating with students online, and can often lead to communication after regular school hours, depending on how accessible the teacher wants to be to his or her students. I think that this course allowed me to understand that you cannot just wing an online course but rather need to develop it with other teachers and you need to be very critical of each creation step to ensure maximum success for students. This course taught me patience for the design process and also patience for my students in their educational learning.

Another influential course I took at Michigan State was CEP 817 (Learning Technology Through Design). I believe this course allowed me to reflect on what I'm doing in the classroom and what I should be doing in the classroom to help my students become successful. As an educator I know it can be easy to get stuck in modes of repeating our teaching strategies, but CEP 817 forced me to look at each student individually. I now have a deeper understanding of the importance of reviewing my teaching, adjusting my lessons, and building relationships with my students. My current generation of teachers needs to understand the best way to educate our students is to using a process of evaluation and reflection. Educators, including myself, need to step back from our daily routines and find our personal flaws as well as the flaws in the educational system. To help us with this process we need to understand and execute the processes of [design thinking](#). Before taking CEP 817 I was not aware of design thinking. If I

noticed a problem in the classroom I would most likely blame my students for their lack of motivation to study, to interact, or to get good grades. I would see issues at the surface level blaming students for being lazy, but I was not fully understanding why students were lazy. I would not dive into my student's busy lives to figure out why they did what they did in my classroom, I would just continue to be frustrated. I would research ways on the internet to solve their lack of motivation in the classroom as well as talk to other teachers to see how they were getting students to be actively involved in their lessons and content. This effort is better than not trying at all, but through CEP 817 I was able to dive into a new strategy called design thinking. This is a process to help people find solutions to problems, not only in the education world, but also in general, for example to develop the best possible product. Design thinking taught me to look deep into student actions, develop empathy, use resources around me to find answers, and to keep asking the question why in order to find the best solution or motivating factor. Through CEP 817 I learned many facts about design thinking and was able to walk through each stage, learning what was important to take away, and how I could use each stage to better my teaching and thinking processes.

Even though I am still in the process of completing ED870 (Capstone Seminar) I truly believe this will be one of the most useful courses throughout my Master of Arts in Education at Michigan State University. I believe that I have spend hours reading, completing assignments and projects over the past three years, and I struggled to find meaningful artifacts to prove the knowledge I gained because my materials were not organized, until now. This course allowed me to create something to display all of my knowledge I've gained. It allowed me to process and think about how my time at MSU influenced my teaching and helped me to realize how much I have grown as a teacher. I have developed a website all about me for my students, parents, and administrators. While I'm not really trying to sell myself and I am currently in my dream job, I do love the opportunity to share with my students that I value education and that when I give them homework, I've had homework to do as well. Again, it's the whole idea of leading by example. This course changed the way I see my responsibilities as a teacher. Often I see students come into my class, learn, leave, and forget. I hear from other teachers in my building who teach the next level English class say the students don't know how to make a bibliography page or they don't know how to develop an introduction to their paper. This is a struggle for me because I know that I have taught them these skills, and I'm not sure where theses skill went. So, I can see the importance for students to create a similar website throughout their time spent in classes at the high school level which could be turned into an exit portfolio when they graduate. This could be used for reference and personal growth, but also to help students get in to their dream college/university. Reflecting on your learning can create positive gains in education.

These three courses have positively impacted me as a teacher. However, I believe I gained tips, ideas, strategies, lessons, talent, and practice from all of the courses I took at

Michigan State University. Each one taught me something special I can implement into my teaching or my classroom. I've gained more patience for students who struggle with learning based on a deeper understanding for why they may have a difficult time. I've gained time management skills and an even deeper level of intrinsic motivation and discipline by completing a completely online program. I've gained practice with successfully using technology in the classroom with students and parents. I've gained an education. I am extremely proud to be able to say that I have earned a Master of Arts in Education from Michigan State University. I believe I am a role model for my students, I have shown them what it means to gain an education and how it can impact their lives. Education is the key to success, therefore students need to stay hungry for knowledge. Going through this program has allowed me to think about how I approach my job and how I see my responsibilities. I understand that it's my job to help my students see value in their education, it's my job to help students learn how to interact with technology appropriately, it's my job to help these students develop a love for learning and knowledge. Go forth and learn!