

A continuo journey...
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While completing my undergraduate coursework, we were required to take instructional technology courses in order to meet the requirements for our degrees our freshman, sophomore and for secondary (and K-12 majors) a class our junior year. There were also electives that were offered for instructional technology, in hopes that we would complete a course after graduation to earn out PA Instructional Technology Specialist Certificate from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. There is such a push for technology in schools that I decided to take these elective courses. Through taking these elective courses there were opportunities to work as technology interns at area school districts. I decided that this was something that I was interested in so I would be able to learn from the technology coaches. I remember going to my interview with the assistant superintendent who told me that there was a 50% chance that I could have a job for the next school year if I did a good job. Unfortunately with budget cuts and no open positions in the department, that wasn't a possibility. However, I did develop an interest in technology in the classroom. I was able to research and find information for myself that I could share with the teachers and it allowed me to apply my learning, collaborate with teachers as well as broaden my learning.

With the job market being competitive in PA and the lack of jobs being available, especially eastern PA where I am from, there is a push to go to grad school. However, it is a double edged sword since its possible to buy yourself out of a job. There are two things that educators and administrators recommend to go to grad school for: educational technology and special ed. So I decided to go for educational technology and I would take the graduate course at Duquesne to receive my certificate.

As I am sitting in my final Instructional Technology class before student teaching, I am researching schools to go to for grad school. Duquesne has a 2 year program, but I wanted to get as much out of the program as I could and I didn't believe that Duquesne could do that for me. I was searching for programs that I could complete online. I looked at Penn State, University of Delaware and then I stumbled upon MSU. I read about the school of education and how it was one of the best programs in the country and I immediately decided that was where I wanted to be. After taking the summer class at Duquesne, I applied and was accepted to begin in the Fall 2012.

When I started classes at MSU I didn't have a teaching job. I decided that I would take 3 classes each semester and complete the program by Summer 2013. I was enrolled in the certificate classes first. I felt very frustrated because we were learning ideas to use in classrooms, but I didn't have a classroom to apply these ideas in. In my CEP 810 class, I had to create a technology plan for myself, but I didn't have a job. All of my projects and assignments that I did, I had to make lessons for the class that I didn't have. However, CEP 810: Teaching for Understanding with Technology was very

influential on me during my time at MSU. I was lucky enough to be able to work on my Special Interest Group project with two other Spanish teachers. It was very exciting for me because I only ever had one other Spanish teacher in any of my undergraduate classes so it was nice to work with people within my content as well as teachers that were working. For our project, we research how to use social media in the world language classroom for different topics such as connecting to native speakers, teach culture and foster a community of learners within the global community. This class was also very influential for me because I was able to watch other SIG project presentations and learn more about topics such as portfolios. This class also had weekly meetings online so it was nice to be able to talk to my classmates, since most communication is through discussion boards and e-mails.

In December 2012, I was lucky enough to find a Long-Term substitute for a teacher on maternity. I taught four sections of Spanish 2 and two sections of Spanish 4 Dual-Enrollment (Spanish 201&202 at a local community college). I was very excited to be able to implement what I was learning, but I also knew that it would be difficult to have my first full-time teaching job and be in grad school full-time.

In the Spring I took two classes that were very influential on me professional and personally. The first class was CEP 817: Learning Technology by Design. This was a very interesting class, yet very difficult class for me. It was hard to keep up with the discussion boards since they were more like conversations instead of individual posts. We learned about McCloud's 6 principles of good design and applied it to designing an online course, the Big Kahuna project. This class was one of the most challenging classes for me that I have taken thus far in my educational career. It was a very rewarding class because I was able to teach difficult concepts in the Spanish language, through an online course. I had to find different means and representations for the students to be assessed, taught and given meaningful practice. I had to pay attention to the "finer details" and the class was very focused on what website design looked like. It was great to get feedback from my fellow group mates weekly about my course site as well as collaborate with them to complete assignment about each of the principles of design. We were able to give each other critical feedback, but it also helped me to make the best site possible.

CEP 820: Teaching K-12 Students Online was also a very rewarding class for me. This course was about using Learning Management Systems (LMS) to create an online course. We first learned about the different learning management systems and their capabilities. I used BlackBoard in college and while I was student teaching, but this was my first time that I would be creating a course completely online. We had to figure out which LMS would be most conducive for what we wanted to do. I am a world language teacher so I wanted to make sure that I was be able to have speaking assignments and Haiku allowed me to do so.

Once I decided on my LMS, I had to decide what to teach. I decided to tackle the beast that is the Spanish subjunctive mood. I was going to be teaching it to my Spanish 4 DE students during the time that the course would be completed. This helped me because I had practice and powerpoints for the students that I was able to embed onto the course site. I also developed new content and re-did lessons that I didn't think that worked. I was able to create a course that would take about 8 weeks online. I was very proud of myself and it taught me to not procrastinate as much, which is a huge personal issue for me. It was great to get weekly feedback from my instructor and I was extremely proud of my course because he had so much positive feedback for me. These online courses are so important because there are so many schools that are completely online and that are offering online/hybrid courses for their students. It is important that I know how to teach these classes online. While I was completing my LTS job, the school was offering classes online and hybrid classes for certain classes and the world language department had a few. The teachers felt so unprepared for these classes because the district was not doing too much to help them prepare for it. They had some professional development, but they were not comfortable with having to teach a class online. I am very happy that I was able to create courses online so that it would help me to be able to do this if the time comes that I will have to teach online, which is probably sooner than most teachers think.

Another course that I was able to learn a lot in was the Capstone class, CEP 807. This allowed me to continue building my professional portfolio from MSU and pushed me to make it the best possible. This course is very reflective, so it allowed me to reflect upon what it is that I actually learned. It also is helping me to be able to better market myself, which is something that I need to work on because I don't "talk myself up" enough. I was also able to work with Weebly more, since I used it to design my course in 817. Eventually, I would like to add my portfolio link to the bottom of my resume upon completion of this course and my final semester.

This course has allowed me to reflect on what I have actually learned as well as be proud of my accomplishment of graduating from grad school at 23. This course has allowed me to take what I learned during my time at MSU and put it on display for the future. I was able to make an annotated transcript, showcase my work as well as write essays. This will be another tool that I have on my belt while walking into my future interviews.

While at Duquesne, each semester of our technology classes we had to add more information to an essay of what we learned in that course and semester in order to become a leading teacher and a technology expert. We had to also rate ourselves on a scale of our competencies from PDE. Upon graduation, I was able to look at that essay and see how far I have come. I was able to see all of the things that I have learned and how my competencies were able to change and move in the direction of an expert. Classes at MSU will be over in 3 short weeks and through this portfolio, I am able to look at all of the things that I have learned in the past 9 months. I am able to see all of the assignments that I have completed and all of the things that I have accomplished all in one place and accessible for future employers because it is online.

This site helps me to take ownership and be proud of my work, and this is something that I want to instill in my future students.

Teaching and technology are constant growing process because I will continue to learn about new technologies, come across new people that I can share ideas with and new and innovative ways to teach with technology. I will be able to apply what I learned through MSU and the infamous TPACK, to what I will be teaching in the future. I will be able to help teaching appropriately integrate technology into their classrooms. I have been able to grow so much personally from having such a demanding course schedule along with my personal and professional life. I have also been able to develop professionally because I am very comfortable with technology and I know that I could be an asset to any school district for this very reason. With the upcoming school year quickly approaching, I am not sure where the road will take me for the immediate future, but what I am sure of is that my learning and professional development as a teacher and technology expert is a continuous journey.