

“No Matter the Grade, Education is Education”

When beginning this online journey of obtaining a masters degree in Elementary Education, just two and a half years ago, I would have never believed you if you would have told me where I am currently in the teaching profession. When writing my goal statement in the spring of 2011 for entrance into this program, I was an All Day Kindergarten teacher loving the joy and excitement that five-year-olds bring to my classroom every day. Now exiting this program, I reflect as a fourth grade teacher who STILL loves the joy and enthusiasm brought to my classroom by the wonderful students in my class this year. The jump from kindergarten to the fourth grade this year was a huge one! Everyone I tell my story to seems to agree. There are such great differences between students entering an elementary school and those preparing to leave the building and move on to middle school. From the curriculum to daily routines, my career and the teaching profession has changed greatly since I began this educational step. The wonderful thing I have noticed, after reflected back upon the past two years is that no matter what grade I a teaching, I enjoy the children, the learning process, and the enrichment I am adding to their lives. The MAED program has really grown and changed with me, and it has definitely helped me shape the classroom I am in charge of today. No matter what class I was taking, there was always room within it to think about my students, without worrying about their age or grade-level; education is education, and I love it!

In the goal statement I constructed just two short years ago, I included the following declaration, *“I cannot control this desire to increase my skill set as an educator and dive deeper into my understanding of the educational process.”* This thinking remains the same. Now that I have almost three years of teaching under my belt, I feel no need to rest and relax. The teaching profession is always changing and new ideas, techniques, and programs are always emerging to make the learning process better. It is my new goal from here on out that I pledge to myself, never to become stagnant in my teaching routine and daily interactions with children. I must always strive to be a better educator and provide the students in my classroom with the most recent, effective practices and experiences, no matter how many years I have taught. I still feel the urge to “dive deeper” and “increase my skill set,” these are two things that have not changed.

When I began pursuing my Masters degree, teaching literacy was, without a doubt, the number one focus of my kindergarten classroom. We spent more time each day working on literacy-based experiences, than probably anything else. Literacy is important across grade levels, and across the curriculum, but nothing made more sense as a Kindergarten teacher, than choosing a literacy focus for my Masters degree. In my past goal statement I wrote, "Literacy is a subject that stretches across all curricula and from Pre-Kindergarten to High School and beyond. Literacy is everywhere, without a strong foundation during Elementary School, you are lost." I still agree with the statement that I wrote two years ago, but I never thought how applicable it would be to me as a teacher today. Having taught two years of kindergarten and one year of fourth grade now, I realize that Literacy really is everywhere in my classroom, in every subject, and in every one of our lives outside of the classroom. Literacy is a huge component of the fourth grade curriculum, not just in the lower grades. My experience over the past two years, and the coursework I have completed have definitely developed a stronger appreciation for the need for fantastic elementary literacy teachers; teachers who are passionate about the subject and strive for continuing education in order to be the best educators possible within this important subject area.

A lot has changed in the past two years- a new school, a new grade, a new principal, and of course many new students. Despite the changes, I have grown and developed as a professional in many ways. Adding new techniques, ideas, and philosophies to my teaching tool-kit through many wonderful classes has been a great source of growth. I've also grown while speaking and connecting with other educators around the country who have been on this same educational journey. But most importantly, I have grown professionally with my experiences inside the classroom; reflecting back on these today, I can honestly say that I love this profession and wouldn't choose anything else. No matter what grade I am teaching, education is education, I love instilling that passion for learning within each my students on a daily basis.