

George McDowell
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Goal Reflection Essay

I came into teaching because of a love of learning. After completing a Masters degree in History, I wanted to inspire and instill that love of learning in others. As I entered into the field, I found that teaching can be messy, but it is through that mess, we develop our craft. Teaching is a wonderful human activity. As teachers we bring our own baggage of experiences, preconceived notions, learning styles and knowledge and meet our students with their own backpacks as well. There was a lot to learn, and I found myself focusing less on acquiring knowledge of content but knowledge of how to be a better teacher. My career path twenty-five years later shows a variety of experiences and a need to continually learn. Although an autodidact at heart, the Masters of Arts in Education degree was an opportunity to learn and reflect in an excellent program while continuing my own teaching. As I reflect on my goals written in the Spring of 2012, my primary objective was to grow professionally as a master teacher, developing my craft and also lead other faculty. I chose this program because I could focus on two concentrations, School Leadership as well as Learning and Technology.

I have sought to provide students with complex, authentic opportunities to explain, interpret, apply, shift perspective, empathize, and self-assess to deepen their understanding. Now that access to technology for students and teachers has moved to more digital resources, mobile platforms, and interconnectivity, I see more opportunities to achieve my goals and even to allow more differentiation of student learning. Moreover, with improved applications for immediate creativity, expression, organization, and synthesis, my teaching has evolved to being more of a guide and fellow learner than ever before. My lessons are now built more around inquiry and a deeper understanding with differentiated instruction as a result of this access. This program has led me to be more mindful in how I approach learners of today in designing better curriculum units, learning more effective use of digital resources, and to helping other faculty in my department and division as we move forward as a school.

In my studies, I have learned that school leadership needs to be deliberate in creating a shared vision for learning and meeting student needs. Unfortunately, in my experience, I have seen that as teachers we are too comfortable teaching in isolation with the door shut. With increasing expectations and demands on teachers, the fast-pace change of society with new digital tools, why should we pursue this endeavor alone? I have learned through my Masters concentrations that schools must develop a supportive environment as well as create opportunities and provide time for inquiry, collaboration and reflection. Moreover, I now feel more empowered to address change, as well as collaborate, share, and bring others along the journey of self-development and school improvement.

This degree was a wonderful step of my path of lifelong education and has validated what I've been learning on my own through my own reading and personal learning networks. I have enjoyed the online format of the degree which has allowed me to see the benefits of online and blended learning for myself and others. For my own learning style, online learning provides time and pace for me to inquire and reflect and then create, express, and share my learning with peers and professors. I see the benefits of online learning such as flexibility, collaboration, interactive and active learning in synchronous and asynchronous formats. This online experience has led me to become coordinator of online learning for my current school. I have also rediscovered a joy in writing and research and may continue towards a doctorate degree. I am thankful that I had this wonderful opportunity to focus my studies for a period of time and feel more confident as I continue on my journey wherever I may roam.