

Goal Reflection

Upon beginning my Master of Arts in Education in summer 2019, I had set several goals for my own professional growth. For most of my teaching career thus far I have worked with majority English Language Learner (ELL) student populations. While I had always done what was best for my students, at the start of my program I felt that I needed to refocus on true best practices, especially for those ELL students. Additionally, I wanted to learn more about actual literacy assessment and the research behind it. For these reasons, my main goals upon entering my master's program were to diversify my instructional methods as well as gain a more concrete understanding of literacy assessment techniques.

Since writing those goals, and submitting my application to Michigan State University, one-and-a-half school years have passed. While this may not sound like a lot to those outside of education, teachers understand how much can change within that short span of time. While I still believe my original goals are important, and I have explored these topics in depth throughout my studies, my current goals as an educator have shifted focus. Whereas previously my professional goals were very data-oriented, I find now that I am more focused on the interpersonal aspects of teaching. Using teaching strategies that align with best practice will, of course, ensure that more students benefit from my classes; however, I also know that establishing strong relationships with my students can help accomplish the same feat. One of my current goals is to establish more meaningful relationships with my students, in order to support them as learners and as people. Also, while I still recognize that assessment is of the utmost importance to understanding where students' areas for growth and areas of strength lie, I see that students' engagement and feelings of inspiration in my class are even more vital to the overall wellbeing of my students.

There has been a clear shift in my goals from the start of my program until now, my final semester. I would like to think that this evolution was fueled simply by my own desire to do what is best for the students that come into my class each day, but I know that my personal motivation is only one contributing factor for this change. My priorities have also changed thanks to the many generous and insightful colleagues I have worked with over the years. I have seen firsthand the impact their positive relationships with their students have had. After all, we did not get into this profession just to instruct and assess students - we became teachers because we love to work with young people and help them navigate some of the least certain years of their lives. Ultimately, my hope for each of my students is that they leave my room feeling cared for and having opened their minds to new experiences and ideas.