My Career Change
By: Jason Simpson

I feel that the one thing I learned about myself is my constant ambition to be a lifelong learner and my drive to want to instill this in my students. We as educators need to be constantly passionate about learning in order to inspire our students to do the same.

After my master's program and teaching experiences my goal as a teacher is to push literacy learning through the use of technology. I feel that reading is the basic building block to attaining any other knowledge and with the combination of literacy and technology; teachers can finally reach students with varying learning styles through one lesson. I had just graduated from Eastern Michigan University and obtained a Bachelor's of Science degree. My major is in Special Education teaching with an endorsement in Cognitive Impairment and my minor was in Elementary Education. I worked as a Network Administrator for a school district since January 2000 and it wasn't until 2008 I decided to switch career paths and go into teaching. I was inspired to go back to school by my past interests as well as by the teachers I worked with throughout the

years. In August 2012, right after I graduated with my undergraduate degree, I started back the following semester at Michigan State University to achieve my Master of Arts in Education Technology.

The past two years have been packed with learning, changing, and achievements. With my studies I have learned a lot about technology and with my background in technology I surprised myself as to how much I discovered that I didn't already know. My graduate courses gave me a completely different outlook on teaching with technology. Everything I knew about technology was correct, however I had to evolve in the way I applied the use of technology. I needed to think more creatively, consider the student's preferences, and their way of seeing things.

Three courses that have really made a difference in how I use and teach with technology are highlighted on my Showcase page (http://jsimpson22.weebly.com/showcase.html). They are: **TE 846 –** *Accommodating Differences in Literacy Learners*, **CEP 820 –** *Teaching Students Online*, and **CEP 812 –** *Applying Educational Technology to Issues of Practice*. Both courses **CEP 820** and **CEP 812** stand out in my

educational path because they really taught me how to differentiate my use of technology to fit my audience. They taught me to use technology in a way unfamiliar to me. I can honestly say that I learned an immense amount during these courses.

I learned how to choose and evaluate technological tools, know which tool worked best in the situations at hand, and how to accommodate the technology tools to fit the audience I am intending to instruct and the content I want to include. While creating an online learning environment for my students, I found a new educational channel to use for the students who have trouble learning in the traditional way. Each class taught me in great detail how to use technology to educate varying audiences in different settings.

While working during the course **CEP 820**, we also had to investigate a variety of course management systems. It was then, that I had my first experience with Weebly.com, a technology tool that I have come to use extensively. I was assigned to create an online classroom for my students. This website was to be the central focus of the chosen

student content instruction. During **CEP 812**, I had the goal of creating instructional and technological ways of presenting a professional development to staff. Our group had to explore ways to incorporate technology in a professional development. We designed an instructional video about the features of Google Documents by using a "Flipped Instruction" model. The video walks you through creating, naming, and sharing a Google Document. It also shows how you can work collaboratively with peers on the same document online to brainstorm ideas producing a more effective document.

Finally, the third class that has really made a difference in my teaching career is **TE 846**. Within this class the focus of the learning is to learn how to teach literacy to all of students. Once I began teaching this became a struggling area for me to teach. With this class I have learned how to approach teaching literacy differently and resources to use to be effective. This class actually taught me to approach teaching strategically no matter the content focus. I have also gained the knowledge on how to break my teaching down into smaller parts and strategies. I feel that it is important to create an educational

environment that not only reaches all of our students, but also prepares our newest generations for a technology driven future; a future where their jobs have not been invented yet.

Career Focus

Teaching for the future is one of my greatest drives on why I became an educator and why I stay updated on the latest resources available for my students. Soon after I began my master's program, the district I have been working for offered me an elementary special education position. I was very apprehensive of the transition, but every change can be scary at first. It had to be a very quick and smooth transition in which I had to shift my entire focus after 13 years as a Network Administrator. Throughout my first year of teaching I am thankful that I was still attending classes at MSU because it helped with my focus and troubleshooting my struggling areas. As I said earlier, my latest course **TE 846** has given me an immense amount of information and resources to use with my current caseload of students while my other two impact courses have helped me to individualized instructional programs that are tailored to my students individualized needs using

technology that is engaging.

In conclusion, during my journey to obtain my MAET degree, I had many challenges in both my academic and career paths. I have learned a lot from my courses, my academic interactions with peers and my personal experiences in the classroom with students and staff. One thing I learned about myself along the way is that I know now that I cannot stop being a learner because my courses are over; I need to become a motivated life-long learner for my students. I cannot be an accurate teacher without being current and knowledgeable in strategies and new ways to teach. I have learned new ways to be a better teacher and student.