

Future as a Learner

Katherine Hinkson

In my goal reflection essay, I wrote about **giving every student a voice**. The goals of advocating for every student and helping each student embrace his own voice help shape my dreams for my future in education. **For the the upcoming school year**, one of my goals is to try as much as possible to “flip” my classroom, and put more responsibility on students. I also thought about how completing my master’s degree entirely online influenced me as a learner, which helped me develop new goals regarding **the use of technology in education**. Besides these, I want to learn more about behavior management and **how to motivate students** to achieve their dreams—in and out of the classroom.

One of the beautiful aspects about technology is that we are able to do things now that we would have never dreamed of only a few years ago. This year, I struggled to relate the concept of “dial up” Internet service to my fifth grade students. Many of them were appalled when I shared that I didn’t get my first cell phone until ninth grade—and it didn’t even have texting! Though it has its drawbacks, the incorporation of technology is able to **open new doors** for students, particularly those with disabilities. Part of my responsibility as a teacher highly qualified in Special Education is to help open those doors for as many students as possible. For one of my classes during my coursework, I read a book called *Carly’s Voice*, which was about a girl with Autism who now has a successful blog and thousands of Twitter followers. Her story is incredibly inspiring to me, and captures the power that technology can help to unlock in non-traditional ways.

In addition to incorporating technology into my lessons, I feel strongly about teaching students about **using technology responsibly**. This phrase has a wide variety of implications. To me, using technology responsibly is about teaching students academic and social integrity, that is, the correct and appropriate uses for different technologies. As the influence of technology continues to grow, it becomes difficult to separate our personal and professional lives. As silly as it may sound, I feel it is important to discuss with my students whether or not texting your boss is appropriate. Should you follow your professor on Instagram? The answers to these questions may seem obvious to us, but to a generation so infused with technology, how will the boundaries change? Furthermore, how should we as teachers adapt our practices to accommodate students who are more comfortable with iPads than books? These are discussions I look forward to having with colleagues and with my students in the future. I feel that having earned my graduate degree entirely online, it is my responsibility to have discussions about online learning and its impact on the future of K-12 education.

Throughout my graduate coursework, I enjoyed learning about behavior management and the **psychology that is involved in teaching**. I would love to spend time observing and learning about various methods to motivate students,

especially those who haven't had positive experiences with school in the past. One of my most rewarding experiences thus far was forming a close relationship with a student who was traditionally a troublemaker. Though we started the year off with much desk slamming and eye rolling (him—not me), we eventually formed a close bond, and he grew leaps and bounds during the school year. I grew to love this child deeply, and wanted to help him change his image around the school. I routinely sent him on errands to the office, checking in with our secretary for behavior reports. I would tell her that my goal was for her to love him like I did. This student truly changed me as a teacher, and I began to seek out relationships with students who I knew were typically behavior problems. I eventually volunteered to change grades from fifth to eighth, knowing that I would be encountering much more challenging behaviors. Going forward, I want to continue to learn how to inspire and motivate students, especially those who have struggled in the past.

My goals for the future are lofty and varied, but they represent my passions and interests as they have developed through my time at Michigan State University, as well as in my own classroom. I have been fortunate to have been supported, encouraged, and challenged through K-12, undergraduate, and graduate programs. Now, as I look into my future as an educator, **my goal is to give each student the support, challenges, and encouragement they need** to discover their own unique voice.