

## Giving Every Student a Voice: Goal Reflection Essay

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Two years ago, I was unsure whether or not I wanted to continue in education. I had just finished my student teaching and was debating between pursuing an advanced degree in either Social Work or Education. One thing I did know was that I wanted to be in a position to advocate for children. My favorite part about working with children was the close relationships I formed. I loved learning the subtleties and complexities of each child. I knew that I wanted to challenge myself to learn what would help each child meet his potential.

After a year of teaching 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I chose to focus on Special Education for my master's degree because I believed it would make me a better teacher for all of my students. During my first year of teaching, I often felt that I lacked the tools and resources to meet the needs of my diverse students, especially those receiving Special Education services. Looking back now, only a few weeks away from receiving my degree, I know that I made the right decision. Throughout my experience in the MAED program, I learned about and practiced a variety of teaching and behavior management strategies. Also, the communication and collaboration skills I developed in this program are valuable tools that I can use in the future to make sure all of my students' needs are met.

One of the greatest challenges of working with children is that they are not always able to express what they need to meet their potential. Furthermore, they might not know what they need, whether it is an assessment modification, social need, or assistive technology. Because of my experiences in the MAED program, I feel prepared to take on the unique challenges that every student presents. My competency as an educator of students with Special Education needs has grown tremendously, which makes me a better teacher for all of my students.