

FUTURE AS A LEARNER

As I am nearing the end of my Master's program, I do not feel I am nearing the end of my education and learning. I believe every educator should be a lifelong learner. How can we instill passion and a love of learning when we are not practicing what we preach? Looking back on my childhood, I realized at a very young age that I loved to explore and learn new things. My mom used to joke that I would be a lifelong student and be in school forever—in a sense, I guess she was right! Even though I will complete my Master's program and be done with formal schooling, it does not mean my learning comes to a sudden halt. I intend on being a lifelong learner by taking advantage of traveling, collaborating with colleagues, attending conferences and professional development, attending technology seminars in order to stay up to date on current teaching strategies, techniques, and trends.

I am a firm believer in teaching my students through authentic learning activities, which is how I intend to continue my education. Traveling and visiting new places is a great way to learn and expand on my current knowledge. For example, I used to think that United States history was interesting, but it was not until my first trip to Washington D.C. when I was in third grade, when I really gained an appreciation and fascination for our country's history. Traveling to our nation's capital was very inspiring and peaked my interest in every aspect of our history. I also used to not think too highly of world history, until I traveled to London and Rome during my study abroad trip through Michigan State University. Through the trip I realized how important world history was and how it impacted the United States. It saddened me to realize that I knew very little about it, but I gained a deeper appreciation on my trip and took advantage of every learning opportunity. Traveling is a wonderful way to learn about different places and people, and I was fortunate enough to grow up in a family that valued traveling and took me all over the United States to gain invaluable experiences.

I feel I learn best by doing or completing a task and seeing first-hand how something is done. I plan to continue my education by collaborating with my excellent colleagues. As a teacher, I realize there is no one way to do something successfully and that I do not always have all the correct answers. I love working together with colleagues, no matter what grade level they teach, in order to get new and fresh ideas about how to do things. I teach my students to work in groups and the importance of communicating with each other to get new ideas, and that is what I do as well in my profession. Chances are, when you work with different teachers, they can offer new insight and experience that I may not have. We all have something different to offer each other and can really learn a great deal by working together. It doesn't just take a village to raise a child, but to also successfully educate them.

Being in the know of current teaching trends, strategies and techniques is extremely important in the world of education. In order to be up to date on everything, I intend on attending conferences that pertain to my subject matter and grade level, technology, and anything I find interesting. I feel it is important to stay well rounded in order to prevent myself from getting into a teaching rut. By attending conferences I will be able to hear from educators around the country about new and possibly effective strategies that I could potentially implement into my classroom. A lot of conferences are about the atmosphere in gathering teachers from all over the United States and sitting them in one room talking about education. There is a lot to learn just from the networking and socializing with other teachers from around the country, before learning about the content of the conference. I believe my future as a learner involved attending numerous conferences in order to continue my education about my career to better my students.

I am fortunate enough to work in a school district where once a month we have Technology days set aside before or after school. During these seminars the IT specialists usually introduce the school staff to a new resourceful website for our students or us in staying organized. I have attended these seminars in the past and have found them extremely useful, and intend on attending them in the

future. Outside of my district though, I believe it is important to stay current with technology, because it is very much part of our everyday lives. Students need to leave the classroom fluent in ways to use technology to make things easier and as a resource for them. Many students enter knowing how to do the basics, but need to know how they can use the technology in the future, or where they can learn the newest and greatest with technology. Many teachers are afraid of new technology, mostly because they are not comfortable with it. We all need to get over our fears of new things and do what is best for the students. We are living in a technologically advanced society and I do not see it going away any time soon. We need to buckle up and get into the driver's seat in using and teaching the various technologies available in order to make our students better equipped for the 21st century.

Learning is extremely important to me, but not because I am a teacher, but rather because I am a lifelong learner. I enjoy learning by traveling, working with others, and using technology, and believe my future as a learner will involve all of these aspects. My education is not ending; it is just beginning.