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Final Reflection Paper

MAET – Summer 2010 Cohort

As I look back over the last six weeks, as well as over the last six months during the certificate program, I see as I was before, and today. There are many things that have interested me and of which I have built a new foundation of learning off of during my time in the Master of Art in Educational Technology program at Michigan State University. Three ideas have stuck with me and make me read more deeply, ask important, thought-provoking questions, and in general strive to understand the topics that have made me want to be a better educator, mentor, and master in the subjects.

Firstly, I will strive to have a sound understanding of my pedagogy and why I use it the way I do. From the standpoint of going into just my second year of teaching, I understand now (as I didn't before), how important knowing why I teach the way I teach and the reasons in which I use the methods I use. After reading "The Theory Behind Disciplined Study" by Levstik and Barton, I realized that I WAS one of the teachers who always stated, "Forget theory – just show me the practical side of things" (Barton 9). It scares me to think of the person that I was and how it affected my teaching in general. If, now, I have a sound understanding of my pedagogy, other educators will have more respect for me and will be more eager to learn from my teaching, my students will have a better experience within the classroom, and there will always be a reason that I do something. Honestly, it just makes sense.

As the authors state, "Good theory also helps teachers plan effective and meaningful lessons for their students...allows teachers to separate ideas from something important from those that are simply cute, novel, or well-packaged." In other words, when I am teaching an idea or creating an activity, if I have sound theoretical knowledge, I will be less likely to include filler activities, more likely to include engaging activities that utilize critical and deep thinking skills, and more likely to have control over my classroom, which provides a stellar environment for learning.

Because educational theory changes daily in the World Language, Educational Technology, and Elementary Education realms, it will be important in the future to maintain a certain amount of research for these to exist in my life. By actually executing the theories within my classroom, I will be able to try, fail, and succeed to find what works best for the situation that I am in. From here on out, I have identified the importance of having and maintaining a strong theoretical background within my educational position and plan to execute it correctly.

Before I began this program I always felt as though something was missing from the way in which I used technology within the classroom. Even after I began and excelled through the certificate program, I still felt as though the technology that I was using and the way in which it was being used wasn't the most appropriate for my situation. But alas, I have come across a model of using technology to teach the content knowledge through the pedagogy that I choose, named TPACK. Finally, I feel as though this is what I have been striving towards but couldn't figure it out. It's almost as if my prayers have been answered. To me, TPACK, or Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge, is one of the most important ideas that I will take back to my district and share, and share and share and share. It is evident with its research base, its application to my own classroom, and from the discussions that my colleagues within the program have had that it is an integral part of using technology in the classroom.

Because my first important idea from this course is understanding theory, it is quite necessary to understand how the three most integral aspects of teaching in society today come together to form a stellar classroom experience lodged in theoretical understanding. As Mishra, Koehler and Henrikson state, "For effective integration, teachers must know more than the technical aspects of technology, and must understand its affordances and constraints both for representing content and identifying pertinent teaching approaches" (Henrikson 2). However, this does not always happen within the classroom and in my own opinion, it is what turns teachers off to thoughtful technological integration because of the real time it takes

to integrate these technologies effectively and for a prolonged period of time. Through the use of the TPACK approach, I now have a base in which I can focus my attentions for successful technological integration. I also have theories, explanations, and ideas for this same matter. Thankfully, the community of supporters for the TPACK framework is growing, and therefore becoming a more-powerful sense of reasoning within the educational technology community, thus making it easier to discuss among colleagues and integrate into my district and content area.

There are several key topics that I know will be important to me over the next five years, at least. Pertaining to the Spanish language, there is a new Michigan World Language Graduation Requirement for 2016 graduates. Coupled with technology integration, this is both exciting and scary, especially since it weighs so much on job performance and teaching ability. Effective technological integration will be key when students are learning the Spanish language, especially when using authentic language and culture from the countries we learn about.

Through the use of technology, I will be able to integrate several different pieces of the Spanish language and culture, including traveling to other countries, specific dialects and accents, as well as key cultural celebrations from around the world. In my own opinion, without language there is not culture, and without culture there is not language. This is so important in today's society, especially with the 2016 World Language Requirement in Michigan.

There are several Web 2.0 technologies that I will use as a resource guide for language learning through technology. Although I already use several of them, there are many ways to become more involved in many of them, and therefore I plan to take a better leadership role within them. These resources include [FL Teach](#), a language teacher ListServ that discusses activities, curriculum, world language teaching methods, assessment, and technology integration. The list of contributors ranges from students in teacher

education programs, to new and experienced teachers, to administrators and other professionals interested in world language. I also plan to use the K-8 ListServ for World Language teachers, called Nanduti .

Because I have a strong belief that the best resources for new ideas using technology are available through networking with other educators, I plan to present and/or attend at the following conferences: Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning (MACUL), Michigan World Language Association (MiWLA), and International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). Through networking I am able to see triumphs and failures of technologies used in the language classroom, ask pertinent questions and have engaging discussions about other classrooms around the country. Each of these conferences and societies include engaging web discussions, articles, newsletters and research that are leading the way in educational technology today. With each new development, I plan to research what will be best for my own classroom and develop engaging lessons and unit ideas based on others' research.

Another important aspect of networking is working together with people from your own region. For this reason, I plan to start a group for language teachers in the area to come and discuss all things language teaching, including technology within the classroom. I believe that this will be very beneficial to my own teaching and learning, as well as for my students' benefit, as well. Through networking with educators in my area, it will be easy to meet once a month or so, gain (free) knowledge from long-time teachers/experts in my field, and have a great network of other language teachers who can inspire and engage me to better myself in the world of education, teaching, and leadership. While the online portion of my networking is important, it is much more beneficial to me to gain these friendships and networks face-to-face, especially when there are so few language teachers in Michigan and around the country. It will be great to have a network of educators to find out what is happening in our area, to engage each other in new projects and ideas, and to have counterparts who understand and can align the 2016 World Language Requirements for further emphasis within our region. I will also start a Yahoo! ListServ for communication

between events and meetings. This last part will be helpful, again, to plan accordingly for projects, performances, support, and other pertinent issues and events happening within our region for further professional development within my content area.

Another key topic that I will face in the next 5 years is that of “keeping up with the times”, in other words, making sure that I stay current with educational technology through all of the advances that it is making, both in my content area and in general. There are several ways in which to stay current, many which I again already participate in, but there are several in which I have yet to acquire that I plan to do. It is important to point out that although this plan is for the next 5 years, I believe that I will have to “keep up with the times” for the rest of my life. It is important to me that I stay on top of technology in education, especially because so many educators fall into the “bump and grind” of everyday teaching that they sometimes get lost in the shuffle, which in turn causes burn-out. By ever evolving my own teaching through the use of professional development, networking, and technology, I hope I can maintain my love of teaching, students, and my general work environment for the better part of my life. I also plan to be a leader within my school in the realm of re-purposing technology for educational uses.

Currently, I use a RSS Feed Reader, specifically Google Reader, to subscribe to a variety of excellent blogs by bloggers who have a stake in the educational technology world, including: [NCS-Tech](#), [From Toy to Tool: Cell Phones in Learning](#), [Edutopia](#), [Discovery Ed Blog](#), [Techlearning](#), [Weblogg-ed](#), and [Free Technology for Teachers](#). Each blog offers a different and engaging perspective of relevant content to what I am trying to do with my teaching: find engaging ways in which I can offer/present/utilize content for the needs within my classroom. I believe that through the help of these blogs, I am able to better myself as an educator and keep up-to-date with what is happening in the educational technology world. For instance, when ISTE 2010 was taking place, many of the bloggers I followed attended and posted very relevant

content, which all ended up in my blog stream. Instead of seeking this out, it came right to me, in one place. It was very useful and I felt like I was a part of the conference because of the bloggers that I follow.

As mentioned before, I plan to travel to several conferences annually to maintain my level of knowledge in educational technology. It is important to me to present at MACUL as well as visit ISTE, with the goal of someday presenting at the conference. It will be an exciting time in my life when I make it to that level of knowledge.

Besides maintaining my RSS Reader, I believe that a part of my Personal Learning Network includes me giving my knowledge to the world. Through the use of a blog, I plan to blog about using educational technology within my Spanish classroom. I have gone so far as to even buy the domain name for it, which is EdTechandLanguage.com. I have been reading on the ins and outs of starting a successful blog, and plan to begin it within the next year. It will target a very specific audience, but I can see it having a profound effect on both my teaching and the World Language teachers in the United States and around the world. I also would like to network through my blog and gain perspective on what is happening around the world in the realm of both educational technology and World Language classrooms. I hope it will be as beneficial to other educators as it will be for me.

Works Cited

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