

Three Years That Will Live in Infamy

By Chris Norred

Three years ago I decided to go back to school to earn my Master's degree. I had just finished my fifth year of teaching and am a full time coach in the fall with no time to take classes. I wanted to find a program that would help me in my everyday teaching and improve me as a teacher. I have a coworker that went thru the program and I found some of the classes she talked about to be very interesting and a good way to become a better teacher. The MAET program was the perfect fit for my needs and interests. The online courses gave me a chance to learn technology in a new way, as well as able to learn from home on my time. My goals for this program were to learn new and effective ways to use technology in my classroom, become a leader in my school when it comes to technology and to earn my Master's in Educational Technology from the same university where I earned my Bachelor's degree, Michigan State University.

The best features of the program were the quality of courses and the hard work and dedication of the instructors. The MAET program only has a few classes that all students must take, the rest are up the student and their interests. I was able to choose from courses that I thought would help me the best in my classroom, as well as courses that interested me. The MAET program consisted of ten courses that I completed over three years. These courses taught me how to imply new technology into my classroom, how to become an effective leader in my school and how to address the new learning styles of students in the new digital world.

One of the most influential courses I took this spring was CEP 891 Online Literacy and Reading-to-Learn in the Digital Age. There were two main goals in this course, the first was to learn how the web and online literacy has affected students as readers, the second was learning about the new technologies used to help read to learn the web. This course taught me a few new things that I am going to bring into my classroom. I was able to use new technology, these tools include, Diigo, Jing, Google Docs and Screencast.com. These tools allow me to offer a variety of teaching methods through visual and audio techniques that were not available in the past. In addition, my students now have access to tools that help them understand online literacy and the vast amount of information that is available on the web. My students will use these tools to help them understand the material they have found on the web for research projects. They will create screencasts of how they went about researching, as well as using Diigo to create notes on the websites they used for their specific research topic.

In CEP 891 I created an online lesson using a website where my students are going to learn how to use a search engine affectively and learn how to determine if a website is reliable for them to use as a resource. I will implement this lesson at the beginning of the year so my students will learn these tools and be able to use them throughout the school year.

In the summer of 2011 I took CEP 800 Learning in School and other Settings. This course was dedicated to learning several major psychological perspectives for appreciating learning that goes on in school and other settings. The main goal for this course was to learn about these perspectives and be able to use them in our classroom, as well as our own learning. The understandings of how to the brain functions and what goes into learning helped me as a

teacher understand how different types of students learn. The ability to reach all of the different learning styles I have in a classroom is not an easy thing to do, but this class has made me much more comfortable to creating different lessons that will help the variety of learning styles.

Constructivism is one perspective to learning that I learned about, it is when the teacher takes a more of a facilitator role and the students learn from each other. In my Westward Expansion Unit my students studies a variety of topics that ranged from “The plains Indians and the buffalo”, “Outlaws and Lawmen”, “Building the Transcontinental Railroad” and others. The students were given a topic which they must research and create a presentation. They could have used any technology tool they wanted for their presentations. It was up to the students to what information they include in their presentations. My role was to just keep them on task and answer any questions they may ask. The students learn about topics other than their own by the presentations their classmates created, it is based on what their classmates contribute. The other students learned through socially constructed opportunities. My role as the instructor was to facilitate and help them along. The students were active thinkers, explainers, interpreters, and questioners.

Another example of this is a lesson I created for my World War One unit. The students received and played the role of one of the three main leaders in charge of creating the Treaty of Versailles. Each student received background of the person they were assigned, as well as what that person was bringing to the negotiating table. The students’ job was to get together with all the other students who had the same role as them and decide what they wanted on the treaty. After they agreed to what their character wanted, one person from each role got together and they had to work out a final treaty. This lesson used Social Constructivism, knowledge was

based on what the students contribute and construct together. I was a facilitator and the students were actively engaged.

In CEP 817 Learning Technology Through Design, I learned the importance of creating a lesson and how the design of the lesson can make it successful or a failure. CEP 817 is described as “Learning Technology through Design is a course that investigates the process of design particularly as it applies to educational technology. The course is structured around multiple design activities and one (or two) large design projects. Topics covered include learning by design, human computer interaction, art and aesthetics of design, iterative design, design evaluation, and collaboration in design”. The main assignment of this course was to learn how to create a web site based lesson. At my school all of the faculty members are encouraged to create lessons for “distance learning”. I should be able to have the kids learn if the school is not available for them. The students should be able to learn from home and not miss a beat in their classes.

One of the weekly assignments we had in this class was to discuss good and bad designs. Each week a group had to present pictures of what they thought was good and bad designs, the examples could be from anything. We would then discuss what made them good or bad and the importance of having products designed well. The purpose of this was to help us understand the importance of a well-designed website that students and other educators could understand and navigate easily. This got me to think not only of my main project of website design and the importance of designing a quality website but at design for everything in my class. The design and layout of my classroom is an important aspect and is one of the first things students notice

when they enter my classroom. I currently look at all of my assignments, rubrics and projects to make sure the design of them is easy for the students to follow, looks good and the goals are clearly understandable.

For the main project of this class, I took my Treaty of Versailles lesson and made it into an online based project. I will be implementing this into my class this coming school year. CEP 817 taught me to look at the many different aspects needed to create a good website based lesson. The course taught me to look at the visual appearance of the site, is it nice to look at or will students be turned off by it and not want to do the work. I tried to make the visual appearance of my site both appealing and appropriate for my topic. I made the site easy to navigate by making sure the important aspects were easy to find and the instructions were very easy to find and follow. The students will be able to understand what they need to do and where they need to go. I also learned the importance to adding a variety of media or different forms of technology into my site. The students will be able to watch a YouTube video, a Prezi presentation, discussion forums and couple Google Apps. This allows the students to keep focus and reach a variety of learning styles. I am looking forward to see what my students think of the lesson and how well they do with the project.

The MAET program did more than just help me learn new ways to put technology into my classroom. It showed me how to address the different learning styles, learn the differences in online literacy compared to traditional text. It also taught me how to become a leader in my school. In CEP 815 Technology and Leadership I was able to learn to become more of a leader in

helping my fellow teachers learn about technology and helping them implement it into their classrooms.

In this course I learned about the seven transformations of leadership, opportunist, diplomat, expert, achiever, individualist, strategist, and alchemist. I found out that before this course I was a “diplomat”, this type of leader avoids conflict, wants to belong, obeys group norms and rarely rocks the boat. My strengths were being supportive glue with in a team and I helped bring people together. The goal throughout the course was to learn how to become a better leader not only with in the 8th grade team that I am a member of but also throughout the entire school.