

RACHEL LAFLER – FUTURE LEARNING GOALS ESSAY

Reflection on professional goals and future steps. Identification and description of goals and areas to explore further. Evaluation of how and why learning will enhance professional practice and facilitate achievement of goals.

In my first essay, I reflected on my original goals. Now, I'll look ahead and reflect on how I can work towards my future goals. As I do this, I cannot help but think of the saying "the more things change, the more they stay the same." This isn't to say I haven't gained anything, because I certainly have, but my goals remain almost identical. My original goals were to enhance my professional practice and explore careers in education. Did I achieve this? Absolutely. I gained knowledge, skills, and experience that can be directly applied to my practice, and I explored things like online teaching and educational technology leadership. Overall, I'm much better prepared to be an effective educator. So, what's my future goal? To continue my career as an effective educator, which inherently requires me to continue learning, growing, and exploring job opportunities. Despite achieving my goals, I'm realizing such goals are ongoing, for educators exist within this intersection of learning and educating; to be an effective educator is to be a lifelong learner. Since I'm unsure of the exact job I want to pursue, rather than focusing on knowledge needed for a specific dream position, I chose the following areas to focus on: (1) Online Education; (2) Educational Psychology; (3) Educational Technology Leadership. I believe that learning more about these topics will help me achieve my goal of continuing my career as an effective educator.

Online education is becoming increasingly prevalent, as more courses are conducted entirely, or partially, online. Additionally, teachers are creating blended learning environments by "flipping" their lessons. It's critical that I continue learning about how students learn online and how to be an effective online teacher for a few reasons. First, I may pursue a job teaching online. Secondly, if I'm in the classroom, I want to integrate online learning activities. If online education is the future, to be an effective educator, I need to be well-versed in, and experienced with, the practice. The following resources will get me started:

- "Is K-12 Blended Learning Disruptive?"
- "Ten Principles of Effective Online Teaching: Best Practices in Distance Education"
- National Education Association's "Guide to Teaching Online Courses"

To create a learning environment that promotes success, educators must understand their students' needs. Although I minored in psychology, I need to focus more on its educational implications, as such understandings impact many pedagogical decisions. Focusing on this will benefit me in a number of ways. First, I'll be better equipped to make informed decisions regarding policies, procedures, learning activities, and more. Regardless of my job, understanding how people learn, and how I can meet their needs, will make me more effective. Additionally, I'm interested in working with beginning teachers/student teachers someday, so this knowledge would help me guide them. It's imperative that I continue to learn about educational psychology because these frameworks can (and should) influence my decisions, making me a more effective educator. The following resources are worth exploring:

- "Educational Psychology Promotes Teaching and Learning"
- "20 Psychological principles that will help your students learn more effectively"
- "Educational psychological interactive: internet resources."

Similar to the previous topics, I have some experience with these concepts, but there's much room for growth. As educational technology evolves, educators must keep pace. I've always been fairly confident with educational technology, but I never thought much about the leadership side. Moving forward, I want to stay abreast of what's going on in the educational technology realm, but I really want to focus on developing my leadership skills further. This will help me in a couple of ways. First, I can make instructional decisions grounded in frameworks such as TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) resulting in more effective technology integration. Secondly, I'll be better suited for non-classroom careers, such as being a professional development coordinator, should I go that route. Lastly, I'll gain the confidence needed to assume leadership roles (formal or informal) within my work environment. To be an effective educator, I must develop my leadership skills and keep up with educational technology trends. I will start with the following resources:

- Office of Educational Technology
- Top Ten Educational Technology Leadership Tools
- ISTE - International Society for Technology in Education

This experience pushed me to analyze the role of learning in educating and truly see the importance of proactively continuing my education, whether formally or informally. I'm more committed than ever to being a lifelong learner. This starts with my continued examination of the aforementioned focus areas. In the future, my goal is to be an effective educator who embraces life in the "intersection," not just someone who stops there periodically.