

RACHEL LAFLER – GOAL REFLECTION ESSAY

Reflection on changing goals. Identification of original goals, as stated in the application to MAED program.
Evaluation of how and why goals changed (or did not change) as a result of the MAED experience.

I applied to Michigan State University's (MSU) Master of Arts in Education (MAED) program in May 2016 during a transitional period, as I was preparing to finish my third year teaching, move cross country, and have my first child. These changes afforded the opportunity to reevaluate some things professionally and, although I wasn't exactly sure what my future looked like, I knew I wanted to continue my career in education. In my Professional Goals Statement, I explained how I believed a Master of Arts in Education degree from MSU would "enable me to enhance my professional practice, expand my role as an educator, and further my career."

To elaborate, my ultimate goal was to continue my career as an educator, but I wanted to explore options beyond being a traditional classroom teacher. I was drawn to MSU's MAED program because of the opportunities it presented, allowing me to learn about online teaching, professional development, leadership positions, and more. I believed the program would not only prepare me for my future as an effective educator, but also help me identify what that future would be.

Additionally, I wanted to grow as an educator, specifically regarding effective technology integration. Although I used some technology in my classroom, I wanted to learn about new, innovative ways to utilize technology resources to increase student engagement and achievement. By choosing the "Technology and Learning" concentration, I could focus my studies on such topics.

Now, I find myself completing the final course of my MAED journey. At this time, I have one overarching goal of continuing my career as an effective educator. To do so, I need to first determine the type of job I want to pursue. Although I achieved my goal of exploring different options, I still have not completely decided in which direction I want to go. Additionally, to be an effective educator, it's imperative that I focus on continuous growth by reflecting on my practice and making informed, intentional decisions regarding things such as technology integration, differentiation, and classroom management. This should all sound quite familiar. My current goals are almost identical to my original goals, but this isn't because I didn't achieve the original goals. In fact, I can wholeheartedly say that the MAED program has fulfilled, and exceeded, my expectations. The goals remain partially because I'm still unsure of my professional future, and also because such goals are difficult to ever fully accomplish. I am confident, however, that the MAED program has prepared me to be successful in a variety of job positions and it has instilled in me the understanding of what I need to do to continue developing as an educator.

My original goals remain, as learning and reflection never end; they are integral parts of being an effective educator. Yet, my goals have evolved, as I gained the new knowledge, skills, and experience I originally sought, which challenged me to think deeper about my decisions as an educator and strive to apply my takeaways to my professional practice.