

Letting in the “Real World”

A goal statement reflection by Sarah Frazer

One of the questions almost every teacher has had to answer at one point or another in his or her career is the inevitable: “When am I ever going to need to know this in the real world?!” When beginning my Master of Arts in Education program at Michigan State University back in late 2010, I had only two years of teaching under my belt and had already heard this question numerous times. It was my goal to gain the expertise to provide my students with relevant, engaging curriculum that exposed them to cutting edge technology and performance-based assessments so that they would not even think to ask such a question in the first place.

My two concentrations - Science and Mathematics Education, and Technology and Learning - have enabled me to explore, examine, and employ current best practices in integrating technology effectively into my science and mathematics classroom. From producing digital stories, to constructing an entire course online, to developing ways to communicate and complete tasks asynchronously, my continued dedication to life-long learning has not only improved my practice as an educator, but has ultimately benefited the learning of my middle school students. My school is still developing their technology platform, and it has been exciting to help build the program based on what I have learned through my coursework at MSU. Over the past year, I helped to: establish a website parents and students can access to obtain electronic copies of assignments; utilize Skype to communicate with my students’ pen pals at another school; create a fully-integrated cross-curricular unit with authentic embedded assessment (see above picture); and incorporate online tools like Socrative into regular, formative assessment.

Every day I seek out opportunities to learn more about integrating technology appropriately and productively into our curriculum. My master’s program gave me a strong foundation to do this through the theory of TPACK (Technology, Pedagogy, and Content Knowledge) as well as a strong focus in teaching for true understanding.

Although my understanding of and ability to create authentic learning experiences in the classroom has absolutely evolved over the past two years, my underlying goal as an educator remains the same: to prepare my students to be well-rounded, successful adults in an increasingly digital society by tearing down my classroom walls (figuratively, of course) to let in the real world.