

Learning: Till Death Do Us Part

by Christopher Munn

There is a famous Chinese idiom 活到老学到老, which literally means “as long as you are living you should be learning”. I love this idea of being a lifelong learner, and I think it is especially important as educators that we model lifelong learning for our students and our communities. Living in China these past six years and learning a new language and culture has challenged me to adapt and learn in ways that I never had imagined while living in America. We can always learn more about ourselves, more about our loved ones, and more about our world. Moreover, the field of education is constantly evolving and teachers must be aware of these changes to be relevant to our students. I read an article recently that said that the business world adapts relatively quickly to new technology but the field of education is generally very slow to adapt, which I thought was sad. Teachers should be driving the innovation and inspiring students to create new things, not trying to catch up to what the rest of the world is already doing. Over the last two years, I have been on a wonderful journey while studying educational technology at Michigan State University. But just because I will receive a master of arts degree does not mean I will have finished learning about educational technology. On the contrary, I want to recommit myself to staying current with educational trends and ideas, challenging myself to be a learner that imparts that same desire to my students and others around me.

The knowledge and skills I have learned in this master’s program have challenged me to continue to develop my own teaching philosophy and use of technology. I learned early on in my graduate studies that a personal learning network is crucial for continued professional development. I plan on continuing to develop and utilize my network of learning, which includes using online tools such as twitter to stay on top of new trends in education and technology. Another thing that shaped my thinking about educational technology was the relationship between technology and learning. I know that I cannot put technology integration first and foremost, but must always keep learning at the center. As new technologies emerge, I plan on using this mindset while assessing how each technology might aid teaching and learning. Whenever I encounter learning problems, I will continue to check if there are any technology solutions those problems.

I learned from several classes that there are constantly new challenges and new research in the field of education, and it is our responsibility as educators to never stop learning. Moreover, I think that learning should be naturally followed by sharing with others, and I want to model this as well by sharing my learning with my colleagues and my students. I want to continue to be a model in my school for using the best practices, both in learning theories and educational technology. Whether it is showing teachers how to put resources online, use new software or hardware, or create new resources for their students, I believe is my duty to work with my colleagues to achieve the best results for our school.

These last two years in the MAET program have allowed me to learn new things and develop new skills. I have been able to create e-portfolios, stand-alone resources, podcasts, websites, screencasts, data visualizations, videos, and much more. I have studied learning theories, technology integration methods, and best teaching practices. However, the more I have studied, the more I have realized that I have so much more to learn. I hope that I never stop learning. As long as I am living, I will be learning.