

The Difference Between Education and Learning

by Christopher Munn

As I look back on the goal statement I wrote more than two years preparing to enter the MAET program, I can see that my perspective on education and learning has grown. When I got back into classroom teaching three years ago, I had many goals in regard to further education. I knew I needed a master's degree to attain gainful employment. I knew I needed a refresher on pedagogy and classroom management tactics. I knew I needed to get a feel for the latest technology trends in the sphere of education. I knew that getting a degree in educational technology or some sort of technology specialization would also help set me apart to future employers. My education goals were career-oriented, which is not all bad, but now my goals now revolve more around learning, both learning to be an excellent educator and how to improve student learning.

The biggest shift in my thinking over these last two years is the purpose and place of technology in the classroom. As I said in that initial goal statement two and a years ago, I still think "that utilizing technology to illustrate, instruct, and inspire our students can lead to greater creativity and imagination, and ultimately, greater learning." However, I now see that learning has to be central to reaching these goals. I can't just hope that using technology will potentially lead to greater learning. If technology does not meet learning goals, it should not be used. The TPACK framework which I studied in the MAET program has proven most useful in sorting through the decisions on how and when to use technology. I now know that just knowing the content, pedagogy, and technology is not good enough. Educators need to consider how these spheres interact and how a certain technology changes pedagogical methods or the delivery of content material.

While three years ago I might have run headlong into any new technology to try to use it for educational purposes, I now find myself more patient and discerning when it comes to integrating educational technology. I hope to become a voice of reason to teachers or administrators who want to eagerly get new technology without considering the affordances and constraints in regard to learning goals. And while completing this MAET degree has given me additional "education" in the sense of experience and credentials, I have gained much more in regard to learning. Rather than being a master practitioner of educational technology, I have learned more about the complex relationship between technology and education, being more equipped to make future decisions. I have been set on different learning trajectory which will continue to change my instruction far after the conclusion of this program. Most importantly, I have been reminded that education is about student learning first and foremost, and every technology decision I make should be kept in that context. These past two years I have learned the difference between education and learning, and it has truly changed my life as a teacher.