When I began my journey as a graduate student in the fall of 2010, I really wasn't sure what the outcome would be. I had my first year of teaching under my belt and I was ready to continue my education. I had heard from the technology teacher that I worked with that she was in the MAET (MA Educational Technology) program and was very much so enjoying it. When I did some research on my own, I realized that I had many options to complete this new chapter in my life. Michigan State seemed like it would be a great fit for me and was a different institution from where I had received my undergraduate degree. Even though I was very busy teaching, coaching and with my personal life, I still found the idea of adding the online component very enticing. I did however begin in the classroom with the initial certification program. I didn't really know what to expect at the beginning of the program and kept an open mind of what was about to occur. I knew that technology was growing and becoming a huge part of teaching. In physical education and health there was plenty of room for me to grow my teaching abilities and students learning experience. I knew that this program could help me with both of these goals.

I almost always knew that I wanted to be a teacher and a coach. My younger brother one day had asked me to help him learn to play soccer. I couldn't have been more excited about this as this sport was my strongest suit. He said to me "you are a great teacher." It really got me thinking about what I wanted to do with my life at this point. I knew that I wanted to help others and I was very athletic. Becoming a Physical Education and Health teacher just seemed like the most reasonable and logical decision. I have had many wonderful physical education teachers throughout my middle and high school years as well as great coaches. I always looked up to these people and could always have a conversation with them about anything in life that sometimes would be awkward to have with a parent. I know firsthand the impact teachers have on just one student's life and I wanted the opportunity to give back to students what I had been so blessed with in my short lifetime. Building those relationships with students really gains their trust and respect which, in turn does impact student achievement and learning. Students are always changing how they learn and I feel that teachers should be always changing how they teach. I have the motivation and drive to keep things interesting and fun as well as meaningful to the student. Beginning my journey in the Michigan State Educational Technology program seemed to be the right fit. For that, I have many reasons why and here is how I planned to make that happen.

With the Educational Technology program, there were many avenues that one could progress through. I began with the certification program that was a wonderful introduction on how to teach, adapt and apply technology to the teaching practice. These courses really gave a good foundation of what the program was all about and how to learn the basics of educational technology. I enjoyed all of these classes that I took face to face. I chose to learn face to face as I was working and coaching and was a little hesitant to fully let myself go online. I was also looking forward to taking the 5 core classes in order to receive my endorsement. These courses were really the strong points of the program as they taught various ways to teach students, how to learn more about how people learn, how to change a culture of students/people into doing something that could greatly benefit them and to complete proper research on subject areas and topics where technology could be helpful. All of the courses throughout my program were beneficial in more ways than one but I do want to focus on a few courses that really made a difference in my teaching style and would improve the learning of my students. These courses really are what impacted me the most in accordance to my goals.

Understanding how others learn and retain knowledge is a much diversified subject area. There are many places that people learn. The most common is in schools, however businesses and organizations learn as a unit as well. In the class CEP 800, we were taught to understand how others learned and what motivates people to learn. The theories of

learning are many but making crucial connections for ourselves and those of others can determine and calculate learning. Students of all age levels have various backgrounds and prior knowledge in relation to any subject area. What they bring to the table may be a lot or a little but should not be confused with what they actually have learned. This class allowed us to think of ways that we could incorporate technology into our teaching based on what and how students learn and know.

Learning in School and other settings allowed me to reflect on topics in my health class that were really difficult for students to grasp and retain. A self reflection of teaching style and how it is affecting your students is a great place to begin with what you want them to learn and know.   Knowing that every student does not learn the same, but also creating meaningful technology that will support your specific classes can maximize learning and retention.   I realized that the population and culture of students I was teaching were starting to smoke at a younger age. It was difficult to really portray in words, assignments, tests and other means the devastating effects any kind of smoking can have on your body. Prior to figuring out how I wanted to tackle this situation, I created a 10 question survey for all my students to complete one day as their bell work. Bell work is something that they would complete right as they were walking in the door as the first bell would ring to start class. This would allow me to poll all of their results and come up with a meaningful way to help them learn.   Creating a digital story to have my students see and hear first hand was really catching for them.   In health I do like to show video clips from time to time but creating a digital story was ideal for them to still hear my voice in mini lecture format while showing photos, charts, and graphs to back up my words. The questions flowed like I couldn't believe! Having this little bit of knowledge that was taken away from this class was more than I expected would happen but it's just to say that learning theories definitely do work.

The next few courses that had significant meaning to me I feel as though went hand in hand. CEP 815 Technology and Leadership and CEP 822 Approaches to Educational Research work together in the sense that any piece of technology or new system that companies/schools look to implement needs to be researched. Usually this is completed by a leadership team or group of individuals that are capable of searching for affordances and constraints of these systems. The processes that need to occur usually require that the individual doing the research is knowledgeable in the subject area, looks at all the most recent materials and has a process of charting their findings. In Approaches to Educational Research, the heavy use of statistics as well as using excel allowed for charting of data and presenting the information in a precise fashion. Formulas that were taught in this class helped in charting information that was needed for any of the research completed. Most good leaders are looking to implement the newer technologies or systems that are out there and this is why I feel they run hand in hand.

As a health teacher, there are many sensitive topics that can be covered over the time frame of the course. One that I was interested in knowing more about is the amount of high schools that teach sexuality education. I have taught in a school that prohibited any students having any conversations or learning of this material and another that made sure that there was time for this information to be learned. As a health advocate and technology leader in my school, it was important to me to find out more about this and to be able to have the important conversations with all the right people to see that it be implemented in a school that really needed the education the most. Knowing what types of leaders there are and how they are seen by others in Technology and Leadership was very eye opening. I initially thought I was the type of leader that no one would respond to and after taking the course I realize that if I present material in a different fashion that perhaps I may have some respect on the topic and pull to make a change. As I collected the data on sexuality education, I realized that this was also a very controversial topic and that some research was difficult to find

that was truly reliable information. In educational research there are many places to get information from journals, articles, and others research. Making sure that you have reliable research and data to back up your facts in implementation of any subject area is critical. I feel that these classes were just a foundation of what is to come in educational technology, leadership and research however would relish any opportunity to do this again.

When learning in schools and other settings class was finished, it was merely a reflection of either learning in a school setting or at work. CEP 820 Teaching Students online was truly an eye opener for how students were expected to learn online, formatting for creating an online class, the many platforms that can be used and what is enticing for students to learn while online. This was a large world that I knew little about and was very excited to take it all in. The class took an entire summer to complete and it was packed full of so much great information. Anne Heintz was a wonderful professor that really critiqued our work and made us think of the many possible ways to format the class and how to make it more interesting for the viewing audience that we were trying to reach.

I created an online classroom for health. Taking my curriculum from paper and pencil to online was more time consuming that I had originally expected. I knew that it would be worth it to start to get all of this information online because the school that I was working in at the time, students had a high absentee rate. Whether they couldn't get to school or family issues, it could help ease the gap with students missing their work. While going through the first few units of health, I realized that I probably should have really come up with the unit objectives and had them written down anyhow so it gave me some time to re think what I was actually teaching. I enjoyed creating a "road map" for each unit which is how the online class was structured as well. It was simply a checklist for the student to help keep them focused on what assignments needed to be completed for the unit. They were able to print this out and have it posted so they could highlight or write down notes on it. I felt that this was a great component for any online class as some just need to have a visual. Another portion of my class that I enjoyed creating was differentiated instruction. I did also do this while I had a live class however, I felt that I had to get a little more creative and it allowed me to use different software to complete this task (Camtasia/PhotoStory) that were taught in earlier classes.

Lastly, finishing the master's program has had great significance on my viewpoint of taking online classes, how I teach, and how others learn. When I started in the program, I knew enough about technology to write papers, complete power points, and the basics of Smart Boards. After going through the program I really never looked ahead of what I was going to be doing. From the online portfolio, to designing websites, and completing research on how to implement certain technologies, the learning always had me drawn right in. There wasn't a class that we didn't receive feedback from our professors as well as our peers. I was encouraged all the way through the program and was able to succeed due to the efforts of the university.

Technology is always changing and in the 3 years it took me to complete this masters program, I noticed lots of those changes. Learning about Google sharing tools, and building websites, so many new programs came out in the few short

years that I was able to pick up and learn about such as drop box and Wix. I really have enjoyed using Wix not only for teaching but for my personal life as well. It is super user friendly and the amount of customization that can be done to really reflect who I am and what I stand for with my online portfolio has been wonderful.

The capstone course has given me a great opportunity to really think about what I have done and where I am going. I realized that when I started, I didn't really have many expectations. Sometimes I think that's not always a bad thing as my mind was always open to learning and applying new technologies that were taught and giving them an honest shot. Writing this essay has given me time to really think about the classes I have enjoyed most, and how I have already applied them to my teaching and student learning and how they can evolve over time. I don't ever feel that educators are done learning and should always seek opportunities to learn more. Completing my Masters in Educational Technology has already opened up many new avenues for me. I enjoy using it to teach, I enjoy teaching others, and learning more about the vast programs that are out there and in development. Being a physical education/health teacher, I feel as though not many of our kind complete degrees in this subject area so I feel that I have an advantage to have "creative intellectual activity" that really makes the technology meaningful to students in my classes.