

A Matter of Priority

Before we could be admitted to the MAED online program, we had to write a professional goals statement.

I'd like to say my goals haven't changed. And in a way, that's true. They're all still there:

- Introduce my students to the wonder and creativity that comes through answering mathematical questions.
- Help my students understand that the nature of science involves flexibility and change, not absolute truth.
- Get my Master's degree, so that I can get my professional certificate and keep teaching.
- Widen learning opportunities using technology.

What has changed, though, is the priority I put on them.

If I am completely honest, the most important goal at the beginning was to have a Master's degree so that I could get a professional teaching certificate in order to keep teaching. My provisional certificate was going to expire soon, and while a teaching certificate is not required to teach at an independent school, my school certainly expected me to keep my credentials up. There was a sense of urgency that made this the number one priority.

I didn't really think that saying that would help with my admission to MSU's online graduate program. So I turned to the frustrations and wishes that I had in the classroom, and stated them as goals to be met. That's why these goals haven't changed throughout the three years I've been enrolled in the program. To get my students to understand and experience the real nature of mathematics and science, and to effectively use technology in my teaching are integral to the work that I do. That's why I chose the Science and Mathematics Education and Technology and Learning concentrations. I picked classes from those concentrations that would help me to reach those three goals. How could I not take a course titled "Inquiry, Nature of Science and Science Teaching" or "Learning Mathematics with Technology"? I have and will become more proficient in meeting those three goals, but because students and technology continually change, each year I will have to meet them again and again.

I spoke before about the priority I assigned to the goals. If I were to put them in order for the day I wrote my professional goals statement (Oct. 1, 2010), they would look like this:

1. Master's Degree
2. Creativity in Mathematics
3. Classroom Technology
4. Nature of Science

Today, they look like this:

1. Creativity in Mathematics
2. Nature of Science
3. Classroom Technology
4. Master's Degree

I'm almost done earning my Master's degree, and I still have a year left on my first renewal of my provisional teaching certificate. It is a goal to keep striving for, but it is almost complete and I don't feel the urgency I felt at the beginning of my program. As for the other three goals, the order of importance depends upon the time of year. I teach math classes in the fall and science classes in the spring, and so the related goals will trade first priority dependent on the semester. The technology goal falls to the bottom during the summer, when I refine my curriculum, and rises to second priority when class is in session. The priority I place on each goal will keep changing with the seasons.

-Katrina Hamilton