

Evolving as an Educator...  
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Ever since I was in elementary school I knew I wanted to be a teacher. When I began volunteering in special education classrooms, I was excited that I had found my passion. I was fascinated and motivated by the idea that all students can learn, no matter what their disability or challenges may be. I left high school truly believing that every student is capable of learning; it may just be in a different way or on a different day. When I finally reached my dream of being an educator, I knew I wanted to continue to grow and learn so that I could be the highly effective teacher that my students deserved.

While looking back at when I applied to the Masters in Arts and Education program in the winter of 2010, I expressed a passion and excitement for learning. I wrote about my interests to continue to learn and grow so that I could better motivate my students. I wanted my students to be as excited about learning as I was. Fortunately for me, I truly feel that learning about the complex nature of motivating students is something that I focused on deeply in this program. I came into this program knowing how to extrinsically motivate my students through rewards or token economies. I now understand and respect the importance of intrinsically motivating my students. Several courses opened my eyes to the idea that if I can support and foster intrinsic motivation, my students will be able to generalize that skill long after they walk out of the high school doors. Although I feel like I have come such a long way in regards to student motivation, it is such an important concept that I am positive it will be a lifelong learning goal for me.

I also set a goal that I would learn how to appropriately involve my students with their general education peers. I said that "I wanted to build a supportive learning environment so that all of my students can learn at their independent and appropriate level." My special education focus has given me such a broad understanding of the importance of inclusion and how to make it happen efficiently and appropriately. I honestly can say I have a 'tool box' of strategies. I am leaving this program feeling more confident and better prepared.

Looking back on my original professional goal statement has really shown me how much I have learned and grown in this program. I can honestly say that I have addressed all of my original goals, some more deeply than others. I have learned so much, and I am still just as excited about continuing to learn!

*"Some people see a closed door and turn away. Others see a closed door, try the knob; if it doesn't open...they turn away. Still others see a closed door try the knob, if it doesn't open, they find a key. If the key doesn't fit...they turn away. A rare few see a closed door, try the knob, if it doesn't open, they find a key, if the key doesn't fit... they make one."*

*-Author Unknown*

