

## The Difference of Two Years Annie Kim Sytsma

I graduated from Grand Valley State University with a teaching degree after making a decision to change career paths. While trying to understand the teaching job market, I faced the decision of whether applying for graduate school and beginning my masters work before landing a teaching job would work for me or against me in finding a full time teaching position. I figured I could go anywhere for a job as nothing was holding me where I was. I did however know the program I wanted to study and where I wanted to continue my education.

Michigan State University accepted me into their Master of Arts in Educational Technology program and I was excited to have something to look forward to in the middle of discouraging job prospects. The more I read about the program, the more my excitement grew. I was going to be a MAETer and a Spartan. Life couldn't have been better, or could it?

My job search criteria which extended globally all of a sudden shrunk to concentrate on just the greater Grand Rapids area after Rob and I were engaged. While waiting for a job to open up I had a wedding to plan. We understood that an October wedding could potentially be difficult if I were to get a full time teaching job, but we had always talked about an October wedding since we met on a beautiful October evening. We would work to make it work, which is what we have always done.

Summer arrived and my focus was split among my masters work, wedding planning, and of course finding a job. As I sat in the room at MSU, I was the only one in the cohort program who did not currently have a teaching position and who has never really taught outside of what was required to get certified. I was self conscious and felt like the weakest link among incredible educators. I silently struggled to make applicable connections since I didn't have any students of my own. The more I learned about education technology, however, the more excited I was to apply my learning to my own students and curriculum.

On the last day of my summer cohort program, I left the campus of MSU to make my third and final interview with a local school district. This was the only school hiring within my certification and my one and only application had taken me to by final interview. While I was sitting through my final interview, my sister was flying into town for my bridal shower and bachelorette party.

By the end of the day, I had completed my first summer cohort program, survived the events of a bridal shower and bachelorette party, and accepted my first full time teaching job at Cedar Springs High School.

And now as I get closer to finishing my MAET program, I can't believe all that has happened in two short years. My goal of becoming a teacher has been fulfilled. Not only am I teaching English and Psychology, but I am also the student leadership advisor.

My big goal of trying to mold students who are digital citizens as well as global citizens have started to sprout and have been getting noticed. Collaboration and community remains to be key essentials in my philosophy. Although much has changed in two short years, I am still headstrong, strong willed, passionate and driven to become the best teacher for my students.

I am committed to being a lifelong learner more than ever before. The more I learn and journey with my students, the more I realize how much I do not know. I have attended many different conferences and professional development opportunities, and have started to present as well. I have presented to the learning communities that have helped to mold me to be the teacher I am today.