

## Future Learner

As I sit here and ponder the question of my future as a learner I must first reflect back to what got me here today. At some level I have been “in school” for nearly thirty years and wouldn't change anything about it. Like most people I started Kindergarden at five years old and went straight through college graduation. After college I spent a year traveling to five different countries including living in Australia for six months. I then started my next journey back “in school” as I accepted my first teaching and coaching job. My first year I can safely say I learned more about knowledge and about my own learning style than I did in my whole college career as a student. Creating lesson plans, preparing content I had not studied before, and implementing new technology were all challenges that I embraced. After being a full time teacher for seven years I was given the opportunity to become a senior administrator at our school. This was a steep learning curve and looking back on it there was nothing to prepare me for the challenges I would face. Then, nearly four years ago I embarked on another set of learning challenges when I entered the Masters program at Michigan State University. I have to admit I was skeptical at first with online learning and being back in school as a student, but it could have not been a better experience for me. I learned about all aspects of education and have implemented much of what I have learned into our school. Oddly enough, I feel like I learned more collaboratively than I would have in going to a traditional classroom setting. I really enjoyed seeing the work of other educators from around the world. So what's next?

Even though my Masters Degree is almost finished, my quest as a lifelong learner is far from over. One of my career goals as an educator is to become a leader at a school that encompasses coeducation for grades Kindergarden through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I have been at all boys private boarding high school all of my career and have loved being a part of it, but realize that new challenges will foster to learning opportunities. I have devoted so much focus in how male adolescent minds work, that it fascinates me how different females think, learn, and react than boys the same age. I also want to learn and investigate the dynamic between boys and girls in the same learning environment at all stages of learning. Is this the optimal model or is single gender more effective? At this stage of my career I don't have those answers. Only time will tell.

The next commitment I'm going to make as a learner is one that has helped guide me to be the educator I have already become, which is to read relevant information every week. Education and technology change nearly everyday and it can be a daunting task to stay up to date. The Michigan State program opened my eyes to so many online educational resources like youtube.edu, khan academy, voicethread, wikis, and many more. In addition it's important to also read online educational journals, magazines like Psychology today and even newspapers like the Wall Street Journal, and New York Times. Whether we like it or not education is changing quickly. Virtual online education is on the rise and the next generation of education will have the most dramatic changes in the history of our society. I believe formal education will still have value, but specialization and the use of online learning will be must. In the end I can't predict exactly what education will look like in the future, but I will make the commitment to stay relevant in a quickly changing environment.

In the end, I feel privileged to be involved in education and have the opportunity to help the next generation of learners. It's important for me to continue to learn the nuances of education and view learning as an ongoing process. Whether this process occurs through online resources, books, technology, the school environment, or even travel, it's important to value the learning process and to share this experience with all students. As Gandhi once quoted “live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever”.

-Jeff Miles