

Looking Forward...

I have always considered myself an avid learner. Whether it be a new “pop culture” term taught to me by my students, or something I heard off the latest podcast, I have a child-like enthusiasm for learning. I get wholeheartedly and genuinely excited when I absorb new information. I believe this is what makes me such a great teacher. If there is anything I have learned over the many years in the profession it is that schools can be wildly unpredictable environments. As teachers, we must be flexible, adaptable, and resilient. I have never felt that more than now; trying to finish my masters and raise two young children during a global pandemic. As I finish up my final semester of graduate school, I am left with an unsettled feeling. Am I really done learning? Of course not! I have finished my time learning in a formal setting, but professional learning should be boundless. My mind is full of millions of things I still want to learn and accomplish. For one, I want to learn all I can about human development. Not only do I feel this is valuable as a teacher in understanding student behavior, but I feel this would be invaluable for me as a mother of young children. Secondly, I would like to focus on ways to make math “unboring”. I do a good job of getting kids excited, but with the rise of technological resources, Pinterest and teacher blogs, I know I can do more. Finally, I would like to develop my skills as a teacher leader. I want to be a resource and mentor for fellow teachers.

Goal 1: Become an Expert in Human Development

For years, I heard fellow teachers tell students, “that is not ___ grade behavior!” I could never determine why, but that statement always frustrated me. It was not until I became a mom and did my own reading that I discovered why that got under my skin. It is because when an 8th grader does something we deem as “lacking forethought”, that is *normal* 8th grade behavior. They don't have a fully developed brain. When my toddler throws an absolute tantrum over something I believe is “ridiculous”, that is *normal* toddler behavior. They don't have the emotional vocabulary to let you know they are frustrated. As I learned more, I became increasingly disappointed in my undergraduate education. Why was there not more focus on the importance of understanding human development and how it is a large contributing factor to human behavior? As a new mom, why was I not given more resources to help me understand what is “normal” and what is not? We as teachers (and parents) need to be taught to understand that as children develop, the way they learn (and behave) changes. I believe that as I gain more knowledge in the ins and outs of child development, I can gain a better understanding of how I can better help my students. Programs and blogs such as [Inspired Human Development](#), [Responsive Classroom](#), [Developing Minds](#) and [Big Little Feelings](#) have been designed to help teachers and parents alike. I plan to use their articles and newsletters to better myself as a mom and teacher.

Goal 2: Make Math “Unboring”

To be blunt, learning (and sometimes teaching) math can be boring. Learn a topic, practice a topic, assess a topic, repeat. To add to that, math is usually not a favorite subject for kids. Most have a horror story or two about “that one teacher” who turned them off math forever. As hard as it is to swallow sometimes, math is a skill that needs to be practiced repetitively to develop fluency and understanding. However, I do know that my enjoyment of teaching is essential to lure kids back into the content. I spend a large amount of time in the beginning of the year focusing on the *who* rather than the *what*. I love nothing more than laughing along side of my students. I know they feel comfortable enough to take chances because of the classroom environment I have created, but I now need to work on ramping up my content in meaningful ways. Being a millennial (of sorts), I have turned to the internet for resources. There are endless amount of Instagram worthy teachers to follow. In addition, I am going to focus my time and energy on professional development through agencies like the [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics](#), [PBLWorks](#) created by the Buck Institute, and [Teach Your Heart Out](#).

Goal 3: Become a Leader Among Teachers

This school year (2020-2021) has been the hardest year of my entire teaching career. My family relocated to a new city, during a global pandemic, which meant I started at a brand-new school, never meeting the faculty or students. I did not get two weeks of valuable start-of-school professional development that would introduce me to the school’s culture. I never got an opportunity to meet my team and plan out advisory or cross curricular units, like I would have any other year. Instead, I got a computer and Zoom. It was also my first time working in a school that was 1:1 with apple products. In those first few months, I witnessed firsthand the hardships of implementing technology under a tight deadline without adequate training and time for teachers to investigate it. I saw many teachers turn off technology and revert to “old school” teaching tactics that left their lessons tasteless and boring. I listened to teachers complain about having to learn new technologies citing it was too difficult and they “didn’t have enough time”. I watched entire lessons blow up in my face because I bit off more than I could chew, or my computer decided to go on the fritz. However, experiencing the ups and downs along with my peers, pushed me to want to help. By maintaining my glass-half-full mentality, I was able to guide fellow teachers to take steps in the right direction. This feeling of usefulness was exciting and reinvigorated my passion for education. I got a taste of what it felt like to add value and I am now constantly seeking new ways to add value to myself and those around me. Through my own discovery, I have found organizations like [Leaning Forward](#). They provide many professional development opportunities and [publish meaningful articles](#) that

discuss the importance of formal and informal opportunities for teacher leadership. My current school follows these beliefs and offer numerous opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles. Moving forward, I plan to find and take advantage of occasions where I am able to mentor and lead fellow teachers.

In closing...

My students deserve a teacher who practices what they preach. If I expect my students to be lifelong learners, I must do it myself. I am not perfect, nor do I know everything. Continually growing and evolving is pivotal to remaining relevant as an educator. It is my duty to develop the best version of myself.