

Lessons Learned: My Development as a Teacher and Human
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Upon entering the master's program at Michigan State University, I had three distinct goals in mind: help pass on my passion for education to fellow teachers through leadership, bridge the gap between general and special education, and learn enough information to impact change.

My life has been one of changing and learning. Through every phase, I try to learn something worthwhile. I began my teaching career at a very young age. My mother would regularly use her best classroom management skills to get all four of her personality-filled children to behave in public. Through all of this, my mother was able to foster our individualities yet maintained that we must always stay empathetic. This comes from her long career in the special education field. I strongly believe that my job as an educator, much like my mother, is to not only educate students within the constraints of my subject matter but to also educate them on how to live life with grace and perseverance.

My next phase of learning came when I started working as a paraprofessional during the day while completing my course work in the evening at the University of Houston. Those long days taught me how to manage my time and function during chaos. I learned that by not requiring every teacher to be a "special educator", we are doing a huge disservice to our students with needs.

Next, my life's path moved me towards the faith-based, Episcopalian schools. For the next decade, I became hypervigilant in my quest for self-discovery and growth while my family grew, and we transitioned to a new phase. Throughout my time in private schools, I learned that my strength is my ability to teach and connect with those around me.

While I teach in a private school and special education services are not provided, the need for providing best practice for *all* is absolutely vital. All my coursework has provided me with a mound of techniques, information, practices, and beliefs that weren't there before. While I started my career in special education, I knew I did not have enough education to provide the assistance our students needed. Since completing my coursework, I have taken on roles in educating and guiding teachers in practices that will help their students with learning differences. I work closely with a group of other teachers to make sure we, as a school, are providing accommodations correctly. As I had hoped when I entered the program, my time at MSU has allowed me to enthuse the teachers around me and slowly bridge the gap between general and special education. My fellow teachers are changing the way they teach because I have convinced them it is valuable. And as it has been my life goal, I try to learn something from every phase in life. This phase of life has taught me that I am more motivated than ever to grow and learn. These goals will continue to be a focus of mine as I move towards my future goals.