

The More Things Change, The More They Stay The Same

By: Michelle Roehl

Upon application to the MAED program, I had to make a plea with MSU to once again let me into the university. The application asked for my professional goals and reasoning for wanting to be a part of the MSU Master's program. I wrote my goals in the summer of 2012, just after my 2nd year of teaching. It was at a time when I felt ready to go back to school, comfortable with 'being a teacher', but ready to be challenged. When going through undergraduate, no class prepares you for the little things you do in your classroom everyday—like classroom management, or what to do when a kid is throwing up on you, or the need to constantly do a head count throughout the day, etc. Those are all things you learn while teaching! There is no preparing for the life of a teacher and when I realized I could manage my own classroom, and I felt comfortable in my role—that's when I applied to the program. It was at a point when I sat down and realized that my students don't need fancy posters or die-cuts or name tags or other learning trinkets; they need ME. They need me to provide meaningful lesson plans every single day. They need me to show up with different strategies to teach each one of them, and they need me to perform for 6 hours a day, keeping their attention, letting them know I care and giving them the best possible education I can give them. And when I realize I couldn't reach this goal on my own, I turned to my alma mater—Michigan State University. I needed this program to help me be a better teacher, to push myself to do more in my classroom and give me resources to make my lessons better and better everyday.

Two years ago starting this journey to my masters degree, I wrote that my goal was to continue learning in order to continue teaching. And yes, I am that simple. I am a confident teacher and I know that I show up to work everyday excited and thrilled to have a new day to work with my students. I am able to separate my busy personal life and the personal lives of my students from the classroom, and I make a point to start every morning with enthusiasm and a smile. But I am also well aware that smiles won't make me a great educator, and enthusiasm won't make my students learn. I know when I need help, and am never afraid to ask for it. And therein lies my professional goal—I want to learn so that my students can learn. And I believe that will be my goal for the rest of my career—because everything I do, I do for my students.