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Final Reflection

The first two weeks of class flew by and when it was all over my brain was on overload, full of new information, creative ideas, and many ways to integrate technology into my classroom. The next four weeks seemed to go by even faster as I was dreaming away for the dream it paper, finalizing my online portfolio, and writing my final reflection to put together the total PACKage. I gained knowledge about behaviorism, cognitivism, socio-culturalism, motivation, creativity, understanding, backwards design, and navigating leadership tensions. I also learned hands on creating Pixlrs, making Powtoons, editing iMovies, repurposing tools like Writing Prompts, and researching the Universal Design for Learning.

It all started with the Just Shoot Me photo, where I was able to show the class what a die-hard Spartan fan I am. It was fun to get to know more about everyone in the class and I plan on doing this activity with my leadership class next year. (Thank you for the idea! It’s one of many that I will be “repurposing” for my classroom.) I took a technology survey and rated myself a 3 out of 5. After taking the survey, I realized that I still had a lot to learn and that there were some things on the list I had never done before like creating a phone app. I was eager to start class and learn about these new technologies.

As we discussed Daniel T. Willingham’s book, Why Don’t Students Like School?, I began to realize that thinking is difficult for learners and as a teacher I need reconsider the ways I have been doing some of the activities in my classroom. This was valuable to me because I now see that rote learning in Spanish is easy for the learner because they are not thinking very hard, but they do not understand the material because they have a difficult time using it in context. They know it, but don’t understand it, two very different things. This was a treasured lesson to me and in the future I want to push my students to think more and understand deeper meanings.

Reviewing the TPACK framework reminded me why I entered the MAET program. I want to learn how to use technology effectively in my classroom and integrate it with pedagogical and content knowledge. Mishra and Koehler’s article, Too Cool for School? Now Way!, reinforced that I need to connect technology with my content area and pedagogical strategies to extend my teaching to more students. Before the program, I was using technology just to use it, now I am using it to uncover students’ learning and as an addition to my teaching.

I enjoyed Shulman’s reading about how we forget things and how learners can have amnesia where they forget the facts, fantasia where they misunderstand the facts, or inertia where they can’t use what they’ve learned. In my classroom students suffer from all three, so I was eager to learn how to motivate students to have more successful experiences getting information from long-term memory into working memory. My working memory was pulling facts from my long-term memory when names like Pavlov, Skinner, and Watson were brought up. My group and I researched prompting and fading. Prompting is saying something to persuade, encourage, or remind students and fading is a waning or decline so students may become more independent. We presented an interactive mini-lesson to the class using the Smart Board to show math prompts and then we used fading as students continued the problems by giving them less verbal and visual cues to enable a more independent learner.

Feynman’s article, It’s as Simple as One, Two, Three, made me consider how learners think textually or visually, but more importantly how we all think differently. The way I think and learn is probably a lot different than the way my students think. My students have a difficult time recognizing cognate words and it’s so hard for me to comprehend why they don’t ‘get it’. To me, policía looks just like police, but students will guess policy! I realize that this is a concept that comes easily to me, but I need to be considerate that to them it’s like learning a foreign language (pun intended).

As we moved on to cognitive development, I learned that at ages 13-15 most of my students are at the formal operation stage of learning. Therefore they should have a good sense of logical thought and deductive reasoning. This was helpful for me because I realize that I can challenge students more than I have been. Although it is difficult because they are limited in a second language, they can be pushed, but not too hard so that they’re in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky) making it challenging enough where they can figure it out, but not too easy that they don’t find it valuable. The reading, The Theory Behind Disciplined Inquiry by Levstik, tells how knowing all of these theories makes teaching better because if asked by a parent or administrator why I did a certain lesson, I can explain my reasoning behind it with detail, evidence, and confidence.

Teaching for Conceptual Change, helped me see that learners’ experiences have a big impact on how they view the world and their rationale for believing in certain concepts. It was very difficult for the elementary teacher to change the misconceptions of her young students about the temperature of the thermometer and it took many experiments to change the minds of her students. This lesson was valuable to me because I now know it may take more than one try to change students minds, it will take many. I want to open the minds of my students to the diversity of the Spanish language and at how it’s not just spoken in Mexico, as many of them think. Like H. Gardner’s thoughts in The Disciplined Mind, I want students that understand the world and think that education consists more of just being in school and goes beyond the walls of the classroom. I want to find new “experiments” to help open their eyes to the Spanish-speaking world and the change the misconceptions they may have about it.

It was great to have the librarian give a refresher course on how to research on the MSU database. I found this very useful when I went to research topics for the Exploring Key Topics in Technology and Education project. I discovered great citation management resources, Zotero and Endnote, which I would like to learn more about.

After the lesson on motivation, I went home and watched Youtube videos on motivation for learning, sports, running, etc. It motivated me to go running while listening to some motivational music, I felt like I could run as fast as Usain Bolt and then I fell flat on my face! Nonetheless, I was motivated to run all the way home because I wanted to overcome the fall. This is a true story and I am reflecting on it because I want to remember the feeling of the true intrinsic motivation that kept me running after I tore open my knees and hands. This is the motivation that I want my students to have for learning, that even if they get a wrong answer or don’t understand, they will try again and keep going. I want to get my students so pumped up about using technology and learning Spanish that they enjoy it and find it valuable. C. Dweck’s article, Caution: Praise Can Be Dangerous, had one main thing that stuck with me, praise effort not ability, which was also reinforced in Chapter 8 of Willingham’s book. I don’t want any of my students feeling like they can’t do it because they’re not smart enough. Therefore, I will praise efforts, not abilities.

After reading Media for Inquiry, Communication, Construction, and Expresion by J. Dewey on different ways to use media, I came away with the main conclusion that students can be very creative if we let them be and as a teacher, I need to be creative and take technological tools and repurpose them for the classroom. In class, we repurposed our pictures of letters to create word art and for my group wiki I researched the tool, Writing Prompts, and how it can be repurposed as a bell-ringer activity or having students create their own using Google Presentations. This activity and reading were very valuable to me because I know the importance of taking tools and reusing them to maximize the learning of all students and there are so many things out there that can be used to do this. I really like the quote from class, “Psychology is a science and teaching is an art.” by William James. Teachers have many roles to play and repurposing tools is an art.

During the technology jigsaw, I learned great tools for creating and editing on iMovie. It was a great time to learn in a smaller setting from my peers. I had not used iMovie before and value this experience, as it was useful to me while creating the Understanding Understanding video. The creation of this video helped show me that people have misconceptions of how the US president is elected and that people will rationalize something even if they don’t believe it to be true. Also, that people want to understand something because most of our participants asked us to tell them what the right answer was after being interviewed. It showed that learners may know facts, but not understand them as stated in Understanding by Design by G. Wiggin’s and J. McTighe. This project was valuable to me because understanding how learners understand makes me reflect on my teaching and how students are learning. I really want to be uncovering what students know and develop a deeper understanding for what they believe about the Spanish culture and language, not just cover it up and add on to their current misconceptions.

Teaching for Aesthetic Understanding by M. Girod was one of my favorite articles because it opened up my thought process and I enjoyed looking at the differences in Ms. Parker and Mr. Smith’s classrooms. This motivated my ideas for the Dream It project because I want my students to be able to use their Spanish outside of the classroom and in real life like Mr. Smith’s students did with the science terms connecting them outside of the classroom. This is so valuable to me, to have students using what they know, and applying (transferring) it to other content areas. Teaching that Sticks by C. Heath inspired me to tell more stories to my class in the target language. I tell stories all the time about my travels and life, but I want it to be done in the target language because I know the students will be interested and it will push them to listen and really try to figure out the language and hopefully it will stick in their memory.

I used the backwards design model as a guideline for my Dream It project and found it very helpful. It opens my mind to think about the big picture is and what goal I want to accomplish. Then I thought of the necessary resources and lastly made the plans. It’s now one of my favorite ways to plan for a unit.

McLeod’s article, Are We Irrelevant to the Digital, Global World in Which We Now Live, was a great lead into leadership tensions because my school has a fine line as to when we let students use technology. The article talks about how we need to prepare our students for the digital age because that is the world they are and will be living in. I agree with this 100% and that is why my Pixlr to create a 3-in-1 photo to show leadership tensions portrays open-to-close minded teachers. I believe that teachers need to be open to using technology and if they are not, they are doing a big disservice to their students. Most students use technology daily then don’t use it when they come to school. It does not make sense and as teachers we need to support them and each other in this new digital era. Paulson reiterates this in his article, Feeling the Tug? Managing the Tensions that Pull Leaders in Different Directions, by giving advice on how to harness tensions instead of letting them pull teachers in a negative direction. This drives me to want to be a leader in my school and put his tips into action like giving more credit to others than yourself and caring enough to support teachers that are really struggling with the uses of technology. As a teacher, if I feel the support of others around me, I feel confident that I can do it, and I want to be that support for teachers in my school and district.

P. Mishra, M. Koehler, and D. Henriksen’s article, The 7 Trans-disciplinary Habits of Mind, emphasized that I need to connect my interests with my teaching and my lessons to the real world. These courses did a tremendous job at doing that and it was so easy to see the professors’ love for art and creativity. Their passions made me want to be passionate about it and I would love to be a teacher like that and I desire that passion to be seen by my students. I want them to feel like their learning matters so much, much the way I felt during the summer program. I felt like a team member and that my opinions were valued. Cuban’s article, Confusing Technology with Instructional Reform, was valuable to me because it reminded me that using technology is not about using it, but about learning and this motivates me to want to use it effectively in my classroom to teach the maximum amount of learners as possible.

In the next 5 years of my career, I would like to focus on leadership and creativity because these are areas in which I would like to improve and have interest in. Excelling in these areas will help develop me into the teacher that I see myself becoming; one who can lead staff and students in cutting edge technology, make creative lessons and activities that motivate students to learn, and understand students’ knowledge and ways of thinking.

I want to be a leader in my school that is looked to for advice on technology, is approachable and supportive of all teacher no matter their skill level. The resources I will use for ideas on leadership are the articles, The 7 Trans-disciplinary Habits of Mind by P. Mishra, M. Koehler, and D. Henriksen and Feeling the Tug? Managing the Tensions that Pull Leaders in Different Directions by S. McLeod. I will use the website freetech4teachers.com to stay up to date on free tools that I can share with teachers and use in my classroom. I will continue to be a member of my school’s PLC technology team, but will try to step up more as a leader and share more of my ideas in future meetings. I would like to use my blog as a resource for teachers in my building and district. I will continue to use my PLN of Twitter, Classroom 2.0, Merlot, and Facebook to stay connect with colleagues, MAET classmates, and MSU professors. My goal for next year is to attend the MACUL conference because I have never been before and think it will be a fantastic experience. In the next few year, my goals is to present at the conference.

The web and technology resources I will use for creativity in my classroom are Pixlr, Powtoons, Audacity, iMovie/Movie Maker, Instagram, Twitter, Storify, and Edmodo. I feel these tools will keep my students interested in topics in both Spanish and Leadership class. The article I will refer to for creativity in the future is Media for Inquiry, Communication, Construction, and Expression by J. Dewey. The book I will refer to for creative lesson plans is Making Thinking Visible by Ron Ritchart. It has ideas on how to make students’ work more visible and how to differentiate instruction to include all students. I will also continue to stay connected to MAET classmates through Facebook and Twitter for innovative and creative tech tips that I can integrate into my classroom. My goal for next year is implement my Dream It project in my Spanish 2 classes and my goal for the next 5 years is to use donorschoose.org to get an awesome grant that will let my students be creative inside and outside of the classroom!

These resources are most beneficial for me because they are relevant to what I teach, I have gained knowledge about them over the course, I feel confident using them, and the articles and books support my learning experience. They will help me stay connected with the MAET program and within my school and district. The MAET Summer Cohort program has been of great value to me and it has helped me grow as an individual, a teacher, a leader, and a techie!