

Tools, Goals, and Growth

As a student of the Michigan State's Educational Technology program I have grown a great deal as an educator and instructor. When I first entered the program my emphasis was on learning to use different technology based educational tools. My focus was very much based on the instrument. As I progressed through the program I found my focus shift to the goals that I wanted to accomplish with my teaching and technology.

Initially my goals when entering Michigan State's Educational Technology program were to learn as much as I could about technology. I felt that the key to using technology in the classroom was having the best handle on the latest tools, programs, and websites. I wanted to learn how they all worked and where to learn about new ones. Technology has always evolved quickly and learning about all the new tools and resources seemed like the best way to be at the cutting edge of educational technology.

Currently my goals about using technology in the classroom have shifted dramatically. My focus has shifted away from the tools and centered on the goals that I want to accomplish with the tools. In this case my goal has become how to use technology to enhance and improved student learning. Earlier in the program my focus was on the tools to accomplish this. As I have grown through the program it has become very clear to me that tools are just tools. Tools will always be changing and have been since the beginning of human history. The most important thing is having an understanding of how to use the tools to achieve a goal. For example you might spend time learning how to use a hammer effectively and efficiently. Not bending and nails or marking the surrounding wood. Carpenters are not valuable because they can swing a hammer. They have value as a result of the great and beautiful things that they can create with that hammer. They set a goal for what they want to create and use the tool to achieve it. I have found this to be very true with educational technology. Knowing how to use technology is not the goal. The goal is how to use the technology to enhance student learning. Having students create google docs or make a screencasts is not the goal. The goal is using those tool to enhance student learning and understanding about the content that they are engaged with. Often times overemphasis on the tool causes one to lose sight of the true goal.

As a result of my studies in Michigan State's Educational Technology program my goals have shifted from using tools to enhancing student learning. I have found that I have grown a great deal in this area. My focus is now on the end goal and not the tools. If the end goal is kept clear the tools will naturally evolve and fall into their proper and subordinate place. These changes in understanding have had a great impact on my instruction and who I am as an educator.