

## Why I Will Never Achieve My Goal...And that's a Good Thing

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After my first three years as a teacher, I had made significant improvements in many aspects of teaching, but as a lifelong learner I wanted to continue improving. With the increasing rate that technology is being integrated into our lives, technology seemed like an promising area for me to keep improving. Upon entering the MAED program through MSU in the summer of 2013, my primary goal was to maximize student learning through the use of technology. At the start I didn't have much direction towards how I will actually do this, but it's the job of the instructors to tell me how, right?

I should have taken the time to reflect upon my own teaching and realize that this is not how it works. An educator's job is not to simply *tell* a learner information, but instead to *facilitate* learning by creating meaningful experiences for the learner. Recently, I had one of those experiences reading a piece about iterative design, a process of continually refining goals in order to never stop improving. The article, written by Aza Raskin, describes how he used iterative design to build a paper plane that can fly for long periods of time. Through each step of the process, he makes his goals more specific and more attainable. It turns out this is exactly the process that has happened to me throughout the past year.

Since the beginning of my program, I can think of three distinct goals that have materialized, in order to help maximize student learning. Using the Web 2.0 mindset, my first goal is that students use technology to collaborate, create and share online. Creating content (websites, wikis, presentations) and communicating or sharing information (Google docs, dropbox, twitter) are both easier than ever before and are important to incorporate into education.

The next goal is for me to think critically about why I am using a particular piece of technology, especially in a mathematical context. In the past, I found myself using technology just for the sake of using technology, but it is important for me to keep in mind my mathematical objectives when selecting technology. Creating a wiki can be a great way for students to collaborate and access information. Sites like Geogebra can serve as a way for students to manipulate and explore various mathematical concepts.

My final goal is to be able to objectively evaluate and experiment with new technology. With new technologies being introduced everyday, this may be the most important towards continually maximizing student learning over the course of my career.

Reflecting on my original goal, I realize that simply 'maximizing student learning' is impossible. At any particular moment I might be happy with the progress that I have made, but with technology that is constantly evolving I need to be sure that my practice never stops adapting with it. Instead, I need to make sure that I am fully utilizing the potential of the current technology, thinking critically about how it fits in for my students and continue to evaluate new pieces of technology. If I can do these things I will surely

create a positive learning environment, even if I never achieve my goal of maximizing student learning.