

Future Learning Goals: Building Upon a Strong Foundation

By Mary Hobbs

The foundation has been laid. I have four years of teaching under my belt, and now I am completing a master's degree in education. After going through my various courses in my master's program, there are three areas that I would like to build upon. First, as a lifelong learner, improving my content knowledge in the sciences will help me as an educator. Next, while this graduate school work has provided me with several tools and techniques to improve my pedagogy, finding more ways to present information to my students will benefit not only myself as an educator, but my students as learners. Finally, while I currently have a good network of educators at my own school, it is time to expand my relationships by sharing the things that I have learned with others, which will help me learn from them too. Below I share several ways that I can build my learning in these three areas.

Build my Knowledge

Building my content knowledge will help me grow as an educator. There are sometimes questions that students ask me when I simply have to say, "*I don't know, I'll have to Google it.*" While I acknowledge that I cannot know *everything* about science, I do feel that there are some gaps in my knowledge, and "Nature" is an area where my content knowledge is lacking. While the [LeafSnap app](#) can often come to the rescue, I feel that there are times when I should be able to answer student questions on my own. Becoming a certified naturalist is my first step in building my content knowledge. I plan to sign up for the Delaware Nature Society's "[Naturalist Certification Series](#)" the next time it becomes available.

Another goal that I have for building my knowledge is to continue to become familiar with the Next Generation Science Standards ([NGSS](#)). Through my graduate school coursework, I now understand the importance and benefits of using the standards as much as I can with my teaching. Before each unit that I teach in the upcoming year, I would like to read the standards for that unit.

Build my Pedagogy

Building my content knowledge can only take me so far. In order to truly thrive as an educator, I will need to continue to learn and utilize various pedagogical techniques and strategies. Several of my graduate school courses exposed me to Ambitious Science Teaching ([AST](#)), a method of science instruction that focuses on "intellectual engagement" and "attention to equity." Specifically, I would like to focus on "[discourse moves](#)" like giving "wait time" for students to respond and asking "pressing questions" instead of just spoon feeding them the answers.

Additionally, my pedagogical knowledge could be enhanced by reading articles from various National Science Teacher Association ([NSTA](#)) magazines and papers. As an NSTA member, I receive many publications throughout the year, and perhaps a realistic goal would be to read at least one article a month from an NSTA journal. Taking advantage of these resources will help to build my pedagogical knowledge, and with this, I can feel confident sharing with others.

Build my Network

After my fourth year of teaching, I am proud of the work that I am doing in my classroom and I want to share it with others. With my new master's degree, I now feel confident that I can be a leader in the world of educators. With this portfolio as my starting platform, I want to start a blog about what's happening in my classroom, or even possibly what's happening on my sports fields. Even if I could try to write a post once a month, it would be a good starting point. [Weebly's blog feature](#) will be a great way to transition this portfolio into a functioning blog.

Presenting at a conference could be another way to connect myself with other educators. I have been to several [NSTA conferences](#) as an attendee, but never as a presenter, and I now feel like it is time to share what I have learned. Hopefully by building my own blog and presenting at a conference, I can then connect with other educators and start to create my own professional learning network.

By putting in the effort to build my knowledge, pedagogy, and network, I can continue to grow as a teacher. This master's program has helped me lay my strong foundation, but now it is time to take my learning to the next level. Building these areas will help me towards a successful and enjoyable journey in the field of education.