

Goal Reflection: From “Surviving” to “Thriving”

by Mary Hobbs

“Working at one of the top private schools in Delaware, I want to be the most innovative, knowledgeable, and well-educated teacher that I can be.” (Professional Goal Statement, MAED Application, 2016)

My first year of teaching, as they say, was a state of “survival mode.” The night before each day was spent learning and planning for the following day’s lesson. As a 5th and 6th grade science teacher, I arrived at school an hour early to prepare things like [chopping lemons](#), [counting straws](#), [blending red cabbage](#), [mixing paint](#), or other miscellaneous tasks in order to make the day go smoothly. My goal in my first year was to get through the day.

In my second year, I was lucky enough to be teaching the same subject and grade levels, which made me feel more comfortable in my classroom. With this new found sense of content, I felt like there was time and room for growth in my pedagogy. It was in the Spring of my second year of teaching that I applied for a [graduate school program](#) at Michigan State University. My goal, as stated in my application’s *Professional Goal Statement*, was “to be the most innovative, knowledgeable, and well-educated teacher that I can be.”

As I went through my master’s program, in my third and fourth years of teaching, my innovation and knowledge flourished. With the guidance of my graduate school studies, I was able to design a [Vodcast](#) to help my students with measurement, create a [Inquiry-based lesson plan](#) using the Next Generation Science Standards ([NGSS](#)), and even outline an [entire unit](#) on Newton’s Laws of Motion. My original goal of becoming more “innovative, knowledgeable, and well-educated” has been built upon, but has not been, and never will be, achieved.

This goal will stay the same for me, as I continue to be a lifelong learner, but these graduate school courses have certainly raised my level of pedagogy. I feel much more confident in the classroom. After just finishing my fourth year of teaching and taking my final class in my master’s program, I realize that my goal should be to not feel “comfortable” with my teaching, as I did in my second year, because that could lead to “complacency.” I want to continue to learn new ways to be innovative and new ways to build my knowledge. My current confidence stems from a strong pedagogical foundation, but I want the branches to continue to grow.

Throughout my graduate school experience, I have also developed a new goal for myself, which is to establish an online presence. This portfolio will be the launching pad for this goal. I would like to more effectively use my Twitter account, and I would also like to start a blog about what’s happening in my classroom. I’m proud of the work that I am doing and I would love to share it with other educators.

While I still often do have to arrive at school early to chop lemons and count straws, I can now say that my goal is not simply “surviving,” but rather “thriving.”