

Can I Please Have Summer Break?  
Sarah Weston  
June 2014

Winding down my time at MSU, I will be the first to admit I look forward to enjoying summer break without the added work and time constraints graduate work brings. I will no longer feel guilty as I meet simultaneously via the internet with my small group to chat about the importance of early literacy, while my own kids stare at electronic devices so they won't interrupt us! Despite looking forward to a few summers without attending college, I know my educational experiences will actually lead to more learning experiences down the road.

I have many interests in the field of education. I believe my experience teaching at-risk preschool and alternative education high-school, as well as several classes I have taken at MSU, have led to my interests. My current interests include: social skill development, language development, increasing student interest in science, and technology use within the classroom.

Several of my interests were sparked by specific courses at MSU, leading me to pursue these areas. During the summer of 2012 the two courses I was enrolled in, Psychology of Classroom Discipline and Elementary Reading Assessment and Instruction, both focused on the importance of intrinsic motivation. I later chose to attend a [conference](#) regarding motivation presented by [Richard Lavoie](#). In addition to the strategies and ideas I learned at the conference, I purchased two of his books, [It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend](#) and [The Motivation Breakthrough: 6 Secrets to Turning On the Tuned-Out Child](#). I was excited to read them over summer break as I continued to learn about motivation and helping children with learning disabilities.

While I have never been afraid of computers or failing when it comes to technology, I have slowly fallen behind as technology has progressed. My enrollment in an entirely online program taught me new skills and made me aware of technologies that are available. Two courses I took, Using Technology to Teach Students with Mild Disabilities and Capstone Seminar, have opened my eyes to all the advances technology brings to education. They have created a desire for me to increase my technological knowledge so I can effectively integrate more technology into the classroom. In the future I hope to participate in workshops or college classes to teach me new skills and ideas. While I don't have a planned timeline for taking classes, I look forward to having my summer free next year, which allows me to pursue this interest. Currently I am taking an informal approach by reading Richard Byrne's blog, [Free Technology for Teachers](#). I receive his practical technology tip of the week and I am making a conscious effort to do more than just save the email. I am reading the articles and choosing technologies to try each month.

I believe knowledge acquisition, whether informal or formal, requires a conscious decision to participate and expand one's knowledge. Through technology, there is a whole world of learning available at my fingertips, but accessing it requires a conscious effort. [Nielsen named the 5 most visited websites of 2013](#) as Google, Facebook, Yahoo, MSN/Windows Live/Bing and YouTube. Despite the hours individuals spend on these websites, the value of the information found is dependent on how it is used. I recently

gave my high school students a research assignment, only to realize they were typing the question into Google and writing down an answer from the search results without using the accompanying links. Despite finding answers, they missed out on so much more. My desire, as seen in my approach to the Technology Blog, is to pursue learning.

Abraham Lincoln said, "I do not think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday." In the five years I attended MSU, I grew in my experience and in my interests. I'm unsure where I will find myself in another five years. My interests may have changed based on the grade level I am teaching, and I may or may not have started pursuing another degree. While my summers may not be spent taking graduate courses, they will be spent learning as I prepare myself for the next school year and acquire new technological skills. The person I become will evolve from my experiences and the learning that took place in the past, currently is taking place, and will take place in the future.