

Prepared to be Unprepared
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In May 2010 I applied to the [MAED](#) (Masters of Arts in Education) program at MSU after spending several years home with my children. Prior to this I had worked off and on as a substitute teacher when my family life allowed it. I chose the program through MSU because there was a wide range of courses available. I also loved that it allowed me to take my courses completely on-line, thus allowing me to complete my coursework while working around the needs of my young children.

One of my initial goals was renewal of my provisional teaching certificate as I had allowed it to lapse. Completing the master's program allowed me to renew my certificate and eventually obtain my Professional certificate. My other goal was to be better prepared to teach and work with all children in the elementary classroom.

Parenting a child with special needs ignited my passion to help all children succeed to the best of their ability. Many children in the general education classroom have special needs. In the early elementary years many disabilities are undiagnosed, emerging as the child struggles with learning or behavioral issues. A child's background, including their socioeconomic status and their cultural values, can influence how they think, learn and participate in the classroom environment. By learning numerous strategies to manage my classroom and foster a caring classroom community, I have become proactive before behavior problems begin. The knowledge I have gained utilizing functional behavior analysis and positive behavior support helps me when student behavior becomes challenging. The strategies and skills I gained that help students struggling academically include: universal design for learning, response to intervention, assistive technology, and a greater breadth of knowledge regarding literacy instruction. The knowledge I have gained at MSU has enabled me to better accommodate all students in my class.

Nearing the end of my graduate coursework, I realize my goal of being prepared to work with all children is a goal I will continuously work towards. Though I have become better prepared for my students, and have acquired a vast array of strategies to use, I will never be completely prepared. Each child and their individual background, as well as each situation, is unique. Despite going to school to become a better teacher, I am still a student. I am a student of my own classroom, learning from my students. The response will be different for each situation based on the individual's background, how they respond to specific stimuli, and how the class fits together as a whole. I use my acquired knowledge to make informed decisions. The techniques and strategies that are successful one day, are not always successful the next. New students and new circumstances quickly change the dynamics of the classroom! As a teacher, it is my job to be observant, patient, resourceful, and open to new research and new ideas. The cycle of learning will continue as I learn from my students, my experiences, my colleagues and professional resources.