



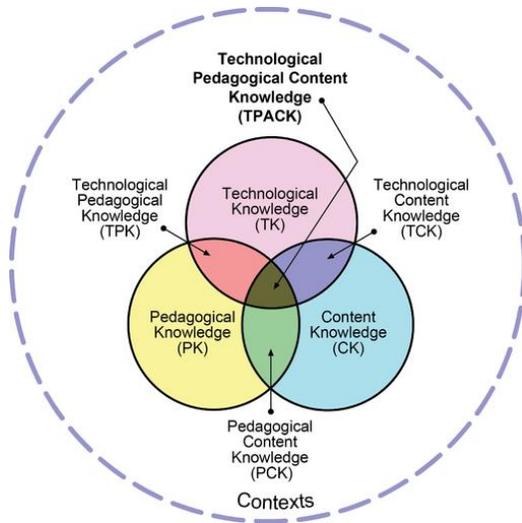
When I began the [Master of Arts in Educational Technology](#) (MAET) program at Michigan State University, my life was in a bit of flux. I was about to embark on a transition from an eight-year teaching career into a new role, Technology Director. The task ahead seemed daunting, and while I entered the program to help prepare me to be the best Tech Director I could be, the thought of taking courses through Michigan State, taking networking courses through the local community college, and starting a new job was a smidge overwhelming. Nonetheless, I dove into the program being aware of my ignorance but prepared to change that as

quickly as possible. I learned many valuable lessons, and while all of the courses altered my perceptions and increased my ability to perform my role at school, there were three that bear closer examination. Before I dive too deeply into that transformation from woefully ignorant to at a minimum mildly cognizant, I should explain what brought me to this point.

When I was in college, I desired a vocation that would allow me to maximize my influence in the lives of people. I then (and to a certain extent now) believed that the sign of a life well lived revolves around one's positive influence in the lives of others. I came to this conclusion when one of my friends' grandfather passed away, and I went to the visitation to support her. I was in awe as I saw the line to visit this man wrap around the building multiple times and move snake-like through the building to accommodate all of the people this gentleman had impacted. He had profoundly touched that many people's lives in that small town. This epiphany led me to become a youth minister and pastor before finding myself in the halls of academia. I came to believe (and still do) that a teacher touches the future every day and can transform the life a student in ways that will either propel them in a positive or sadly a negative direction. A teacher can either spark or squelch a student's passion. Ignite a flame or douse it. That's what led me to become a teacher, a love for students and a desire to do for them what too few teachers did for me. In short, I wanted to influence a generation to strive to learn about what they don't understand and to embrace a passion for becoming more than what anyone expects them to be.



With that said, I entered into my new profession with a bit of sadness. I felt as though I was moving away from my passion in order to fulfill a role that was vital (and that no one else would take) but one that took me from where I was most passionate. I thought that I would no longer be able to touch the future as I had. Well, that was where my mind was when I began my MAET journey.



Before I dive into the aforementioned classes, I would like to mention the MAETy1 hybrid, because that is where I started to see how wrong I was about my thoughts about my role as tech director. During two intense weeks, we had TPACK (which is a way of integrating technology into what we are supposed to be doing anyway) drilled into our souls. We had many adventures including planning and executing a Maker Faire in what seemed like seven hours but was probably seven days. As I sat and listened and absorbed and actively tried to become less ignorant, I started to see what my new role could be. I had a professor in Seminary say that the role of the Pastor is to equip the Saints to do the good work. The more I listened, the more it occurred to me that the role of the Tech Director is to equip the teachers and administrators to do the good work of teaching as effectively as possible.

The first class that I want to discuss is [CEP 813: Electronic Assessment](#). While that is perhaps the most boring title for a class that one could imagine, it is the first class that I started to really dive into the idea that I could use what I was learning in the now rather than a nebulous future. I saw it as an opportunity to not only develop a [rubric for assessing assessments](#), but also for creating a [rubric](#) that teachers could use to move forward in their pursuit of technology integration (not for the sake of it but because they saw how pedagogy, content knowledge, and technology could comingle to drive forward understanding). I also saw it as an opportunity to exemplify for teachers what they could be doing for their students regarding assessment. I purposely developed it with a growth mindset in mind with the idea that teachers would use that concept to trickle down into their own assessment. Prior to this class, I had used rubrics, but it was always an autopsy of what had already been completed. They were never designed to push students forward or as a communication piece for driving students to deeper understanding. Of all of the classes that I have taken, this one had the greatest impact on how I would teach if I returned to the classroom. It lives as an example in my mind of what a class can and perhaps should be.

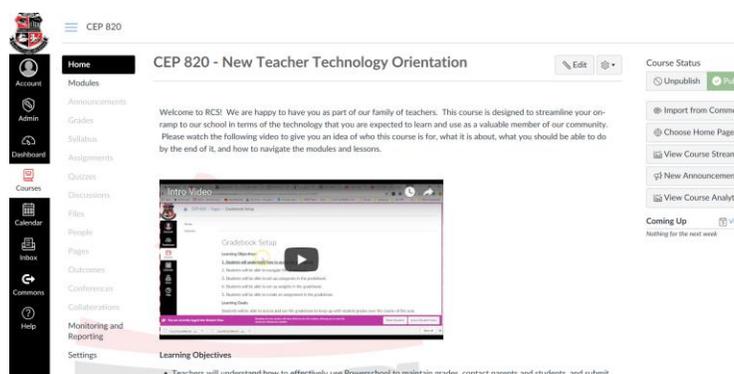


Where CEP 813 drove me into a deeper understanding of the power of assessment to propel people forward in learning and understanding rather than merely being a snapshot of if learning took place, [CEP 817: Learning Technology by Design](#) revolutionized my view of the whole learning process from the very creation stage. The course essentially showed us how we could use the Stanford Design Thinking model to create engaging and worthwhile experiences for our students. The course was broken into the five steps of the model empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. As I mentioned in the reflection paper for that class, I believe that a teacher could use this model to not only develop lessons but to involve students in the

entire learning process. The portion of the model that seems so intuitive but for the most part escaped me as an educator was the first one. I would be aware of what my students knew and needed to know,

and I would have an idea of how they liked to learn. With that said, I would as far as I can recall never take into consideration empathizing where they were, rather I would just skip to define and move on. This revelation also led to a better understanding (and a decreasing in my ignorance) of my current occupation.

As I [develop professional development](#) (which was my semester-long project), I do a much better job of seeking out what teachers need by actually reaching out to them and seeing where they fall in technology use. The simple act of involving them in the decision-making process has increased buy-in tremendously. I have since started using this process as we determine what tools to pursue (such as NewsELA and Vocabulary.com). Rather than start with the tool (hello again TPACK), we look at what teachers needs are and then define the problem and work from there to find solutions that actually meet real needs. While this seems to be an obvious process, prior to this, the tool was bought, and then we tried to shoehorn it into classes with very little buy-in from the staff. Now, that they have involvement in the process (and the process has more transparency) buy-in has increased dramatically.



While CEP 817 helped me to revolutionize the methodology that we use for tool procurement and to teach professional development in general, [CEP 820: Teaching Students Online](#) afforded me the opportunity to develop an online course from scratch. Our school is a one to one school utilizing Chromebooks, and I inherited the Canvas CMS (which I like, fortunately). Our administration wants teachers to move to using Canvas as the primary repository of

assignments and content. Before taking this course, I had used Canvas to a certain degree, but I had never created a full class with in a CMS. I just added assignments that I wanted students to do without any real thought. Through the process of developing this course, I was able to start to develop how-tos and suggestions for the teachers at my school to utilize as they start making this transition in their teaching. Given the last paragraph, you might notice this is a bit of a contradiction. I am striving to help teachers see where Canvas can make their lives easier to meet the perceived needs that they have, but ultimately, this is an example of an ultimatum that I am trying to make more palatable. With that said, CEP 820 equipped me with the tools to equip the teachers to effectively use Canvas which will increase their ability to use it to improve instruction (hello TPACK again).

Now, the genesis of all of this is the path that I have taken and more specifically the changes that have occurred in my practice thanks to my participation in this program. The most obvious change that I have noticed is that I don't think technology is always the answer to student learning and growth. In fact, sometimes I think it is a detriment, which has helped me to be a better resource to teachers that see me as an advocate for learning and not an advocate for technology as my title would imply. TPACK was the driving force behind this transformation in thought. I have on multiple occasions used it to explain to teachers the role that technology should take (assistant to pedagogy to teach content). Prior to this, I would give teachers tools and encourage them to try them in any lesson. Now, I ask what the content is and how they plan to teach it before diving into the toolbox. This may seem a small change, but it has

made quite the difference in acceptance and utilization of technology in the classroom in ways that are helpful instead of bells and whistles for the occasional teacher observation.

Another step along this path has been a transformation of my understanding of assessment. I never could assess teachers anyway (I am not an administrator, thankfully), but I would provide an autopsy method of evaluation mainly because it was all that I knew. Now, I can use my position to not provide an autopsy but to provide meaningful feedback that will help teachers to take next steps in their journey towards technology integration in their lessons. An added perk is that I try to provide that feedback in such a way that it is an example for how they can use feedback to assist students to move along the path from developing to proficiency to hopefully excellence.

A third step in the journey from ignorance to understanding was the power of involving teachers in what they learn for professional development by using the Stanford Design model. At this point, I model for teachers empathizing where they are and encourage them to do the same with their students. Rather than just provide the professional development that I perceive teachers to need, I seek out what areas they are struggling with. The biggest takeaway from this has been that one size fits all PD doesn't work. Teachers need targeted PD that pays attention to level of comfort, interest, and subject level specific.

I hope that you can see the transformation that I have made from an ignorant newbie to the role of technology director to one that has processes in place to not only help teachers grow in their technology usage but more importantly can help teachers see ways that they can improve their teaching practice itself. I have not moved away from my passion. Instead, I am in a position to help teachers to light that spark in students that I once endeavored to do myself.

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