

## Why I Chose a Master of Arts in Education

My undergraduate work consisted of two bachelors: one in Child Development focusing on Preschool Teaching, the other in Elementary Education with a major in Language Arts. I then went into my year of student teaching feeling ready to tackle the world. However, I discovered as my internship progressed I didn't feel prepared enough to meet the reading and writing needs of my third and fourth grade students. I found this to be odd because I had just completed methods courses designed to teach soon-to-be-teachers literacy instruction. I knew that if I wanted to be highly effective in this subject area, I would need to dig deeper to sharpen my tools.

Additionally, within the course of my undergraduate work, murmurings of a new reading proficiency law began to happen and ultimately this law was passed in 2016 with implementation across Michigan to come very quickly. With this new legislation, I became increasingly wary; I was a newly certified teacher who was finding that she was lacking knowledge to teach a subject which now carried so much weight for my students.

Therefore, I applied to the Master of Arts in Education program at Michigan State in the spring of 2017 with two very specific goals:

1. Become more proficient in diagnostic skills and strategies to assist me in reading instruction and intervention.
2. Dig deeper into writing and language in order to drive strong, meaningful instruction of the writing process as a whole.

The fall that I began my masters I also hired into Charlotte Public Schools in Charlotte, MI as a Developmental Kindergarten teacher. Having the youngest learners in the district, this is a prime opportunity to build strong, lifelong foundational literacy skills.

Course by course, I found that I was learning from amazing resources that I could implement immediately within my practice. My first few courses were really developed in the study of spoken language and how it affects our learning within literacy, so I chose to revamp teaching vocabulary, word study, and letter study. I could see an impact on assessments, as well as the interest my students had into delving deeper about science and social studies topics. I was able to translate that interest into writing and publishing student-driven material, as well as modifying what that looks like for students with special needs. In my second year especially, I feel that merging what I had already learned about language and writing into deeper reading instruction. I also took my reading diagnostic this year as well. Wow, did my instruction change! I found that my students grew so much more because I was truly able to differentiate by skill. My groupings became more fluid, and my students were wanting to challenge themselves when they saw their peers begin to read.

I am so glad that I started this program in my first year of teaching because I have been able to do the great service of giving my students my learning from those two goals with immediate implementation. I found myself re-energized about teaching literacy concepts because I knew I had professors from my program as well as teachers in my district who could help me to best understand my students, especially since I was learning along with them.

Through this program I have also realized a new dream of mine. Eventually, I would like to become a Literacy Interventionist and possibly a Staff Developer. Data across the board has now shown that the earlier an intervention takes place (both in the school year, and in life), the more likely it is to reap positive results. Having learned so many valuable skills in my graduate courses has expanded my toolbox and sharpened the tools that were already there.