

## **Achieving Goals By Woei Wang**

During the summer of 2014, I found out my teaching certificate had expired. In order for me to reach my goal of teaching abroad at an international school, I needed to renew my teaching certificate by getting my master's degree. This was easier said than done because I live abroad in South Korea and a degree from a Korean graduate program could not be applied toward my teaching certificate for re-licensure and, frankly speaking, I'm not fluent in Korean, yet. This left me with only one option, which was to attend graduate school and obtain my degree through an online program in the United States. For me, the most obvious choice was Michigan State University (MSU) because of my familiarity with the program, the flexibility that was granted to me when choosing classes, and it being my alma mater. The Masters of Arts in Education (MAED) program at MSU allowed me to target areas in literacy, class management, social studies, and sports leadership in my pursuit to become better educator.

I currently teach English in South Korea and one area I wanted to grow in was becoming more effective at improving the literacy skills of my students. I have many students in my academy who study English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in order to do well on the English portion of their standardized tests. I chose to enroll in Accommodating Differences in Literacy (TE 846) so that I could learn methods to help my students be successful on their tests and increase their literacy. I found this course to be incredibly helpful in aiding me achieve my literacy goal. In the course, I learned about factors that influence literacy instruction, how to use assessments to determine the skill level of students, and strategies I could use to support my students in better utilizing English. One of the aspects of the course I found to be beneficial was my case study because I was able to work one-on-one with a student and apply what I had learned in the course. During the case study, I assessed and diagnosed the areas of weakness for my student and created lessons that accommodated his weaknesses. I also got a chance to reflect on the effectiveness of my lessons in order to make improvements for future use.

A course that benefited me greatly in the MAED program was Educating Students with Challenging Behavior (CEP 832). The reason I chose to take this course was because it's so easy to write off students with challenging behaviors. I wanted to be able to give each student, no matter how difficult I found them, a fair chance to be successful because some of them might not even realize why they act the way they do. I can only help my students if I understand the reason their challenging behavior manifested in the first place. In this course, I learned how to recognize a variety of challenging behaviors students have in the classroom, such as disruptive behaviors or disengaged students, and learned strategies and tips on how to remedy situations when students displayed challenging behaviors. My colleagues and I read about different behaviors each week and engaged each other in case study scenarios by sharing and problem-solving so we could be prepared in the event a similar situation occurred in our classrooms. This course required me to try and understand the situation of a student by looking for unknown factors that may be contributing to the challenging behavior of the student while also maintaining a positive teaching stance when

interacting with the student who has a challenging behavior. The culminating project for this course had me working with a student in my own classroom who displayed one of the challenging behaviors we studied in the CEP 832 course. I was tasked with creating an intervention plan for my student using the information made available to me in the course and implementing my created plan in my classroom. The details and results of my intervention can be found in this pdf file.

In the fall of 2015, I took the course, Psychosocial Bases of Coaching Athletes (KIN 855). I'd always wanted to pursue coaching alongside my teaching career and KIN 855 provided me the opportunity to learn of the psychosocial aspect of coaching. I was surprised to learn how similar being a coach was to being a teacher. This shouldn't have come as much of a surprise since a coach is teaching the athlete that is under his or her care. As a coach, you are to try to understand, motivate, and communicate effectively with youth in your care. One thing I found immediately applicable to me as a teacher from KIN 855 was how to be an effective communicator. I learned that I need to keep my directions short and concise so that I don't lose the attention to whom I'm talking. A coach and/or teacher has a limited amount of time in which to work with his or her student so every minute counts. Not only do I have to be able to communicate clearly, I have to also be a good listener. This meant I had to become an active listener and show the person who was talking that I understood what he or she said. One way I learned how to actively listen was by using the GROW model which is an interview that has the coach asking the athlete four questions about a goal he or she wants to achieve. GROW is an acronym for: Grow (G): What is your goal?, Reality (R): Is the goal realistic?, Options (O): What options do I have to achieve the goal?, and Will (W): What will I do to achieve the goal?. The GROW model is an effective tool for a coach because he or she can listen to the athlete's response, get clarification on what the athlete has said, and come up with a plan on how to achieve the goal with the athlete. The GROW model could be applied to teaching in the classroom by way of behavioral interventions. The GROW model gives me a basis on how to conduct behavioral interventions and gets the student involved in the solution process which instills a feeling of ownership on the part of the student. Student involvement is key because it creates ownership is reminiscent of behavioral interventions I had with my students in my classroom and gives me a basis on how to conduct meetings in the future. I used the GROW model in a case study with my athlete and received positive feedback from my athlete and In KIN 855, I established and expanded on my basic beliefs as a coach such as my coaching philosophy and the ethics of coaching. Strategies and skills I learned in KIN 855, such as being a good communicator, active listening, and using the GROW model were not only applicable for me as a coach but were also useful to me as a teacher.

In addition to literacy, I wanted to develop as a teacher of social studies. Although I don't currently teach social studies, Teaching and Learning K-12 Social Studies (TE 865) has challenged me to think about how social studies fits into education. My goal in social studies has always been to have a class where my students can comprehensively learn about the past so that they can make well-informed decisions in the future and TE 865 taught me I would need to rethink the way I conducted my class if I wanted to realize my goal. One aspect I intend to change in the future is to emphasize the importance of

domestic and global citizenship. Even though many educators consider citizenship as one of the cores of social studies, TE 865 has taught me that many students don't know what it means to be a good citizen let alone an active one. I plan to demonstrate what it means to be a good citizen by having my students identify social causes and becoming actively involved. Being a good citizen also means being a good global citizen. This is especially important because of globalization. The world is only going to get smaller and my students will be exposed to different cultures so it is imperative for my students to see things from the perspectives of people from different cultures in order to be a good global citizen.

The knowledge I have gained through experiences as a graduate student has expanded my views as an educator, coach, and lifelong learner. I have been challenged to better myself as an educator through analyzing information, reflections, and peer interactions. Listening to my colleagues, I've been reminded just how important it is to take time to understand a student. Whether it's through observations or actively listening, a teacher can find valuable insight on how a student learns. A teacher can use this knowledge to shape instruction in a way that will benefit the student and help the student achieve any goals he/she may have. As I near the completion of the MAED program, I appreciate how I've been able to learn from my professors and colleagues because without their help I would not be as equipped to provide my students with the opportunity to grow as learners and as people. At the beginning of my journey in the MAED program, I was motivated because I wanted to renew my teaching certificate. However, I realize now that I'm in a position to encourage my students to seek their goals and reach for the sky.