

Transformative Experiences

I sent my application and wrote my goal statement for Michigan State's Master of Arts program in the fall of 2009. I began my course work in the summer of 2009. As a result of the master's program, my career goals have been completely transformed. My primary concentration area is educational leadership. I selected this area so I could prepare myself in developing educational policy. Originally my two goals were to become an assistant principal and head football coach in secondary education. However, as a result of my coursework, I discovered I want to be a head football coach but not a school administrator. I still desire to be a leader in education, just not in the front office. Therefore, I now wholeheartedly believe the place for me is in the classroom and coaching on the field.

Importantly, in my original goal statement, I expressed three objectives as an administrator. First is inspiring students not to be good but great. Secondly is to improve community involvement in school activities. Thirdly, improve the discipline system so students learn self discipline not simply punishment. The aforementioned ideologies are wonderful administrative goals, but I found are also applicable in the classroom. Therefore, my professional goals changed, but original intentions stayed the same. In my classroom I have control over the culture of my room. I can directly teach and discipline the students in the way I feel most comfortable. As a school administrator I could set the tone but would relinquish my control to others. In the end I would not have an active role in fulfilling my objectives.

Furthermore, I taught for three years as I worked through the master's program; I saw how administrators have to focus on so much bureaucracy they can no longer focus on the students. Additionally, the responsibilities of a coach cannot coincide with administrative obligations. No man can serve two masters. I decided I wanted to be part of the solution not the problem solver. In my opinion,

American High School education has plenty of qualified administrators but not enough dedicated classroom instructors.

The educational leadership curriculum in this completely redefined my definition of leadership. Previously I strongly believed leadership was a leader setting a vision, doing the work, and people following his example. Now I define leadership as a leader guiding followers in fulfilling the organization's vision. The effectiveness of a leader is measured by the productivity of his followers. Moreover, in the leadership training courses I learned an excellent way of leading is being a loyal follower. As a classroom teacher and coach I get the best of both worlds. I lead my students and follow the administrators.

In the end, my studies at Michigan State University have allowed me to not only achieve my goals but set new ones. Through my classes I have developed new skills I did not possess. Moreover, it has shown me areas I need to improve upon. In summary, the Master of Arts program fulfilled my ultimate goal of becoming a well-rounded educator.