

For years I made excuses, yet longed for finishing a masters degree in some type of program. In 2006, I started taking graduate classes to obtain a masters degree in Teaching English to Students of Other Languages. At the time I was working down in Liberal, Kansas where my degree would be extremely beneficial. Life had other plans for me though. As I met my late husband, and we decided to relocate back to Iowa, my educational plans came to a halt.

In 2020, after working under an amazing principal and battling through a pandemic, I decided to go back to school. This choice was not an easy one to make. On the 'cons' side of the decision was time away from my children, the fact that I was on the cusp of turning 40, and I would have to relinquish my coaching duties to focus on the work ahead. Some 'pros' were my children and mother encouraging and pushing me forward, fulfilling my desire to receive a masters degree, building my knowledge and experiences so I can better serve students, and the opportunity to show my children how to keep reaching dreams even when our timelines aren't always the ones we predicted.

When looking at the course load for a Masters in Educational Administration and Principal Endorsement degree from Northwestern College, I remember being a little intimidated. More specifically being intimidated by the legal or law courses. I didn't know what to expect, or how in depth we would go into legal dockets. Reflecting on both of the courses, Law, Politics, and the Principal and Social, Legal, and Ethical Issues in Special Education, I thoroughly enjoyed them both. The professors for these courses assigned assignments that were thought provoking, engaging, and allowed me to view situations from a variety of viewpoints. I learned so much about educational legal cases, that I've been able to see the ripple effects of them, even in my small rural school district.

Throughout my years of teaching I have always been excited about working with data. My excitement for data was met with an extensive knowledge of what to do with the data further than the surface layers I have been working with in PLCs. The assignment, from the Data and School Improvement course, of working with Data Intersects showed me how educators can better serve their students based on how the intersects connect. The work and knowledge gained from the Data and School

Improvement course was a great reflection of the work completed in **Curriculum and Assessment for Student Learning**. I not only want to implement models and strategies from these courses when I become an administrator, but I will be working with my current administrators to begin implementation of a few of the models and strategies from these courses.

There were three courses that I enjoyed so much that I was a little sad when they ended. The first course was **Operational Management**. Thinking about becoming an administrator I didn't consider some of the other central office positions that fall under that category. Learning about the different positions I could obtain got me thinking about the behind the scenes functions that happen in districts. The second course was **Schools, Families, and Community**. It was during this course that I started to realize the true benefit of connecting schools, families, and communities together to form a positive experience for students. During the internship side of this course I had the opportunity to meet new families and community members in the district. These interactions have already strengthened student support in the grade level that I teach. The last course I enjoyed was **Creating a Culture for Learning**. When your world is positive, engaging, and motivating, the outcomes become more obtainable, workable, simpler, memorable and beneficial. I appreciate that this course not only focused on creating a culture for students, but for the staff as well. When teachers love where and who they teach, the people around them will start to feel it too.

I have gained so much during my graduate program. The courses I've taken have prepared me to be able to demonstrate the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. **The standards I believe I have the most confidence in are; Standard 1 Mission, Vision, and Core Values, Standard 2 Ethics and Professional Norms, Standard 3 Equity and Cultural Responsiveness, Standard 5 Community of Care and Support for Students, Standard 8 Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community, Standard 9 Operations and Management, and Standard 10 School Improvement.** There are a few standards I will need to work on more diligently once I obtain an administrative position and do research on the new district. These standards are; Standard 4 Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Standard 6 Professional Capacity of School Personnel; and Standard 7 Professional Community for Teachers and Staff. I mention standard 4

because I will want to identify the curriculum, instruction, and assessment resources already being used. I do not want to disrupt the flow of a district, if what is working for the district is providing the best for all students. Standards 6 and 7 will be building the connections and relationships with the school personnel. I'm not as confident in these standards as I have experienced that each school and/or district have their own personalities. Sometimes there can be strong personalities in those school personnels who will fight against continuous improvement. I will need to work to show them the advantages of forward thinking.

In a few weeks I will be finishing my last assignments towards my masters degree. The end of these classes will be bittersweet. I look forward to spending more time with my children, but I will miss working with professors that have a passion for sharing their knowledge and faith, as well as continuing to make myself more well-rounding.