

Options

By Eric Vanston

When I applied to the Master's of Arts in Education Program back in the summer of 2012, it was not my interest in leadership that drove me to this path, rather it was the set of options that this degree could provide to me once finished. I knew that I wanted to be a secondary math teacher, and that I had very little interest in going down the administration path. However, I also knew that I wanted to obtain a graduate degree, so why not get one that would give me some more options for later in my career. I would be lying to myself if I were to say that I felt passionate about this program or the classes before I began. I mainly wanted the financial incentive that came with a master's degree, and the options it could avail to me in the future.

However, a funny thing happened about halfway through my first semester. I realized that not only was I enjoying the classes, but I was personally growing from them as well. The classes were not just about writing the papers and getting the credit, I learned how to utilize the readings and writings in both my personal and professional life and my outlook on many things changed. I spent a considerable amount of my time studying multicultural education and learning about privilege and oppression that is continually perpetuated in our society. Because of what I have learned about working with students who do not look like me, I believe stronger than ever that my goals have not changed in the slightest. I still want to be working in the classroom with these students on a day-to-day basis. The classes I took in this program had a direct effect on my relationships with my struggling students, parents, and co-workers, which is something I would like to continue to develop. What started as a goal to simply give me options down the road, turned into valuable lessons that has made me a more effective educator and leader in my school.

Every day I go to work and truly enjoy working with the learners who are in front of me. Philosophies and techniques I have learned and implemented have increased positive educational outcomes. I know that there is nothing I would rather do. However, I also understand that many years down the line, I may be looking for a new challenge, perhaps an administrative role. My Master's Degree in Leadership will allow me to accomplish that potential goal. However, until that time comes, I will continue to utilize the philosophies of this degree to become a more well rounded teacher and individual. My Michigan State Master's Degree program may not have changed my goals as a student or an educator, but there is no doubt that the program has changed me as a person. And at the end of the day, even after personal change and growth, it's always good to have options.