Amy Lindsay
EDT M.Ed. Program Reflection

Completing the master's program in educational technology has impacted my teaching in numerous ways. I have gained experience using various technology tools and writing curriculum that integrates both technology and constructivist principles. But perhaps most significantly, I expanded my theoretical knowledge base in the field of education. Overall, the program was a challenging and rewarding experience.

When I began teaching almost six years ago, it was largely by accident. I had hoped to travel abroad and thought I should have some way to finance my travels, so I completed an ESL teaching certification program. When an unexpected injury left me unable to travel internationally, I began teaching at the University of Hartford. No one was more surprised than I was at how much I enjoyed teaching. It was the perfect fit for me both personally and professionally. Experience has been a great teacher; however, because I happened upon the profession in a less than traditional manner, I largely lacked an understanding of educational theory. The coursework in the educational technology master's program has filled this void in my background, providing me with a solid foundation in theoretical aspects of the field. Furthermore, the curriculum development classes and projects throughout the program have been indispensible to my work in the classroom. I believe my experience in the program has made me a better teacher and that my skills and understandings will continue to improve going forward.

In progressing through the program of study, I had many varied opportunities to use technology tools and to write and develop curriculum, integrating technology. My own preferences and nature when it comes to general learning and the use of technology is very constructivist in nature. I prefer to “play around” with ideas, devices and apps until I gain understanding and proficiency that I can then regularly use and share with others. This approach was very beneficial throughout the program, as I believe success with technology lends itself to a constructivist approach. Technology is an ever-expanding field, and it would seem futile to attempt or pursue mastery of something that is constantly evolving. However, a foundational familiarity with a broad range of tools is of great use. The exposure to many web 2.0 tools that I gained through the master’s program has directly led to their regular inclusion in my classroom. I now regularly use wikis, blogs, webquests, and
social networking activities in my classes. Furthermore, technology's role in my personal life has expanded greatly as a result of my studies, providing tools for increased efficiency and convenience.

In bringing tools from the educational technology program back into my own classroom, I have witnessed increased student engagement. Before using blogs for in-class writing assignments, I never had students ask for more writing. Going forward, I hope to continue to integrate technology tools into my classes in order to increase student engagement and achievement. I would also like to take the knowledge and skills I've learned through the master's program to develop more hybrid and online learning experiences for university ESL students. I think there are great opportunities for students to work at their own pace in developing language proficiency through authentic online and real-world activities, and I would like to pursue them in ways that excite and benefit students.

As I mentioned in my educational philosophy, I am not naïve in thinking that technology is a panacea for the problems that exist in education today. Technology carries its own set of limitations and potential drawbacks. I think it is therefore incumbent on teachers to both model and encourage responsible student use. However, combined with clear curriculum objectives and sound pedagogy, technology has great potential to help students achieve success.

I entered the educational technology master's program hoping to gain practical experience with technology tools that I could use to enhance my teaching. The program provided me with these opportunities and much more. I continue to explore new technologies and tools to use with my students, developing new curriculum with colleagues and reworking lessons and applications as needed. Understanding of the theoretical underpinnings has also been indispensible throughout the process. Overall, I believe the educational technology master's program has made me a better teacher, and the experience of completing the degree program has been rewarding both personally and professionally.