

FUTURE GOALS: The Next Steps

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As the old adage goes, 'when one door closes, another door opens'. Though true in several circumstances, I believe that this adage is especially reflected within the world of education. A theme I have been reflecting on is that knowledge is power, and to become a lifelong learner is one of the greatest gifts that one can truly ever receive. The true beauty that education brings is the craving to continue to learn more, try more and be more. As a result, at the conclusion of my [Masters of Arts in education program](#), there are some professional goals that lend themselves as my 'next steps' in my professional career. My next steps include, growing as an educational leader, continuing to practice and learn about the [Science of Reading](#) and being intentional and deliberate in building a more inclusive classroom.

To be a leader is to know a leader. One of my biggest inspirations in my life has always been my dad. He was known as a great leader in his career- one that was trustworthy, fair and brought people together. Growing in the field of education I see reflections within myself as a leader just as my dad was. I beam with pride when people mention my leadership skills because I know that I am making one of my biggest role models proud. Continuing with the theme that knowledge is power, the courses I took each carried a nuance of how to bring leadership into your educational setting. While I don't see an administrative role in the near future, I look forward to helping serve as an example and a voice that speaks to using [Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports](#) within our school setting. I also have a passion for educating colleagues on [Trauma Informed practices](#), using [Adverse Childhood Experiences](#) as a tool to better understand our students. Continuing my learning and practice with these resources in mind, I believe that my next step within educational leadership is to be a voice for our students and the best practices to meet all our students needs.

Literacy is the skill that connects each of us- through digital literacy, spoken words and written texts we are able to communicate with one another. It is for this reason that I have taken such an interest in literacy and incorporating the best practices for our literacy learners. As a student that never enjoyed reading, I have made it my goal to put books in the hands of each of my students so that confidence is built. I often tell my students the memory of me finishing my first chapter book in 5th grade, *The Princess and the Pea*. I tell them of the joy that I felt and how special of a memory that is for me. This passion in literacy began when I read [The Book Whisperer by Donalyn Miller](#). In her book, Miller calls for all students to find joy in reading through high-interest books. Miller talks of the great success she had in rising her test scores, *just* through putting high interest books in the hands of her students- even the reluctant readers. Since reading Miller's book, I found my goal evolving with the needs of my students. I teach 3rd grade in a post (?) Pandemic world where the slide of skills is made prevalent more and more each day. I would plan lessons using the prescribed curriculum and would see my students still struggling. I knew that more could and should be done. Thus my journey into learning more about the [Science of Reading](#) was created. Being a lifelong learner means that although I have a solid understanding on the principles, strategies and best practice utilized by the [Science](#)

[of Reading](#), I want to continue to learn more. My interest in [Dyslexia](#) has been sparked by learning about how intervention programs like [Orton Gillingham](#), and the multi-sensory techniques it uses, can be used to guide my students to be successful readers. A next step I see myself taking is advancing my training within the [Science of Reading](#) field.

My final goal is one of inclusivity. This next step can be a broad one so I would like to instead focus on building an inclusive library, one where students see reflections of themselves in the books I can provide. I also plan to be deliberate in celebrating different cultural holidays as they come up throughout the year. This next step was created as I began to learn about my own privilege and the nuances my privilege has in my pedagogical practice. Through this awakening, I have been deliberate in making sure that my students are learning factual information and are given the tools that they need to be critical thinkers. In building an inclusive classroom library, I have turned to [DiverseBooks.org](#) to help make sure I am staying on top of the current published books. I will also continue using the [Diverse Books Finder](#). Despite these wonderful tools, I have grown my social network to include diverse teachers, educators and scholars to help me see a different perspective, one that often challenges my own. Through the networking of these teachers (mainly through Instagram), I have learned to be critical about who is authoring the stories I am choosing to utilize in my teaching. As I continue to work through the next step of building a more inclusive classroom, I look forward to also growing as a more inclusive person.

Though this 'door' is closing, I see the many doors that have since opened. These next steps serve as my passion to live the life of a lifelong learner through the further acquisition of educational leadership skills, science-backed strategies for struggling readers and the deliberate actions in building an inclusive environment.