

# SYNTHESIS: Putting the Plan in Action

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On the brink of an academic achievement, it is important to reflect and synthesize what the plan of action will be. Especially with the unique experience of starting my graduate journey while student teaching and then coming back to complete my masters 5 years later, I know it is important to think about the new way I see my role changing and strengthening as an educator. Teaching is a unique profession in that it changes every single day- no 2 days are alike. There is the need to constantly shift, adjust and be willing to try new things. The completion of my Master of Arts program has helped me to see new ways to incorporate what I have learned into my practice.

The urge to learn new, current teaching strategies and to improve my own teaching practice came out of the desire to learn more about what makes a successful reader- especially in a world that is on the way to adjusting to a post-pandemic lifestyle. Additionally, the urge to begin learning again came from a place of wanting to be a more inclusive educator. Those in the teaching practice throw around the idea of being a lifelong learner often, my family even makes fun of my use of the phrase. Despite the frequency I talk about being a lifelong learner, I truly believe that it is important to continue to grow in any way that you can. After the 'awakening' I experienced in June of 2020, with the 'sudden' push for the Black Lives Matter protests, I found myself yearning to put my work to become an anti-racist educator (and person) into practice and to learn more. (Please note that I put the words 'awakening' and 'sudden' in quotes to mark my own experiences- I know that issues regarding the Blacks Lives Matter protests have been around long before June of 2020). Finally, my call to leadership within my educational experience pushed me to pursue a masters that would stretch my capacity and understanding of how to be a leader. As I synthesize these thoughts, I realize that there were 3 courses that pushed me to grow the most in each of these areas and, therefore, help create my plan of action.

### Literacy Education

Though the bulk of my courses were focused on literacy: accommodating the differences in learners, strategies and assessments, there was one class that transformed my thoughts and ideas about effective literacy instruction. That class was [TE 842: Elementary Reading Assessment and Instruction](#). Interestingly enough, this class was the graduate level course of a class that I took while completing my undergraduate studies (TE 301: Literacy, Learners, and Learning in Context). As someone that has an increased interest in learning about the Science of Reading, this class was beneficial to see what has shifted in the literacy education world from top literacy researchers- from the Spring of 2015 to the Summer of 2022. As new ways of learning about literacy emerge, such as the Science of reading, I often feel overwhelmed or alone in taking on such a big wealth of knowledge. To have the idea reaffirmed through the comparison of each of these classes, I felt inspired to continue my work in incorporating and advocating for science-backed reading strategies and programs.

Taking on a struggling reader- and sometimes even trying to push a successful reader- can be a difficult task. Revisiting the Modified Cognitive Model in TE 842 reminded me of the pathway that readers take. It also reminded me to determine the area of deficit when considering an individualized plan for a student. Reading should be taught in a systematic way, in fact, it is taught in a systematic way beginning with concepts of print and eventually progressing through to morphological understanding. As I continue to work with readers of diverse academic backgrounds, I will utilize the information I learned from [TE 842: Elementary Reading Assessment and Instruction](#) to help guide my practice as an educator. Perhaps the most beneficial way that this course asked me to put a plan into action was at looking at the assessments of two different literacy learners to create a literacy learners profile with next steps for each individual reader. Looking much further ahead at putting my plan into action, this experience was incredibly beneficial in preparing me to one day be a reading specialist. For now, I will focus on putting my plan into action that will allow me to be the best literacy instructor for each individual student.

### Inclusivity

The area I have found myself growing in the most is within the area of inclusivity. While there were so many courses I took to help me change my mindset and think openly there is one class that stands out as the most transformative. [TE 849: Methods and Materials for Teaching Children's and Adolescent Literature](#) facilitated by Professor Mary Juzwik, helped me to think critically in ways that I hadn't been asked to think before. Still rooted within my focus of literacy, TE 849 had me read a variety of youth and young adult books and then discuss them with a collaborative group through weekly meetings. While each of the books were interesting and provided their own growth for me as an educator, it was truly through the discussions my collaborative group had that helped me grow in my inclusivity as an educator.

In my understanding, to grow in your capacity to be inclusive one must first look inward to understand how their thoughts, understandings of the world and biases may affect their overall mindset. With the 'awakening' I have felt myself experience from a social justice stand point, I was excited that TE 849 had me look critically also at the books I choose to utilize within my classroom community. With major themes discussed each week such as authenticity in authorship, LGBTQIA+ issues, multicultural issues, mental health issues, censorship and more, my group grew each week in our capacity to think critically about each topic. Additionally, this course allowed me to expand my library to include more diverse texts. One of the most profound thoughts my collaborative group and I shared throughout our weekly meetings was to deeply consider who was telling the story (the author) and questioning how valid the story was based on that. As a group, we realized our privilege (or ignorance) in being able to dismiss the author of the story and take experiences detailed as authentic. This level of critical thought that extended to the portrayals of LGBTQIA+ characters in *Jerome by Heart* and *The Sleeper and the Spindle* had my group examining how the portrayals of the characters could affect, positively or negatively, members of a community none of us had identified with. Finally, a standout topic was the discussion my group and I had around the hot topic of censorship. Tying in with my passion to grow as an educational leader, the issues surrounding censorship in our world today led for me to understand more deeply what my inclusive role could be in advocating for texts that are important to share and need to be shared so our students can gain a deeper understanding into their own lives or to think about the

lives of their classmates/community members that may be different.

The work of inclusivity is never done- there is always more work that can be done internally and externally, to be the voice for those that are voiceless or muted. In my final class project for this course, I wrote a 'letter to the young readers' as an extension to the collection of letters put together by various authors around the world in *The Velocity of Reading* we read at the beginning of the course. In this letter, we were asked to express our greatest hopes and dreams for the young readers of today. Perhaps the most transformative thought I wrote in that letter was "my hope is that you find people in your life that challenge you to think critically, that help you to see multiple perspectives. That you get the profound experience of challenging a truth you have known but have learned isn't the truth for all". As I put the plan of demonstrating I am a more inclusive educator, I plan to think critically about the voices, inputs and stories that aren't being shared and actively seeking out ways to do that.

### Leadership

To be a leader is so much more than just leading. This is a truth I have come to know for awhile. However, my understanding for all the facets of leadership within the world of education has continued to grow. One course that helped me to better understand the role of an effective leader was [CEP 841: Classroom Management in Inclusive Classroom](#). Though this course wasn't listed as an educational leadership course, I learned the most about being a leader from this course. As I look at my current placement, I see that each year there is an increasing need to help manage behaviors within my school community. I am aware that this trend has extended across the country as well as important issues like children's mental health and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as we navigate a world post-pandemic (I am holding my breath as I type that).

As I begin to think about a leader, I think about the control and power that comes with a leadership role. Both those words, control and power, in association with leadership, can have a negative connotation. However, that is the truth behind leadership- you innately do have control and power based on your position. CEP 841 challenged me to think about the ways that control and power can have a positive impact within a leadership role. One of the biggest takeaways from this course for me was the idea that we first need to become effective classroom managers to make change happen and to promote a safe feeling among all our students. No matter how high the leadership role becomes, we all must become grounded in the fact that within education we are serving our students, their diverse needs and their families.

Throughout the time I was in [CEP 841: Classroom Management in Inclusive Classroom](#), I was asked to consider how I am best meeting the needs of my students as a whole class and as individuals. We learned about the importance of emotional regulation and strategies that can support our students in becoming their own emotional regulators. We also looked at how we can support school-wide initiatives such as PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) creating a presentation we could use in a real world setting. For me, it was through these assignments that I felt my passion for leadership re-spark.

The multi-faceted approaches to and parts of leadership were further explored as a whole

throughout my [Masters of Arts program at Michigan State University](#). To be a leader in education today, it is important to consider to whole-child, their learning profile and needs, their home life including the Adverse Childhood Experiences that they have endured and the ways that we choose to interact with our school community. As I put my plan into action for becoming a leader in education I plan to showcase the various aspects a good leader should have by respectfully pushing back on and gaining understanding on an issue, to practice inclusivity practices in my own classroom and to pass on important information that will benefit the school community as a whole. Leaders can be everywhere and I intend to be one to make school a better place for the students and families within my school community.