

Coming Full Circle: Looking Back

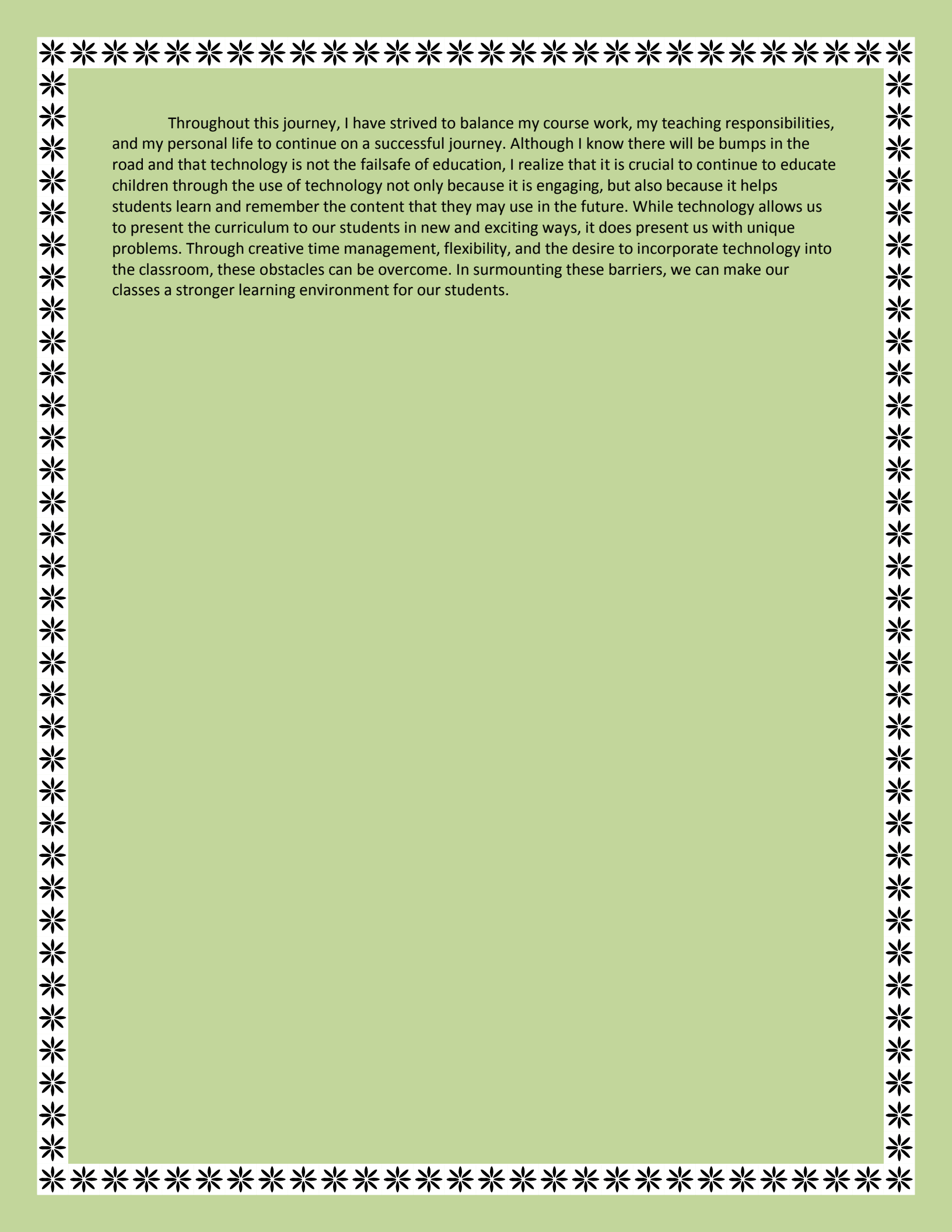
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Reflecting back on my intended goals when entering the MAET program, I am reminded as I look back on various class reflections that the initial and constant goal intertwined in them all is to integrate technology in the classroom. I have found some important teaching strategies that correspond to teaching with technology. Using a constructivist model, I have begun to scaffold new techniques that I have learned through the last two years. I have introduced several new programs to my students, such as WebQuests, podcasts, Web 2.0 tools, Google Docs, Microsoft Office tools, MovieMaker, Photo Story, Audacity, just to name a few. These programs have served to encourage students to collaborate through the learning process and use technology as tool to help them reach their learning objectives. I am also implementing cooperative learning groups more and more and have used my wiki in more ways than I thought imaginable. I also incorporate my online textbook other than just a homework helper as there are many projects that I can adapt to using technology in the classroom. In looking at these strategies to integrate technology, it is very exciting to note the constant changes and evolution of the technologies that have become available to teachers. There is such a vast amount of support for teaching using several strategies and each of them enables our students to become a responsible partner in their own learning. As facilitators of knowledge, we hope to engage students in the learning process and with the use of technology, we can meet those goals.

A second goal was for my classroom to become paperless. After completing the certificate program, I was nominated in my district to pilot teaching 6th grade mathematics in a full computer lab. Through the integration and evaluation of technology, I have learned to identify lessons that are both meaningful and engaging to my students. Whether I am using whole class instruction presenting a PowerPoint on how to solve equations, or my students are individually working on their own computers, I now have the confidence to try out these routines and set goals for using technology that are realistic. Through the plethora of resources gained in this program, I have found that my classroom has become a blended one. In my hybrid environment, becoming more and more paperless, I now try to utilize Internet based tools to expand and reinforce my content standards to extend my students learning beyond the classroom. I also have learned through evaluation that these tools can help to bridge the home-school connection through blogs, websites, online grading systems and wikispaces.

Another one of my goals was to insure that my students get a quality education through the use of technology and I feel much more confident that my students are engaging in the education that they deserve because of my drive to implement the strategies I have learned in this program. Another goal of mine was to learn new and practical applications of technology as I take these successions of courses. I learned how to create fun word documents that address content concerns and reach students in a different way, how to use hyperlinks within a PowerPoint, either externally or internally to open up a whole new way to view this type of presentation and to use Excel for more than just a Baldrige data gathering of grades and attendance. I also learned how to create and evaluate technology resources and to implement the instructional strategies to reach students using these technologies. Finally I was able to work cooperatively with my peers and step into the shoes of my students, so to speak, to create group projects that are both challenging and entertaining at the same time.

I still have a long term goal of becoming a team technology leader within my district in order to enable my students to be lifelong learners as they navigate through this technological world. I plan to continue my quest to keep up with technological innovations and share what I have learned with my colleagues as I complete this program. I have already started sharing ideas that I have learned, and have become the "go-to" person when my colleagues need assistance when implementing technology in their own classroom. All of this work has had such a positive effect on both myself and my colleagues!



Throughout this journey, I have strived to balance my course work, my teaching responsibilities, and my personal life to continue on a successful journey. Although I know there will be bumps in the road and that technology is not the failsafe of education, I realize that it is crucial to continue to educate children through the use of technology not only because it is engaging, but also because it helps students learn and remember the content that they may use in the future. While technology allows us to present the curriculum to our students in new and exciting ways, it does present us with unique problems. Through creative time management, flexibility, and the desire to incorporate technology into the classroom, these obstacles can be overcome. In surmounting these barriers, we can make our classes a stronger learning environment for our students.