A Mindful View
By Suzanne Karwowski

To become a leader in my district for using technology to enhance and improve the educational experience of our students was my overall goal at the start of my journey in completing a Master of Arts in Educational Technology (MAET). This goal has not changed, but how I define it has.

To understand the change in definition, my initial views and experiences must be explored. Technology and the place it has in the classroom has been evolving at an exponential rate. When I began teaching, the school only had a handful of outdated computers, yet, I tried to incorporate them into my teaching on a regular basis. As the school advanced, so did the technology, but not the training. About 14 years and a few computer lab upgrades later, our school went 1:1 with a Chromebook for every student. Yet the teachers were only provided with three days of training on the new learning management system.

I set out to find as much information on teaching with technology by attending special programs through the intermediate school district, multiple conferences and internet research. If there were new programs to learn, I was sent to the trainings. I excelled in it, I thrived. I came back to our building full of ideas and tried using them all. During one of the conferences, I came across the MAET program and decided it was the next logical step in becoming a leader in educational technology.

For me, being a leader in the building meant using the newest, coolest apps and websites to teach. I felt my experiences with technology had fostered a love of learning and I wanted to provide that experience to my students and colleagues. So when I wrote the goal for this program, I thought that being a leader was being on the forefront of cutting edge technology.

This is not the case, being a leader is not using the most technology, it is being mindful of how you use technology to get the best results. As I worked through my master's classes, I began shifting my thought process from how to incorporate technology everywhere to deciding when it is most beneficial to use technology to enhance learning.

Being a leader in technology is not being ahead of everyone in using technology, instead it is to provide support for fellow educators in making the best decisions when it comes to using technology, analyzing if integrating technology is the best method of teaching in different situations and developing best practices for the use of technology.

I believe that a leader provides the foundation for others to grow, a leader has vision on the future of technology use with the ability to evaluate if best practices support the direction it is going. So when I say my goal is to be a leader in educational technology in my district, I am saying that I want to help create a shared vision for the use of technology supported by research and best practices.

The goal is still the same, but the definition of a leader in educational technology has changed.