

Teacher for Life.

Whenever I am asked about my goals for the future, I think to myself, this is it. I have achieved my goal. Ever since 1st grade in Mrs. Visser's class, I've wanted to be a teacher. Here I am, in my 6th year of teaching at a dream school, a school I can see myself staying at for the next 35 years. I'm where I want to be. Of course, it isn't that simple. Yes, I want to grow as a teacher. Yes, I want to be an example to younger teachers. Yes, I want to make a mark on students, on the classroom, and on the world of education. I certainly cannot do that sitting back thinking "I'm where I need to be." In order to move forward as an educator I need to focus on expanding my content knowledge, integrating technology into the classroom and finding ways to support at-risk students.

For the first time, I am teaching an Advanced Placement class. Advanced Placement World History nonetheless. The material is so incredibly overwhelming that I feel I will never catch up. But I have been surprised by the amount of enjoyment I have found in the content. I've always enjoyed teaching United States History, but World History, it wasn't my cup of tea. Surprisingly, I find myself getting excited while discussing the big ideas and making connections to modern day current events. For example, discussing the split in Islam in the year 632 and explaining to my students that this split is still prevalent today, citing Sunni Muslim Saddam Hussein's mistreatment of the Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq. And it isn't only the content, it's the historical thinking skills I'm responsible for endowing my students with. There are so many resources out there that can fulfill my needs, but one of the greatest resources is the [AP Summer Institute for World History](#). These institutes offer professional development in teaching AP courses. I believe once I am more at ease with the content, I can spend more of my time focusing on student engagement.

The school I teach in is now BYOD, Bring Your Own Device. Students show up to each class with a laptop or tablet. It has been a wonderful addition to the school and has made some things more seamless. But technology should play a bigger role in students education than simplicity. I know there are tons of resources out there with ideas on how to integrate technology in the classroom. The trick is finding the right way for me. I need ideas that fit with what I believe is best for students. Edutopia has a great [article](#) specific to using technology in social studies classrooms. These suggestions offer ideas on how to integrate technology into the classroom, for example, having students act out battles from World War II with "director commentary" to show understanding. It is so easy to get stuck in a teaching "rut", doing things the same way over and over again, year after year. Resources like this challenge me to be better a better teacher for my students.

I work with a lot of students who are considered "at-risk". One of the classes I teach is called "Tools for Success" and I act as support for students who are struggling academically. Sometimes, students are so far behind it's hard to find a balance between helping them make up the work they haven't completed, and keep up with the work they are currently struggling to complete. At times, I feel helpless. This isn't just an issue that should be addressed in this class, I want to be able to help my at-risk students in my social studies classes as well. The [SIOP](#) model (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), developed specifically with English Learners in mind, is a model that can be applied to at-risk students. The model provides support for organizing instruction in a highly effective way. Often, teachers know WHAT they can do to help students, differentiating assessments, chunking reading assignments, providing key vocabulary. While they may do these things naturally, it isn't done with intention. It is my goal to be intentional with these strategies to make sure that my at-risk students needs are being met inside my classroom.

Teaching is my passion, and I don't imagine doing anything else in my professional life. What that means for my future is that I will continually be working on my craft, doing what I can to improve year after year. I want to master my content. I want to reach those kids who seem unreachable. While this will take time, it is important to remind myself of these goals so I can be intentional in achieving them.