Looking in the Rearview
by: Elizabeth Collins

"He who does not know how to look back at where he came from will never get to his destination."
- Jose Rizal

At the start of my journey to earning a Master of Arts in Education I quickly decided on the concentration of Technology and Learning. My one priority was to see technology integrated into the traditional classroom. Looking back at where I began, I realize I had no idea how far this journey would really take me, I just knew it was a path I wanted to travel down. My goal when I began the program was merely just to learn more about technology integration and learning. I gained so much more than that.

I was a non-traditional student during my undergraduate years because I was already married with two children before I even stepped foot on campus at Michigan State University. I am the first person in my family to finish college. If it had not been for technology, I do not know that I would have ever been able to finish my Bachelor's Degree and certainly would not have been able to go on and complete my Masters.

When my daughter began school, I saw a lot of me in her. She did excellent and the teachers praised her, but when I attended conferences teachers would also say that she seemed bored. When I think about my years in school, I am not one of the students who feel warm and fuzzy. In all honesty I was often bored with school and would race through worksheets to turn them in. Good grades came easy to me when I was younger because I have mastered the technique of finding the answers in the text and quickly jotting them into a worksheet. When I heard the teachers say she was bored, I knew I did not want that same thing for my daughter that was why I decided to go back to school to

get involved in the field of education. I blamed my experiences, and what I saw occurring with her, on the teachers. However, looking in the rear view, I see that a lot of what I experienced and what she was experiencing was the fault of the school structure and not the teachers themselves.

Technology has changed that for students like me. Technology allows for differentiated instruction and allows teachers to customize their lesson planning. It allows students and teachers to move away from textbooks. Instead of sifting through stacks of books, internet and the World Wide Web, has brought the library shelves to us. I completed my Bachelor's Degree and my teaching internship, but it was my internship year that pushed me to want to do more. I had a great mentor teacher, but the school itself wasn't very old and there was zero technology in her classroom. This was because of her teaching pedagogy and she felt that what she had been doing for years was the best way to reach her students. She had phenomenal lesson plans, that would not have to be abandoned to change the delivery method, however she was very resistant. She was a great teacher, but there were many students who just did not seem engaged. I decided to do a simple activity of creating a classroom YouTube account and having students each pick a song that was about their dreams or aspirations. Every student in the class was excited and did the assignment. Then from there the things we did in class engaged them because it was connected to something they had done. We spent a few Fridays listening to the entire play list while we did other activities and I could see a fire ignited in them. I was not able to completely integrate technology daily, but just those small crumbs were enough to keep them hungry for learning each day.

When I began the program I was not completely sure what I was really getting into. I just knew that I wanted to be part of integrating technology and learning because I saw

what it did in my internship classroom. I have personally seen how it can allow someone who may not have been able to be successful before, an opportunity. I look back at my goal when I applied to the program and I have far surpassed even what I set for myself.