

**A Lifelong Path: The Journey to Stay Educated**  
**by Melissa Smith**

*“Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.” - Dr. Maria Montessori*

Although Dr. Maria Montessori is no longer alive, her philosophy of education and teaching methods are used in Montessori classrooms around the globe today. Not only did she author many educational philosophy books, but there were also biographies about Dr. Montessori and her theories. The inclusion of technology in the classroom did not exist when Dr. Montessori was living. . Does this mean that she would not condone innovative lessons with technology? How would I choose to assimilate Educational Technology into my Montessori classroom, preserving the educational theory?

What if Dr. Montessori walked into my classroom and noticed two students actively engaged in an interactive online activity using the Smart Board? What if students were using technology with an emerging literacy digital storytelling project? She would see the innovation to learning that she was researching herself so many years ago in Italy. Dr. Montessori would support educators finding new ways to enhance student learning and prepare them for the real world, as the Montessori educational philosophy upholds. Technology is now very much a part of today's world and today's learners.

Technology can be present in any classroom or school but that alone does not make it educational. An educator must know who, what, where, when, how and most importantly why to use it. Before the MSU MAET (Master of Arts in Educational Technology) program began, I felt it would be difficult for me to find a way to integrate technology into my Montessori classroom on a daily basis with meaning. Since working my way through the MAET, I've answered this question many times over, and gotten the chance to actually use my coursework in my classroom. This is exciting to me! As our world changes, so will that of our students as learners. The educational environment in which they flourish must also grow with the changing world and culture.

Montessori education thrives on its goal to provide children with an environment where they can learn independently, by the exploration of concrete materials and apply this to real world schemas. The importance of building a solid foundational understanding of key concepts across the curriculum is vital. With the right tools, technology can be individualized, hands-on, creative, innovative, intellectually stimulating, and thought provoking just as much as an educator can revisit a topic for comprehension. My MAET experience has given me confidence to provide my students with a variety of technology projects while staying true to Dr. Maria Montessori's philosophy of education, which is of utmost importance to me. I am looking forward to technology resources that can be used to enhance student learning as I explore them with a new found confidence...because they will change just as quickly as the world we live in

If I want to continue to have an in depth understanding and knowledge of technology and support other teachers as they integrate technology into their classrooms then I must be on the cutting-edge. I plan to continue my education by attending conferences dedicated to technology in the classroom, and practicing on my own classroom integration. I am much more confident at that integration piece after many troubleshooting experiences and successfully working through them through the MAET program course work. Before my MSU coursework, I would've gotten nervous and given up. I feel so much better knowing how to use these tools and find options when things don't go as planned. This is exactly my hope for my students in the classroom! Educational Technology links me to my professional learning network as a whole. I will continue to do so in whatever facet of education my future holds.