

GOAL: THEN AND NOW - Joseph A. Hoover

My undergraduate degree, a Bachelor of Arts in Biology-Chemistry, enhanced my inclination for, and interest in the physical sciences. However, since those years I have discovered more than an interest but a passion for Education. This made my choice—to enroll in Michigan State University's Master of Arts in Education program (MAED)—an easy one. The concentration I chose, P-12 School and Post-Secondary Leadership, was based on my desire to continue our family's service to the students we had been serving for the previous 10 years.

I work in tandem with my wife and children, building a family atmosphere for the twelve students placed in our care. We are houseparents—sort of like surrogate parents—for our twelve when they are on campus and classes are in session. In the home, we have the opportunity to create a climate where they can freely strive for their best. We hold their true potential closely and help them live out their personal values and vision of success for their lives.



With no formal schooling in the field of Education and a career set on working with young people in this home-life program, I jumped at the opportunity for an MAED. Initially, because I enjoy working in a school so much, I wanted to develop into a leader that would be ready for advancement on my school's campus. I wanted to learn about education theory and praxis to be better equipped for my future as an administrator--I wanted to move up in our organization.

Specifically, courses like *Engaging Diverse Students and Families* and *Issues and Strategies in Multicultural Education* have proved to be valuable resources in better connecting our family with the students in our care. Overall, the coursework from the MAED program has revealed my methods in connecting and teaching the demographic we serve has limits and I started to wonder what it really feels like to be under our care.

Based on these reflective practices, I am now developing strategies around what it would take to serve our students better staying in our current role. Although my initial goal was advancement, I am pleased to strive toward this: to expose and then expand my limits as an educator in my current role. Working with students that possess complex intersecting identities that are so

different than my own requires my natural inclinations for pedagogy be scrutinized. I am developing specific knowledge and skills that will help me connect and promote life-changing influence with *all* of our students. This MAED program has helped me learn to be more intentional in how I listen and consider the perspective of our students as we make decisions. This allows for a deeper sense of belonging and a more fertile, learning environment.