Online Student Becomes Online Teacher

By Emily Stone

In October 2006 I was two months into my first "real" job, teaching middle school math at an urban charter school. As I sat down to write my goals statement for the Online Master's application, I had no idea how much I would experience and grow over the next two and a half years. Through my experiences, I have solidified my initial beliefs about teaching and broadened my career aspirations.

After one year teaching in a "bricks-and-mortar" school, I made the switch to a virtual charter school. Teaching in an online environment has allowed me to explore many of the amazing possibilities that computer technology holds for revolutionizing K-12 education. As I completed assignments for the master's courses, I was always conscious of how I could apply what I was learning in both the bricks-and-mortar and the online setting.

In my goals statement I express that I strongly believe in the thoughtful integration of technology to increase student engagement and learning outcomes. This belief has been strengthened through my teaching experience and master's courses. My courses provided me with frameworks for evaluating educational technology and strategies for implementing free and commercial applications. My professors helped me think critically about the pedagogical reasons for using technology with students. I was then able to use the resources and ideas I learned about in class to create e-learning experiences for my own students, and share strategies and resources with my teaching colleagues.

The content I learned in my master's courses has been very valuable and relevant to my teaching practice, and so has the overall experience of being an online student. When I wrote my goals statement I did not know I would be experiencing online education from both sides, but now I see that I am in a unique position to help improve online learning for future students. As a student I have experienced various forms of online course design, use of Web 2.0 tools, and responsiveness to student needs in the online environment. As a teacher I now have the pedagogical knowledge and technical skills to create effective online learning experiences. By combining my learning and teaching experiences, I can be a unique asset to the improvement of online learning at all levels.