

## **A Future Written In the Past**

By: Angela Engardio

*“Whatever you are, be a good one.” – Abraham Lincoln*

In order to understand where I am going, I have to start by considering where I have been. This is true for all facets of life – including my future as a life-long learner. My first intrigue and engagement with the subject of history came from my grandfather. My grandpa, Frederick Williams, was a professor at Michigan State University with a Doctoral Degree in the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln. Years spent at my Grandfather's knee listening to the stories he wove. I now realize these were not typical Fairy Tales with white knights and princesses, as most other grandpas would share. Instead he used the power of stories to teach me about Shiloh, Antietam, and his greatest hero - Abraham Lincoln.

From this early introduction into the intrigue of history and the power of education, I am now a high school social studies teacher. Each day the words of Abraham Lincoln, as told to me by my Grandpa, resonate and push me to constantly improve and evolve.

*“I do not think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday.” – Abraham Lincoln*

On the verge of finishing my Masters Degree it would be easy, and a breathe of relief, to consider graduation the end to my educational path. However, learning does not happen only to those labeled “students” within the confines of a class. Learning can, and should, happen everyday and in a variety of ways. I have no intention of letting the end of my Masters in Educational Technology (MAET) program symbolize the end of my learning. During my very brief four years teaching I have already noticed monumental changes to how I approach lessons, strategies, and students. Some of these evolutions can be traced to the MAET program; many are a direct result of my talented colleagues, inspirational students, and extra-curricular involvements.

When I was hired at Fraser High School I knew nothing about the district or community, I entered blind. It only took one year before I realized I had hit the jackpot. I joined a staff that called each other the “Fraser family.” Not only did they embrace as a new member, a majority would go out of their way to help acclimate me to the culture and building dynamics. Beyond the culture and community, which I am much more comfortable with, my coworkers help me continue to grow as an educator. Within my department, working in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) I will be able to continue adapting new lessons and strategies. I work with a wide-range of individuals; we each bring something unique and different to our PLC helping each other to improve. As a member of the leadership team I also have the opportunity to work with the administration and other school leaders from various disciplines. This diverse group helps me

to think outside of the Social Studies realm, and see a broader picture of the building and student needs. Due to the emphasis placed on technology throughout the Fraser Public School District, I also will be able to continue progressing my technology skills and abilities. I have many resources at my disposal including: 1-1 iPads, Apple TV, SmartBoard, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Educators. The technology is nice, but having the support of dedicated teachers to assist integrating technology into my lessons will be hugely beneficial to my continued success with technology in the classroom. Having adult support in the building, helping me to continue learning and growing, is nice but it is not everything.

The people I see every day – my students – will continue to be my best resource for acquiring new skills as a teacher. Students in my classroom, Student Council, and/or Peer 2 Peer all bring something unique to my repertoire. Working with my Peer 2 Peer students has been especially inspirational. The students in this program are general education and students on the Autistic Spectrum (ASD), working to help students with ASD overcome social challenges. I have developed a deep interest in the area of Special Education with a specialization in the area of ASD. My future degree plan is to find a program with this emphasis, although I am currently unsure of where I will enroll.

*“My great concern is not whether you have failed, but whether you are content with your failure.” – Abraham Lincoln*

I aspire to be a master educator one day, which takes much more than a degree and support. Direct application of my ideas and plans is necessary to evolve my teaching practices. It is difficult to accept, but occasionally what I believe will be an excellent lesson fails. The students do not react the ways anticipated or the desired outcomes do not occur. These failures, in the moment, are extremely difficult to manage. After taking time to reflect on the problems and issues that emerged I have the opportunity to adjust and re-evaluate. Failures will happen, they are inevitable, but it is important to take the failure and turn them into success. Learning from failures will continue to evolve my teaching skills.

*“The best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time.” – Abraham Lincoln*

Contemplating my future as an educator it is difficult to predict all the possibilities. What I know will hold true, the quotes that repeat, come from Abraham Lincoln in my Grandpa’s voice. Finishing one program does not mean an end of my growth and learning, it is only a stepping-stone toward my future as the best teacher I can be.

*“I do the very best I know how – the very best I can; and I mean to keep on doing so until the end.” – Abraham Lincoln*