

**I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.**  
*Mark Twain.*

My future as a learner requires a brief reflection on my past as a learner, and by brief, I will try to keep it to a couple paragraphs. I could go back to high school and drone on about what learning meant to me then; however, I feel that I was not truly a learner, rather, I excelled at regurgitating exactly what it was that my teachers had told me to learn; no more, no less.

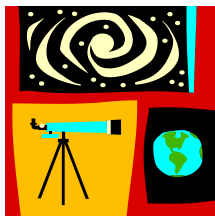
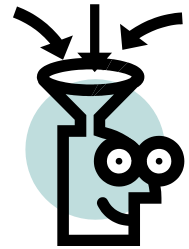


Instead, I will take you into the realm of college and work. It was during this time, though tumultuous the first couple of years, I defined myself as a learner, a person that appreciates the daily acquisition of knowledge, whether rudimentary or complex. At this time, I was still very much into partying, as I was just 18 years old, and though I had a thirst for knowledge, I still had a thirst for being social. I approached my first three years of college more as a trial through errors in the classroom; however, I would not hesitate to spend an entire weekend in the engineering or law libraries reading and researching the unassigned, rather what I wanted to learn. At this point, my college career came to a screeching halt as the University kicked me out for a year due to my failure to take my core courses seriously.

Skip ahead two years, I re-enter school with a new vigor and desire to achieve. During my time off, I realized this was what was required of me in order to study what truly interested me, or to be capable of learning on my own. At this time, I reflected upon what excited me about learning as well as what I was most interested in learning about, Geology and Physics. Therefore, I switched majors from Mechanical-Polymer Engineering to Geophysics, a major that would allow me to explore the outdoors and approach the fundamentals of how the natural world around us

emerged. Once I was in my Geology/Geophysics courses, I excelled not just in the classroom, but in graduate and level courses and research. I loved my time as a learner.

Skip ahead again, this time three years, I decided to leave my home, family, and friends in order to learn how to teach in an unconventional manner, through outdoor education and experiential learning. I wanted to become an educator in order to give back to the youth what Mr. Russ Bell, my high school physics teacher, provided to me as a senior in high school. Mr. Bell made science exciting and it was not about what the book required, but rather how the concepts related to us in our lives. He was not just a teacher; he cared about how we felt and how we learned. Two years go by in the southern California mountain town of Idyllwild and I accept a teaching position at a private K-12 school in the greater Los Angeles. However, this was just one route I could have taken after being in the mountains, I was also attempting to enter nursing school and truck driving school. Whichever school called me first was the direction my life would head. Teaching beckoned and I moved to Los Angeles.



While at my current school, I continued to learn and adapt my curriculum in the direction the world of science was evolving, collaboration, robotics, experiential learning, and STEM. Though my efforts were, and are still frequently dismissed by my colleagues and many administrators, I fought on and continued to implement these vital factors in my daily lessons. One day, I received an email to attend the ISTE conference in San Antonio, so I asked my technology chair if he would pay for my attendance at this event. He did, and my eyes were opened to a world of learning I knew existed, but did not know how to reach or implement wholly in my classroom. Thus, I began looking for a program that would allow me to maintain my job and learn how to implement

emerging technologies into my classroom, I found the MAET program at MSU and my thirst continued.

Upon entering the program, I did not know what I would do or how I could balance my work life, a social life, and a school life. Lucky for me, my work life was marginal and my social life virtually non-existent. I had a lot of time to devote to learning through the courses I was enrolled as well as through additional research inspired by my course instructors.

Today, on the brink of graduating from the MAET program, I look ahead to what my next adventure in learning will be. I have thought about this time and the approaching final year at my current school for some time now. I am eager to move on and begin this next chapter in my life as a learner, a son, a brother, an uncle, a friend, and an educator.

Currently, I know I will be moving closer to those that I care about and those that care about me, the Midwest and east coast; closer to my friends and family as the chapter in my life titled *Adventures in the West* ends and the forthcoming chapters await.



My future as a learner, still filled with a thirst for knowledge and reacquainting with those I have been so far from for the past ten years, is on the horizon. As a lifelong learner, I am looking for a Geology program to pursue a PhD in Hydrology and/or Structural Geology as well as tinkering in the realm of Geocognition. At this point, I am leaning toward five schools, Michigan State, West Virginia, Case Western Reserve, Penn State, and my hometown alma mater The University of Akron; however, at Akron, I will only be able to pursue a Master's degree, but I can also collaborate with the School of Education to pursue an EdD specializing in Science Education.

Additionally, I have a love for the outdoors and providing the experience of science in the natural world with the challenges posed by the outdoor classroom. As a result, I would love to start a non-profit experiential learning center in the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia to provide the experience and challenges of learning in the outdoors. The reason for the location is because West Virginia is a very poor state and its education sector does very little to show its youth that they are capable of more than just the next generation of miner. Additionally, educating the youth on mountaintop removal and the perils they face in the future if they do not look for a change in lifestyle is paramount to me as a scientist and an educator.

Ultimately, education and learning has played a great role in my life. Many educators have influenced me, but the most influential of all has been my father, my model as a lifelong learner. My thirst comes from him. He has looked for a new challenge in learning for as long as I can recall, all the while be a wonderful father and great leader.

**The result of the educative process is capacity for further education.**  
*John Dewey.*

