

Professional Growth Plan

There is no greater thrill than to see how technology empowers today's youth. To me, teaching is an iterative process to be improved each year. Students are my participatory co-designers, providing feedback about how their learning can become more engaging.

My teaching journey began after I graduated from the University at Albany with a major in History. I now hold a Master's Degree in Educational Technology, from NJCU.

The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation awarded me an [educator fellowship](#) to take part in an [Earthwatch Expedition](#) to Costa Rica. My academic accomplishments earned an invitation to join to the [Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education](#). In the spring of 2012, I was nominated for the New Jersey Department of Higher Education's Showcase of Exemplary Practices; I was awarded the NJCU Trailblazer Award in spring, 2014. I am currently an Educational Technology Leadership Doctoral Candidate and adjunct faculty member at NJCU.

Students in my classes are also taught social studies using a game-based approach. Games and simulations present content in an authentic context, which creates a situated learning environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Not only do students play to learn, but they also use iterative design skills to create and to problem solve. Playtesting and analyzing feedback engages students in ways that are effective, exciting, and empowering. I share a similar philosophy as the [Institute of Play](#) does for its [Quest to Learn](#) school (I am on its [Teacher Advisory Council](#)). Some of Quest to Learn's principles includes: design thinking; systems thinking (interconnectedness); playful learning; and constructivism (learn by doing). The teacher's role at Quest - and in my classroom - is to put students on a mission.

When I learn about a new technique or technological tool, I implement it with students and share the experiences with my colleagues and peers. My leadership approach follows the model of affecting transformative change. One of the best examples of a transformative leader was Steve Jobs. [Addressing the graduating class of Stanford University, in 2005](#), Jobs said, "You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards." Jobs's triumphant return to Apple can be attributed to his qualities as an effective, transformative leader; he was a true visionary.

Vision is fundamental to being a transformational leader. Transformational leadership "changes and transforms people" (Northouse, 2013, p. 185). Being on the board of directors for the New Jersey Council of Social Studies helps me to affect transformative change. I also use media to help others innovate. A recent example was my [students' self-published iPad book](#). The class became creators - rather than consumers - of digital content. Our insights were shared with peers in a [feature article for the NJEA Review magazine](#). I have also written for the International Society for Technology's [Learning and Leading](#) magazine, the [Social Science Docket](#), and [Creative Teaching and Learning](#) magazine. I was an "industry expert" guest columnist for [Innovate My School](#).

Spreading transformational change extends to my students' playtests of education games. Following each test, I shared anecdotal findings by publishing articles, partaking in interviews, and presenting conference workshops. Students piloted [SimCityEDU: Pollution Challenge](#), which was featured in an [article in Mental Floss magazine](#).

Following the game's release, I took part in a panel discussion on the Institute of Play's *Playtime Online*. We piloted *Historia*, for [E-Line Media](#), and playtested for [BrainPOP's GameUp](#) platform. In the summer of 2014 I was invited to the [Games in Education Symposium](#), in Troy, NY. I was also selected to be a teacher panelist for [GlassLab at South by Southwest Education \(SWSXedu\)](#), in Austin, TX. The panel will be called *Teachers Only: Some Serious Gameplay*, covering its *SimCityEDU* and *Mars Generation One: Argubots Attack* games.

In my school district I am viewed as a leader of educational technology. Service on the district social studies curriculum revision committee, the technology committee, and the school-based professional development committee exemplifies my commitment to innovative teaching. In the community, I co-advise the Kiwanis Builder's Club, in which students raise money and help the local community, and advise the Student Technology Club, inspiring students to create. My class is where I put Jean Piaget's constructivist ideas into practice - where students learn by doing, as well as Seymour Papert's constructionist approach - learn by making (1962; 1993). I was an Ambassador for the authoring tool, [Voki](#), and a STAR Member of the [Discovery Educator Network](#).

The Foundation of Denville awarded me classroom grants every year that I have taught in my school district. These experiences were furthered in the grant writing workshops I presented to other like-minded educators. Proficiency in technology skills led me to teach professional development workshops at the Morris County Educational Training Technology Corporation. Classes included: podcasting; Skype; digital storytelling; social media; Web 2.0 tools; grant writing; SMART Board lesson design; Google Earth; and iPads in the Classroom.

Accomplishments in graduate school and in my professional life demonstrate my ability to lead. All of my work as a game-based learning advocate led to a forthcoming book from Peter Lang Publishing, *Gamify Your Classroom: A Field Guide to Game-Based Learning*. I wrote the book because I wanted to share what I have experienced. Moving forward I plan to:

- Develop my research skills, including using SPSS and Excel to analyze dissertation data
- Develop my formal dissertation proposal by Spring 2015
- Continue in my capacity as an adjunct instructor at New Jersey City University, integrating my e-learning knowledge into course design
- Continue advising Institute of Play and the GlassLab studio
- Advise more game developers (e.g., BrainPOP, Zynga.org's nascent Educator Working Group)
- Continue as an Edutopia blogger, extending my reach as a game-based learning advocate
- Submit and publish article from deleted book chapter in *Digital Culture and Education, E-Learning and Digital Media*, or similar refereed journal
- Submit and publish article from E-Learning course to *E-Learning and Digital Media* or the *Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education*, or similar refereed journal
- Present at major conferences to promote my book, including (but not limited to): South by Southwest Education (SWSXedu) (March 2015),

- Games+Learning+Society Conference (June 2015), American Education Research Association (AERA) (June 2015), International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) (July 2015), Serious Play Conference (July 2015), and Games in Education Symposium (August 2015)
- Co-design additional missions in *Time Society Chronicles: Independence!* interactive fiction game
 - Have my dissertation completed by Spring 2016

My passion fuels the direction that my professional life has taken. I still have much to learn as an educator. I am very enthusiastic about embracing the challenges that lay ahead. After all, today's inspired students will become tomorrow's future leaders and innovators!

References

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