



## Are You Ready to Go Back to School While in the Classroom?

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Before I graduated with my undergraduate degree, I knew I wanted to attend graduate school and at least obtain a master's degree. One of my professors told me to get a teaching job first before investing more time in school. She also noted that I would be able to put into practice what I was learning if I waited. I appreciated her advice.

I started my first teaching job in 2006, and in 2009, I was accepted into a secondary education program. A professor asked me what I was going to do with this degree, and I really could not articulate a response. She suggested I study a program that would help me in the classroom. I switched to the language education program because I had English learners and was not sure how to support them. When I finished the program, I had another teaching license, bringing my license count to three. When teachers talk to me about pursuing a master's degree or enrolling in a doctoral program, I share the knowledge that was shared with me about pursuing a program of interest that will benefit the teacher with helping students. Teachers should also see if the degree will add another license because more licenses can help a teacher be more marketable.

Teachers should also consider the cost. My undergraduate degree was paid for except for a \$7,000 loan I had to take out during my final year. I ended up on that five-year college plan and needed a loan to cover that last year. I got married a few months after I graduated. I had an extremely low-budget wedding. Since my parents did not have to break the bank for the wedding, their wedding gift to me was paying off that loan. They wanted me to enter my marriage debt-free. My dad said, "Staying debt-free is your responsibility now." That resonated with me. I knew when I was accepted to my program for my master's degree that I would only take classes I could pay for. I was not going to take out any loans or charge up tuition on a credit card. This meant I took one class at a time for many semesters. In the middle of my master's program, I got pregnant with twins and had to take off a semester. Going from a family of two to a family of four made me more committed than ever to only taking classes I could afford to pay for out of pocket.

Next, teachers need to look at their capacity to teach, have a bit of a personal life, and do well in their course work. Yes, I meant a little bit of a personal life because some of that personal time will have to be used to do coursework. I finished my master's degree in 2012. In 2013, I started teaching at the university level and have done so ever since in addition to being in a school. From the professor's side, I have facilitated learning for pre-service teachers and teachers in the classroom. Some teachers are not ready to teach and complete coursework at the same time. I have had grown adults complain to me about my late work policy and say it is unfair. If anyone is wondering, I allow one week late with a 20% deduction unless the assignment is a discussion. If it is a discussion, you cannot make it up because after the deadline, the class is on to the next discussion and it is simply a monologue for credit. Again, as an adult, you know how school works especially if you are a teacher. I had one teacher write me five emails complaining about a course I was teaching. Each email was at least three paragraphs ... could have done the assignments with all the energy burned complaining about

the assignments. If teachers don't have the time, focus, or organization to meet the demands of graduate school, they should not enroll.

It is throwing money away when teachers take classes for a degree when a teacher does not have a purpose for pursuing more education. It has to be for more than clout. Also, teachers can learn and improve without obtaining another degree. As an educator, of course, I support obtaining more education. However, the why matters and the capacity for learning while teaching must be there.