

Opening a New Chapter

I am currently at a point in my life where I am closing a chapter, a chapter that has been written for the last 20 years. I am finally retiring from the military. My goals have drastically changed from when I enlisted at the age of 18, to now at the age of 38. I have been planning and preparing for retirement for the last 5-7 years. I have always had my education in mind and knew there would be more job opportunities for me if I furthered my education. I started out in the Criminal Justice realm but changed my goals later on due to the fact I did not want work in law enforcement for the rest of my life, 20 years was enough. I have earned 4 degrees (2 Associates, 1 Bachelors and 1 Masters) thanks to the military and also without accumulating any student debt. I want a job after the military that I am happy going to every day. Then, I chose to go for my masters at Michigan State in the Master of Arts in Education program MAED. Teaching is my passion, and I know that's where I want to be. My first step will be to gain as much experience as I can in an internship setting.

The last 6 months of my military career will be through an internship with Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas. I will work directly with the lead behavior technician and the assigned board-certified behavioral analyst in providing skills instruction to learners with behavioral needs. I will be responsible for the implementation of behavior reduction and skill acquisition programs designed by the supervising board-certified behavioral analyst. I will also learn how collect required data during sessions, create and review session notes and prepare program materials and organize data. This internship will give me an opportunity to immerse myself in my degree specialty of Special Education. It will give me hands on experience as well as the ability to network and reach back to my mentors after I move on to another position. This will be a part of the foundation to build myself as an educator in the upcoming years.

The next step will be to receive my teaching certification in the state of Michigan. I will need to complete an approved preparation program as well as three semester credit hours of required reading courses, first aid and CPR and pass the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC). I plan to take a few prep courses prior to my MTTC to ensure I will pass on the first try. I am also required to have an endorsement. Not only will I have to earn my teaching certification, I will have to apply for an endorsement. This will be done through a certifications officer to ensure the application is processed correctly.

Once I am a certified teacher, I would like to further my education and learn American Sign Language (ASL). There are many programs available to learn ASL, however I would like to take a class to learn, not through an app. Michigan State University offers an American Sign Language class which is open to master's students in the Special Education realm. I think it would be a great tool to have working in classrooms with deaf children. ASL is also something that can be used all of the time, anywhere.

All of my future learning goals are in line with my profession after the military. Preparing and planning is one of the hardest things to do with a career change. But I am always growing and learning each day. I hope once I move to Michigan things will move a little faster and I will get more information I need for my future career.

