

## My Thoughts on Teaching and Learning

Knowledge is an unknown *treasure*, buried under an earthy surface of ignorance.

Teaching and learning are the *processes* of digging for knowledge. Those who teach and those who learn are *diggers*.

I believe that students and teachers must first establish a *connection* in order to begin their digging—and because “digging” is a choice, teachers must encourage and persuade, not compel or force.

A connection implies a relationship; a relationship implies a dialogue.

*Dialogue* allows teachers and students to stand upon the same ground and dig. They dig...and dig...and dig some more. Meanwhile, the teacher continues to encourage and persuade: “Keep diggin’! Yeah! That’s right! We’re gonna find it!”

However equal, students and teachers have different roles and responsibilities. The teacher must teach and the student must learn, but both must dig *together*. In short, I believe that teachers are not above their students and students are not above their teachers. (Along with equality, add compassion.)

A compassionate teacher elevates.

I prefer lectures and discussions. I want students to think critically and ask questions. I prefer activities and group work (i.e. I like seeing my students up and about, not slouching in their seats). After all, education should be enjoyable (like digging for treasure).

Students need a reason to learn (otherwise, they’re quick to throw paper airplanes). I prefer to explore the connections between the subject matter and whatever students find interesting, relevant, or exciting. In preparing a lesson, I often ask myself, “Why should my students care about this?” and “How can I make this engaging?”

Students should experience disequilibrium and novelty.

A classroom is best governed by principles, not rules. These four statements of principle will govern my classes: (1) be safe, (2) be respectful, (3) be cooperative, and (4) be responsible.

*Safety, respect, cooperation, and responsibility* are not just buzzwords—these are integral principles for maintaining safe and productive classes. These are not only principles, but also *priorities*.

Let’s git diggin’.

## My Thoughts on Assessments

When I first began my education studies, I remember thinking, “Assessments? What...like tests? I hate tests. In fact: everybody hates tests. Nobody wants to be assessed.”

But during this time, an instructor of mine asked, “Isn’t life a test?” (I remember feeling sheepish.)

If life is indeed a “test,” then educational assessments are wholly necessary in the microcosm we call school. Assessments are necessary; if necessary, important.

I prefer informal assessments, which reflect a student’s day-to-day performance in the classroom. I enjoy seeing progression and informal assessments show progress (or the lack thereof).

I prefer authentic assessments. Growth and learning inside the classroom should only serve to prepare students to grow and learn outside of the classroom. An authentic assessment reveals the ability to apply learning in the “real world.”

I also prefer performance assessments (although I understand the importance of paper-pencil assessments). For example, I prefer to assess reading and writing by means of essay questions.

Grades can be arbitrary because grades do not always reflect *actual* learning. In my estimation, a “failing student” who struggles to earn a “C” most likely puts forth more effort than a “C student” who struggles to earn an “A.”

In perhaps my most challenging political science class, I earned a “C” grade—a so-called “pockmark” on my college transcript. But I wasn’t disappointed or discouraged. After all, I had *learned* more than I had earned: I had learned an A-grade’s amount of knowledge and comprehension (despite the “C”).

Assessments should reveal what students *know* or what students can *do*—not how they guess.

An assessment is simply an evaluation, a judgment, and a review.