

In my understanding teaching is a slow collective process of drawing meaning to the people, places, and things we experience in life and using that information to positively impact the world around us. I believe teaching is collective and reciprocal, engaging both teachers and students. Everyone should be challenged to uncover deeper meanings and understandings of their experiences by developing and using critical thinking skills. I do not believe that any of us are blank slates or repositories of new information. Instead, I believe that each of us comes into the learning environment primed with experiences and pre-existing beliefs. These experiences and beliefs cannot, and should not, be ignored. By leveraging these experiences and beliefs, learning can be contextualized and enriched for all involved. Connecting learning to what folks already know allows new information to be more readily integrated into daily life.

Just like words carry a moral and ethical weight, I believe knowledge does as well. When engaged in the co-creation of new knowledge, teachers and students must be cognizant and embrace the impact they can have on the people and community around them. Teaching should be applicable. This does not mean that applicability is always readily apparent, but that through intentional reflection, meaning can be made and lessons applied to non-theoretical instances. In this way, knowledge should be used to create a more just society, to relieve suffering and pain. When knowledge is used to create greater inequity in the world, I believe the teaching and learning process has been misused.

Knowing the impact proper teaching can have on the world, I believe it should also be done in a way that encourages learners to remain engaged in the process beyond the immediate teaching experience. By crafting teaching in a way that shifts learners' beliefs about learning from a quick task to be accomplished to a slow process to be engaged in, I believe we build a more sustainable educational environment primed for future success.