

**BIG IDEAS THAT WILL
CHANGE THE WAY YOU TEACH**

BIG IDEA...

**Beliefs &
Assumptions**

Excerpts from Keynotes and Presentations

DR. JACK TIERNEY



*“If we teachers want our students to believe us
(believe science, history, norms, ethics)
it is helpful to first know what they already believe
and then seek a path forward.”*

Beliefs and assumptions are a necessary and important psychological mechanism for making sense of a complex world.



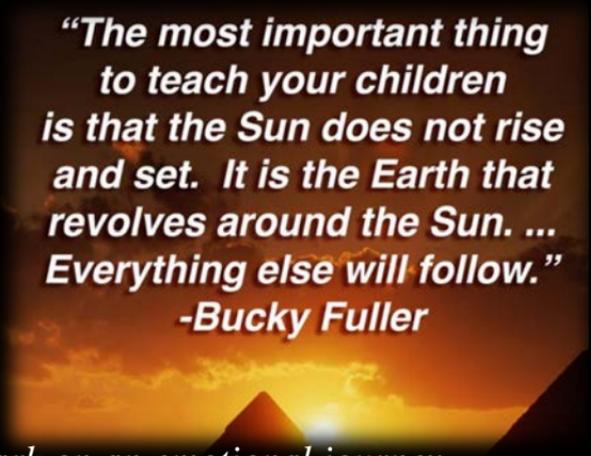
We can believe that the sun will “rise” in the east and “set” in the west today and we can safely assume it will again tomorrow...

...we do not need to re-examine the evidence to fully believe “that’s the way it is!”

Sometimes, however, this important psychological mechanism gets a little lazy as one's "That's The Way It Is" list grows.

Sometimes, it's a good idea to examine our beliefs and assumptions in light of new evidence and new contexts.

If we do, we may find that the sun neither rises nor sets and there is no east, no west, no north and no south.



***"The most important thing to teach your children is that the Sun does not rise and set. It is the Earth that revolves around the Sun. ... Everything else will follow."
-Bucky Fuller***

*When we hold up our beliefs for (re)examination, we embark on an emotional journey
- the more deeply held the belief the more deeply felt the emotion.*

When new evidence conflicts with deeply held beliefs, we experience a distressing emotional state psychologists term “cognitive dissonance.”

As in music, where we “feel” the need for harmonic resolution from dissonance to consonance at the end of a tune...

...so in life we “feel” the need for beliefs resolution from dissonance to consonance at the end of the day.”



Most of the beliefs children carry into adolescence have been internalized through enculturation.



Some beliefs through personal experience!

When we “teach,” we are asking students to believe us, to assume we are telling them the truth.



When what we are asking them to believe conflicts with what they already believe, they will experience dissonance. When we present evidence, dissonance will grow in proportion. Eventually, the learner will need resolution and may do that in two ways: reject the evidence and sustain beliefs, or, assimilate the evidence and change beliefs.

Some beliefs are so strong and so deeply held that they are immune to evidence and may be sustained even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.



A student who “deeply believes” that Zeus controls the climate, will likely not believe that humans have anything to do with it as some 98% of the scientists on the planet claim.



Presentation/Keynote: Educating in a Time of Student Empowerment:

In this engaging keynote/presentation Dr. Jack Tierney describes his four-step “FEEL – THINK - PREP – ACT” framework for educating in a time of student empowerment drawing on research and focusing on “big ideas” and “do-able” applications.

Workshop I: Educator Beliefs / Articulation and Consensus Building:

Dr. Jack Tierney engages educators in active discussion around salient issues such as: school shootings and violence, student activism, curricular vs social responsibilities, belief systems, brain-based learning, and facilitates consensus building on school-based responses.

Workshop II: Designing for Student Empowerment: Activity/Lesson Development:

Dr. Tierney guides educators through the process of designing standards-based learning activities, lessons, and curricular modifications that empower students to speak up and participate in civil society.

Workshop III: Facilitating Student Empowerment: Programs and Methods:

Dr. Tierney summarizes recent research and program development and facilitates planning, preparing, and supporting school-sponsored social-conscious student activity.

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