

Personal Reflection – July 17, 2022

Irenic Education

Years ago, I wrote in my book [On Teaching and Learning](#): “*The means is dialogue, the end is learning, the purpose is peace.*” That was more a hope than a description. Since hope is a memory of the future, those words were built upon my own memories of educational events where physical signs (laughter, sighs of ‘aha!’, joy) indicated *the presence of peace*. Men and women served one another with gentle care and mutual concern. True “com-petition” (asking together) moved them to discover a daring newness in their own experience so they could be useful to one another. Peace!

I always celebrate finding a word to describe what we do. Just today I learned a new word: *irenic* - peaceful. Thank you, [Walter Brueggemann](#)!

When you faithfully design a learning event, beginning with an appropriate learning needs and resources assessment, continuing with the hard work of creating learning tasks for learners to do in to struggle with the content: ideas, attitudes, skills, moving through the patient facilitation of those tasks, welcoming the learners’ responses and products with lavish affirmation and helpful suggestions, you are not teaching peace, you are *doing peace*.

Imagine irenic education in every university classroom, boardroom, laboratory and training center.

The story is told of Thomas Edison saying to his exhausted colleagues, as experiment after experiment with the lightbulb failed: “*Imagine every home in America being lit by this little bulb.*”

Edison inspires me to boldly consider our process irenic.

The purpose drives the process at every point.

--Jane Vella