

The Lens of Now

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A friend of mine and I were bemoaning the state of Elementary Education in America, precipitating my understanding of “The Lens of Now.” I suppose I started it by relating the story of how a student of mine knew all the short cuts and tricks to arrive at the correct answer for a mathematical problem, but didn’t understand the fundamentals. Referring to the “Tens Column” meant nothing. Another student told me flat out that his other teacher didn’t teach math; just what button to push on the calculator.

My friend’s reaction was shocking because he is an accountant and is highly educated in mathematics. His position was that it didn’t matter how the answer was obtained, as long as it was correct. Of course, I countered with the observation that without an understanding of the underlying math, the student would have no way of knowing if the answer was correct or of recognizing an error.

We agreed to disagree and moved on to other world problems. Over the next few days, though, the theory of The Lens of Now took shape. My friend was viewing the world from his vantage point: that of already having a very strong mathematical background. My view, as a teacher, was from the vantage point of how to give that background to someone who had only recently learned what a fraction was. In teaching, if the lesson begins with the tricks, the only things learned are the tricks. Subsequently, that body of knowledge cannot advance; there is no one left who knows enough real math to develop new tricks.

The Lens of Now can also be applied to other areas of interest. Consider the “Then and Now” comparison with other issues;

The story of Moses in the desert; was it 40 years or 40 days that seemed like years,

The practice of slavery,

Then and now views on Human Trafficking,

The first references to American Natives as savages,

The acceptability of Federal Land Ownership.

If you find this intriguing, be aware that there are other lenses through which people view the world. When we learn to see “our” world through “their” lens, we might get along a little better.