

First and foremost I learned that no matter what the topic is you're interested in, the internet has it somewhere - most times free. Millions of educators and parents are seeking the same answers, solutions, revelations, help... and the internet organizes it and keeps it in such a way that it is accessible to all. Come on policy makers - educate yourselves about the real state of education.

The second thing I learned did not come from the contents of the archive; it came from reflecting on it as a work in progress. The internet and the archive is something that grows and defines itself. It does this from the work and interests of other people and the pressing current issues in education - and that is collaborative work. As I reflected on this, I realized that collaborative work can get a bad rap at times. What I mean is - in the K-12 we usually want our kids to figure things out on their own, use their own brain power, and prove what they know individually. The truth is that no one can really get very far relying on his or her self. Individual growth takes teamwork. Not one person knows all the answers. Answers come from trial and error, others' experiences, revisiting and reflecting, and failure. This archive will become a valuable resource for educators as more find out about it.

Finally, I learned that not everything has to come from a textbook - someone else's theories and methods. Holding a BA, MA or PhD doesn't make anyone's experiences more enriching or important than the next. It just means that some people have more vocabulary to discuss certain topics. Educational degrees mean that some people reflect on things in a different way than others, for a much longer time, and probably with more passion. And without being too insulting, this is the third thing I learned - practicality. My everyday life and struggle is much more important than what I read in a textbook about why and how to be accepting to all ethnicities and languages. I've put 30 to 120 days on about 150 colts in the three years I spent in junior college - I was having fun and learning so I stayed the extra year. Each 2 year old had his own personality and vices. Some I loved while others I hated. I had the same patience with each and the same expectations. Some have gone on to professional arenas, while others are backyard pets. Each had a different ability and strength. And it is for this reason that there is something to be said about Prairie Pedagogy - learning takes place in the most unusual places. Farmers will go without food and water before their cattle. Freezing fingers and toes simply means move faster. A neighbor's bull in with your cows means two families work together to remove him. Long droughts mean intruding on your neighbors well - and they welcome it. This is a pedagogy of a way of life that is dying out because it is unappealing, uninteresting, and foreign to most. Farming and ranching is practical in many ways - but most of all - we grow and learn from it. Many people working together and collaborating for the same common goal - feed a nation.