

There are many things essential to learning but I believe that one of the most important parts of process of learning is the teaching. A good student needs a good teacher to guide them along some paths – perhaps not all but there are some things better learned from a teacher.

As a student myself, I feel that anyone you meet in life can be a teacher of some sort but a good teacher (in the classroom or out) needs to have experience. Without any experience or knowledge, what would they have to teach? So there is my introduction to what I've learned this past week: teachers need to learn too.

In the last two weeks I have been helping out at some tours here at JPL that are specifically for teachers. Though I might not know too much about who these teachers are or what exactly they teach I do know that they have gathered here on lab to learn new things to pass on to their students.

I have always had an interest in all kinds of science, but I have a special fondness for astronomy and oceanography. Although I have read books and joined school clubs on my own to learn more about the topics, there was never an opportunity to learn about them during school time. The teachers were supportive and helpful but rarely did they have any material to help me learn more about stars or oceans. Though I never got the opportunity in elementary, middle, or high school to learn about either topic formally in the classroom, I see these teachers that join the tour and conferences that have a special appreciation for learning new things to share with students. I observe them discussing lesson plans and asking presenters questions about how and where they can find more resources for their students to utilize in order for them to get more experience.

The teachers that come on JPL tours and attend the teacher conferences are few of the many other teachers that find ways to further their own knowledge so they can share with their students. I find myself somewhat envious of these younger students who will have the opportunity to have hands on experience with new technology and to learn about the newest missions and instruments in space. I can only imagine how this even younger generation can benefit from this knowledge.

I am not trying to voice my regrets or frustration with my past education here in any way. I just hope to point out that teaching doesn't always have to be by the text book. As a student, I know class can get boring with it seems like you are reading out of the same book and doing the same papers all the time. Students can learn and so can teachers. All that matters is that there is this never ending cycle of knowledge being transferred between the student and the teacher. I am very inspired seeing all the teachers that gather here periodically trying to find new material to inspire young people with. I feel that these teachers will have a way of inspiring the new scientists, researchers, and engineers of tomorrow.