

## My Metaphor

The image below represents me and my approach as a teacher.

At first glance, it seems a typical teacher's desk. Many of the stereotypical components of an elementary school teacher's desk are evident. To a casual observer, this is a standard image requiring little effort. However, I began thinking more about their arrangement, the choice of items, their positioning. Was there purpose behind it? Could a slight change, imperceptible to most, have some unseen effect on viewers? Could this effect be intentional and used to elicit a desired reaction? This is where I drew a relation to my approach to teaching.



As an educator, reflection on practices and identification of improvements is a necessity. I can't throw some items down on a table, snap the picture, and walk away. This doesn't mean I worry excessively about minor details, but that I continuously make my best effort, not only for the benefit of my students but also for my own personal satisfaction. Perhaps my students are not aware of the additional effort I put into class content: from creation to delivery to assessment to feedback. Would they even notice if the blocks were arranged across the table horizontally instead of vertically? Perhaps my colleagues feel fine recycling lessons semester after semester, glossing over obvious errors and dated references. Would they look twice if the pencils were all perfectly aligned? This takes me to the specific composition of the photo.

In recent months, I have had the privilege of attending learning conferences and being exposed to a variety of issues I was previously unaware of. Could the apple, assumed to be a gift from a student, represent one with food to spare while other classmates go hungry? While I initially described this as a typical classroom image, maybe that is only due to my privileged background and upbringing. If the apple is placed atop the textbooks, could this represent inequalities in education? Could the student-teacher relationship trump academic achievement, hence the apple's placement atop the textbooks? Could the differently coloured pencils represent diversity in the classroom? And their lack of alignment, the variety of student learning styles? Now, the building blocks, were I arranging the photo, would be arranged horizontally from left to right. After all, that's how we write in English. But what's wrong with a vertical stack? I interpret this as the unexpected, or as an innovation. While we may set out with a particular method and goal in mind, who's to say a student follows this same method? Or that the goal they reach was the one I originally intended?