

I understand a teacher as a weaver of worlds (Butler, 2023). A teacher must first listen and observe to understand each child's intricate pattern already in progress, taking into account student's likes, dislikes, talents, cultural practices and the intricacies of their personality. It takes time; it is slow, careful work. Teachers thoughtfully select threads connecting student prior knowledge to academic ideas. Masterfully looping interests to book choice, from social studies topics to student's lived experience. Threading math concepts with the wider world. Thereupon, unfolding how these ideas matter in the larger tapestry of their lives and community.

A careful weaver learns to braid together each student, welcoming them alongside as partners in the task. Shared books, common interests and common experiences form the inner tapestry of the classroom community. From this supportive center constructed carefully from academic and social lessons learned collectively throughout the year, each child's tapestry fans out. Weavers reflect and analyze each child's patterns, ideas and growth. They ask questions about what is missing and create lessons or draw from old lessons in their repertoire. Careful weavers keep tabs on social connections that seem threadbare and need attention and collaborate with other weavers in detail-oriented reflection to imagine future threads.

I once identified as a careful weaver. I strove to honor student's experiences and lace interests, ideas, community and the wider world into academic milestones. It was challenging work and like all weavers, I made mistakes. No tapestry is perfect and growth happens when we go back, apologize and repair haphazard strands or broken threads. The teacher sets the tone for the tapestry, the values we interlace into the center will continue in the student's patterns as they weave. This includes humility, a deep love for learning, adapting and changing techniques.

Being a weaver is uncomfortable work. Learning new techniques requires going deeper into unfamiliar bodies of knowledge. Students thrive on this path; young brains need uncharted territory and seek out motifs that fit their generation. Understanding these new motifs is hard for some weavers; we do not always enjoy change. Careful weavers honor the discomfort and find ways to connect old knowledge with new patterns.

Those in power are often less attuned to our tapestry; they are disconnected and unprepared for the discomfort. School boards and legislative bodies respond with overemphasizing standardization. I interpret this emphasis on stiff, standardized patterns as fear of ideas they do not yet recognize. Student innovation is overshadowed, the connection between what those in power consider "standard" and our community's weaving practices unravels.

Weavers are left confused, disoriented and out of rhythm.

Our job as weavers requires intense concentration and a solid link with the students and communities we serve. Distraction from this task results in fabricated templates no longer exemplifying the community's unique knowledge. The standard tapestries created are designed for comparison, thereby measured and ranked. Some patterns and ways of weaving are valued above others. Weavers must choose to signal and perform ways of knowing that are legible to those in power, those holding clipboards and assigning us a ranking. Those in power walk away from classrooms unaware that authentic weaving values all patterns and thoughtfully braids them with academic ideas, even creating new ones. It is slow work and does not have a clear end point for convenient measurement. Nothing about careful weaving is convenient or neatly packaged.



Many careful weavers have left this environment. I am one of them. But many children and teachers don't get this choice; they continue to weave. It must be clear with the mass exodus of weavers that legislative bodies and state boards need to reassess the decontextualized standards, rigid webs with no flexibility or room for restoration or growth. Weavers desire autonomy and need resources: more time to reflect, and to share knowledge, skills, patterns and ways of knowing valued in *our* communities' tapestries. If we allow them, novel ideas and patterns will stretch to fill the space where these concrete patterns now loiter. Children are already weaving worlds in spaces outside the classroom. Welcoming this new generation's motifs back into classrooms requires abandoning rigidity and embracing tapestries and techniques we have yet to imagine.

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Reference

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