

FingerPoints

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E-Newsletter for *Teaching Is Too Important to Take Seriously*

White Meat and Dark Meat, Take it Away...

Did the title of this column get your attention? I thought it might, and really, I had no choice but to use it. You see, while I was writing this column about Thanksgiving, my favorite movie with a Thanksgiving theme (maybe the only movie with a Thanksgiving theme) *Addams Family Values* was playing in the background, and just at the moment that I was trying to come up with the title, that line came through the speakers of my TV. So, as you can see, it was meant to be.

Now to the column. As I mentioned last year, Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday for several reasons, but mainly it is my favorite because it is so simple. The whole idea is to take time to give thanks. There are no presents involved. There are no requirements, just give thanks. How simple can that be?

Well, I think we all know that sometimes just giving thanks can be the hardest thing to do. As we talk about in the book and in presentations, each of us has a story that if we were to tell it, would bring others to tears, and it is these stories that sometimes make it very difficult to give thanks. I mean, what do we have to give thanks for with all of these stories? However, we also know one

more thing about our stories. We know that each of us has stories that make us smile. Each of us has stories that make us laugh. Each of us has stories that make us thankful.

So, this Thanksgiving take a moment to think about those stories and be thankful for all that we have. For me, I would like to take that time to thank each of you who read this newsletter, and particularly those who have emailed me about your experiences. This newsletter started out as a way to keep a connection with people, and to promote the ideas that I put forward in *Teaching Is Too Important to Take Seriously!* However, it has become much more than that for me. Each time I struggle to start writing this, especially when I am in a less than perfect mood, I read the responses people have sent me (not the ones that say please don't send me this anymore) and it energizes and changes me. It helps me be the more of the person I want to be. So to each of you, I say thank you, and this month be thankful.

Have a Good Day,
Scott Endres

The Finger of the Month - #3 Smile, Damn It! Smile!

I'm going to admit something to you that may surprise you. I know about *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert. (If you are a guy reading this, you may have to do a little research about the topic.) I haven't read the book, because that would be against Man Law, but I know a lot about it, and even watched the entire episode about the book on *Oprah* (If you tell anyone that, I will deny it.)

Seriously, I watched the entire *Oprah* episode and found it very interesting. Every woman in my family had already read and discussed the book, so I had a good understanding of the book when I happened upon the show.

The question is, what does this have to do with *Smile, Damn It! Smile!* Well, late in the show Ms. Gilbert talked about going to Bali and

working with a medicine man that she knew. She talked about how the man had chastised her about a complicated meditation method, and that he would show her a very simple effective meditation method. He said, "I'll give you a meditation. ... Sit and smile. Even smile in your liver."

Ms. Gilbert went on to say "Smile all the way through. Sit there and smile all the way through and see if that doesn't work a little bit to start to change your life and cause a little revolution in your mind."

If that is not a world example of *Smile, Damn It! Smile!*, I don't know what is. Even when things are going badly, remember to take time and Smile, Damn It!, Smile...all the way down to your liver.



Don't Be Afraid...

Don't Be Afraid... (a.k.a. How Making Ice Cream Can Be a Mistake!)

Over the course of this year we have looked at a lot of different examples of how being stupid can be effective in life and in the classroom. We have talked about games in the classroom, coaches painting themselves orange, and me making a fool of myself in front of 900 students on the announcements. To this we can now add that in order to relax and motivate students before state testing, I dressed in a chicken outfit on the announcements, and challenged students to not "Chicken Out" on the test.

However, there is one area of being stupid that we have left out, and that is making mistakes. In the book and presentations, we talk about how letting students see our mistakes has several benefits for our students. Not only does it let students see that we are human, and allow us to make a greater connection to our students, but it also allows our students to see that they are not alone in making mistakes. Also, it gives us a great opportunity to show our students that making a mistake is not the end, but can be a beginning, and this is something most haven't learned or have difficulty learning through their own experiences.

Now this is all stuff you may already know, and I thought my knowledge of how making mistakes can help me, but recently I learned another way it helps. Actually, it is "not" making mistakes that showed me something. Over the past several months I have been experimenting with making homemade ice cream. I bought a small freezer with a condenser, (yes, that's right, no cranking) and began playing. I have made the regular flavors, (vanilla, chocolate, etc.) and the bizarre (Peanut Butter and Jelly, German Chocolate, Honey Cornbread, Chipotle, etc.), and it has been a blast.

Now, I'm sure that you are wondering how making ice cream, not making mistakes, and teaching tie together. Well, here it is. Recently, I took some of my ice cream (PB&J, Chocolate Chip, and Pumpkin Walnut) to a church picnic. While a friend was sampling my product, we started talking about the different flavors I had tried. I was telling about my explorations and how wonderfully they worked, when he asked me the question that stopped me. "What have you tried that didn't work?"

I was stuck. Other than a few normal flavors that I just messed up, there really hadn't been any unusual flavor that didn't work. Why is this a problem? Well, I am enough of a math teacher to know that the chances of everything working out so well are very slim. What it means is that I haven't been pushing hard enough to try new things because I haven't made any mistakes. It was Albert Einstein who said, "Anyone whose has made a mistake, hasn't tried anything new." This is was me and ice cream.

The Einstein quote is also true for us in teaching. I know at different times I have talked myself out of a new activity for my classroom because I was afraid it was not going to work, and it would be a mistake. But let's be truthful. If we spend enough time thinking about something, we can always come up with enough reasons for why it would be a mistake, and why we shouldn't do it. But we never truly know whether it would be a mistake unless we try it. Some of the best activities I have developed for my classroom, I was convinced were mistakes, but they ended up being great learning opportunities.

So the moral for the classroom is, don't be afraid to try something new. If it works, great. Your students are better for it. If it was a mistake? Oh well, at least we have ice cream.

HAVE A JOKE OR A FUNNY STORY FROM TEACHING?

SEND IT TO FINGERPOINTS@PAPERWADIDEAS.COM AND I'LL SHARE IT IN AN UPCOMING ISSUE.

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The TS Moment of the Month

For our Teaching Sucks Moment of the Month, we have a special guest columnist, and he is Jeff Foxworthy. Okay, I doubt Mr. Foxworthy knows or cares that he our guest columnist. Actually, I'm not even sure he is, because even though the piece below is attributed to him, it has been floating on the internet for a while, and you never can tell with the internet. Anyway, it fits this column and some of them are very funny. So read them, get laugh, then remember to write down your reasons teaching sucks, wad them up , and throw them away.

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU ARE A TEACHER

by Jeff Foxworthy

1. You can hear 25 voices behind you and know exactly which one belongs to the child out of line.
2. You get a secret thrill out of laminating something.
3. You walk into a store and hear the words "It's Ms/Mr. _____" and know you have been spotted.
4. You have 25 people that accidentally call you Mom/Dad at one time or another.
5. You can eat a multi-course meal in under twenty-five minutes. (*This sounds familiar. SE*)
6. You've trained yourself to go to the bathroom at two distinct times of the day: lunch and prep period.
7. You start saving other people's trash, because most likely, you can use that toilet paper tube or plastic butter tub for something in the classroom.
8. You believe the teachers' lounge should be equipped with a margarita machine.
9. You want to slap the next person who says "Must be nice to work 7 to 3 and have summers off."
10. You believe chocolate is a food group.
11. You can tell if it's a full moon without ever looking outside.
12. You believe that unspeakable evils will befall you if anyone says "Boy, the kids sure are mellow today."
13. You feel the urge to talk to strange children and correct their behavior when you are out in public. (*This sounds familiar, too. SE*)
14. You believe in aerial spraying of Ritalin.
15. You think caffeine should be available in intravenous form.
16. You spend more money on school stuff than you do on your own children.
17. You can't pass the school supply aisle without getting at least five items!
18. You ask your friend if the left hand turn he just made was a "good choice or a bad choice."
19. You find true beauty in a can full of perfectly sharpened pencils
20. You are secretly addicted to hand sanitizer
21. You understand instantaneously why a child behaves a certain way after meeting his or her parents.

Planning for February In-Services?

February may be months away, but a lot of us are planning for our mid-winter in-services. If you are one of them, don't forget to consider *PaperWad Education* when planning. Along with the award winning workshop *Teaching Is Too Important to Take Seriously!*, that can provide you and your staff the midyear motivation boost you need, our *Education Survivor Series (ESS)* provides you unique professional development that is both professional and will help you develop.

If you would like more information about what we have offer,

take a look at our website, www.paperwadideas.com/education.html .

Be Funny, Make Money (AATH Humor Essay Contest)



Are you looking for a unique writing assignment for your students? The Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH) may have something for you. The AATH recently announced it's second Humor Essay Contest. The contest is divided into five categories (K-3 Elementary, 4-5 Elementary, 6-8 Middle School, 9-12 High School and Cancer Survivors), with a nationwide winner being named in each category. The AATH is looking for essays of a maximum 400 words describing how humor has helped your life. You can discuss how you used humor in a difficult situation, how you benefited from humor to solve a problem, or how you applied humor in your everyday life. Basically, the essay needs to tell how humor has been good to you.

Oh yeah, what do you get? Cold hard cash (and other stuff.) Each category winner will receive \$100, a humor kit of fun humor goodies, and books for your school library. Do you want fame along with the money? Well, you get that, too. The winning essays will be published at the AATH Conference in San Diego, CA in February and they will be published in the AATH newsletter, which is distributed all over the humor world.

If you this sounds like a good idea, check out www.aath.org/student_essay.htm for more information. The deadline for entering is December 1st, so get writing and good luck.

These are the Days of Our Lives

There aren't as many special events this month, but maybe it is because of the big T Day at the end of the month. Who knows, but remember these are real holidays celebrated by someone, somewhere. So just celebrate!

Month

American Diabetes Month

Celebrate Empty Nester Month

I Am So Thankful Month

International Microfinance Month

Lung Cancer Awareness Month

National Adoption Month

National Alzheimer's Disease Month

National COPD Awareness Month

National Georgia Pecan Month

National Inspirational Role Models Month

National Novel Writing Month

National Pomegranate Month

National Scholarship Month

Aviation History Month

Family Stories Month

International Drum (Percussion) Month

Learn Chinese Month

Military Family Appreciation Month

National AIDS Awareness Month

National American Indian Heritage Month

National Family Caregivers Month

National Hospice Month

National Life Writing Month

National Peanut Butter Lovers Month

National Roasting Month

Vegan Month

Weeks

1-7 National Fig Week

3-9 National Care Week

5-9 Dear Santa Letter Week

11-17 National Hunger & Homeless Awareness Week

12-18 Green Ribbon Awareness Week

16-22 National Farm-City Week

18-24 National Game & Puzzle Week

1-7 World Communication Week

4-10 Nat. Animal Shelter Appreciation Week

5-9 Kids' Goal Setting Week

12-18 Children's Book Week

18-24 National Family Week

19-25 Better Conversation Week

These are the Days of Our Lives Continued

Days

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| 1 | National Author's Day | 1 | National Family Literacy Day |
| 1 | National Men Make Dinner Day | 2 | National Traffic Directors Day |
| 2 | Plan Your Epitaph Day | 3 | Cliche' Day |
| 3 | Digital Scrapbooking Day | 3 | Fala Day |
| 3 | International Tongue Twister Day | 3 | Sadie Hawkins Day |
| 3 | Sandwich Day | 4 | National Chicken Lady Day |
| 4 | Use Your Common Sense Day | 4 | Zero Tasking Day |
| 6 | Saxophone Day | 7 | Nat. Bittersweet Chocolate w/ Almonds Day |
| 8 | Abet and Aid Punsters Day | 8 | Cook Something Bold and Pungent Day |
| 8 | National Parents as Teachers Day | 9 | Guinness World Record Day |
| 9 | Diwali | 9-10 | Kristallnacht |
| 9 | National Child Safety Council | 9 | Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Day |
| 10 | Area Code Day | 10 | Marine Corp Birthday |
| 12 | I Need a Patch for That Day | 12 | World Orphan Day |
| 13 | National Young Readers Day | 13 | World Kindness Day |
| 14 | Loosen Up. Lighten Up Day | 14 | Nat. Education Support Professionals Day |
| 14 | National American Teddy Bear Day | 15 | America Recycles Day |
| 15 | Great American Smokeout | 15 | I Love to Write Day |
| 15 | National Bundt (Pan) Day | 16 | International Day for Tolerance |
| 17 | Homemade Bread Day | 17 | National Family Volunteer Day |
| 17 | Remembrance Day | 18 | Married to a Scorpio Support Day |
| 18 | Mickey Mouse Day | 18 | Push-button Phone Day |
| 19 | Have a Bad Day Day | 20 | Name Your PC Day |
| 21 | Pumpkin Pie Day | 21 | World Hello Day |
| 21 | World Television Day | 21 | What Do You Love About America? Day |
| 22 | Humane Society Anniversary | 22 | Thanksgiving Day |
| 23 | Black Friday | 23 | Flossing Day |
| 23 | National Salesperson's Day | 23 | Sinkie Day |
| 23 | You're Welcome giving Day | 24 | D.B. Cooper Day |
| 24 | International Aura Awareness Day | 25 | Alascattalo Day |
| 25 | Blase' Day | 25 | Shopping Reminder Day |
| 25 | International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women Day | | |
| 29 | Electronic Greetings Day | 29 | My Birthday |
| 30 | Computer Security Day | 29 | (Just checking to see if anyone reads this.) |
| 30 | Stay Home Because You're Well Day | | |

It's not how far you fall, it's how high you bounce.

Anonymous