

FingerPoints

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

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

It seems that every time I get to talk face to face with anyone who reads this newsletter, one of the first questions they ask is how do I come up with the ideas for the articles. And every time I tell them the truth. I have no idea.

I have found out by writing these newsletters for the last few years, you have to really pay attention to what is going on around you. It's sort of like the idea that if you look for trouble you will find trouble. Well, I have found out that if you look for good, you will also find good and the latest example came last night at a 8th grade girls' basketball game.

To give you some background, I was running the clock at the game and it was one that would definitely be called a blowout. I think the final score was 44-6, but this was after a 33-2 halftime score. Fortunately my school was on the good side of the score.

The moment of good I saw last night happened halfway into the 2nd quarter when we were ahead 25-2. There had been a scramble for the ball and the ball came flying across the floor to the sideline where I was sitting. It looked like it was going to go out of bounds untouched, when suddenly a player for the other team came flying in from the side and dove for the ball.

Now, the idea that she came across to try to save the ball (unfortunately, she didn't) was worthwhile, and I'll talk about that more in the Finger of the Month, but that wasn't the thing

that caught my attention. It was that three members of her team and one member of our team came over to help her up. All I could think of was, what a great gesture. Let's face it, her team was wiped out. They were tired. They were frustrated, and you could see on their faces that they were ready to finish the game and go home. But even with that they came over to give a hand to their teammate.

As the game went on, I kept thinking about that gesture and what a wonderfully easy gift it would be to give to teammate or friend. There is no question that at this time of year we are about wiped out, and many of us may think the score is at least 25-2, if not more. Wouldn't it be a great gift if someone just came by and gave us a lift up. Well, you know from what we have talked about in this newsletter and presentations, for this to happen it has to start with each of us.

So if you are looking for a nice easy present for someone at your school. Do something to lift them up. It doesn't have to be major thin, just something simple. It can be as simple as sending an e-card or telling a joke or just making them laugh. If you do this, you will be giving them the greatest gift of the holiday season.

And the best thing is that you don't have to wrap it!

Have a Good Day,
Scott Endres

The Pre-Finger of the Month - Play the Cards

Okay this isn't really one of the five fingers, but it is something we talk about in every presentation. It is that we have to play the cards that we have. By now, we have a pretty good idea what cards we have been dealt, and it may not be very pretty. So what are we going to do about it?

Take a second to think about the story about the basketball game, and the girl who made the great effort diving for the ball going out of bounds. She could have very easily said that it

was useless to go after the ball since they were so far behind, but she didn't.

We have the same choice. Do we say "game over" and let the student's ball go out of bounds or do we say that this is the game I am in and I'm going to keep doing my best?

Finally, it doesn't matter that in the example the girl didn't get the ball anyway. It doesn't matter because the next time she will go at it the same way, and I guarantee she will get it.



Don't Be Afraid... the End is Near

At beginning of 2007 I proclaimed this the Year of Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid, and I have surprisingly been able to come up with a story for every month. To be truthful, it really wasn't that hard, because there are a lot of Don't Be Afraid...stupid things out in the world, and it is amazing how many of them are interesting and accomplish their intended goal.

Over the year we have talked about several, dare I say, stupid things. Starting with the benefits of being stupid, which include that it can be a way to help get your students' attention (who can forget the woman from Iowa who could whistle Auld Lang Syne through her toes) and that stupid can help to break down walls with your students.

As the winter and spring moved on, we talked about doing things in your school to help the working atmosphere, like having a tropical shirt week in February. We talked about the stupidity, in a good way, of the Tennessee basketball coaches as they painted their body orange and dressed as a cheerleader to support each others team. (If you didn't read that story, I'll let you guess which coach did what.) We also talked about how stupid can build community, as I saw when I went my son's school. Finally, as summer break arrived, we talked about how something as stupid as forcing yourself to take a break from talking about education is one of the best gifts you could give yourself.

As the new school year began, I pushed you to play games in your classroom and to let them be stupid. We went on to talk about my experiences as a chicken. (Once again, if you didn't read that story, I'm going to let you guess what it was about.) Next we talked about what some think is one the most stupid things in the world, and that is having a positive attitude. I'll say it again, it can work. Finally we talked about the stupidity of making ice cream.

So for the final Don't Be Afraid... column, I had a lot to choose from that I hadn't used. Stories like how the math club was beating the wrestling team in races around the school because the math team were trying to find the "math treasure" problems to be the Nerd of the Week. However, the last column is going to be about possibly the most important Don't Be Afraid. Don't Be Afraid...to Be a Kid.

Picasso said "All children are born artists, the problem is to remain an artist as we grow up." I believe this to be true in other areas beyond art, and I have been lucky enough to have a couple of experiences recently that showed me it was true.

Most recently, a close friend had her 45th birthday party at a laser tag arena. She said that when she told people what she was doing for her birthday, they thought she was crazy, but later she it was one of the best birthdays she had, and I have to admit it was a blast. Coming out of there I can't tell you how exhausted, yet happy that I was, and we won't talk about how many times the 18 year old game attendant had to tell me to stop running.

My other Don't Be Afraid to Be a Kid experience came when I went to a local park with my son. I really don't know how it happened, but all of a sudden I was a part of a four person game of tag. It was me, my son, and two kids he made friends with in the park. I started playing just being a person who was there because I was watching my son, but before I knew it I was running full speed through the park trying to keep from being "it". Towards the end of the game I realized, that it had been a long time since I had just out and out laughed as hard as had been during this game. (I also realized that you run a lot playing tag.)

So this holiday season, when it is so easy to get caught up in all the details, take a moment and be a kid. Take a moment and play for no reason. Take a moment and laugh for no reason. Take a moment to have fun for no reason. By the way that is what the holidays are about, being a kid. And you don't have to be young to do it.

The TS Moment of the Month

Sometimes it is difficult to come up with reasons teaching sucks. Now, I'm sure that a number of you disagree with that statement, and actually I have a hard time agreeing with it too. I guess what I'm trying to say is that the time between Thanksgiving Break and the Holiday Break is generally a fun time, and it makes it difficult to see the reasons that teaching sucks.

Granted this time period is very hectic, and it would be nice to have some time to teach, especially if you work in a situation like I do where this is the only period we aren't doing some kind of school wide testing. But even with that, this is generally a period where we as adults get to steal from our students. Not stealing the way you may be thinking, but stealing some of our students' excitement. I don't care what age students you have, all of them have some level of extra excitement, energy, and happiness during this period, and we are lucky enough to get the chance to have some of that rub off on us, if we let it.

So, anyway, finding a TS Moment of the Month can be difficult during this time, but I have one. Before I tell you what it is, I have to have a disclaimer. At different times in various editions of this newsletter I have mentioned my son. What I haven't mentioned is his name, which is Erich. Now, why is this a disclaimer? Because the TS Moment of the Month is student names that you aren't sure how to pronounce. For example, is my son's name pronounced Eric, Air-Rich, Eee-Rich? (By the way, it's Eric.) And then, just when you think you have it down, the student tells you that it is now pronounced a different way. This tends to happen a lot in 8th grade and beyond. One day Sally becomes Sal-eee, then Soll-ee, then Sssssss-Allie. I think this is why one teacher I know just addresses students by the their student number. In conferences she always talks about what a good job student 644783 does.

Well, I'm sure you can come up a number of other reasons teaching sucks, and I suggest you do. Remember to write them down, wad them up , and throw them away.

End of the Year Clearance

(Random stuff I didn't get around to using in 2007)

A camel is a horse designed by a committee

Anonymous

At the end of the movie Monsters Inc., the company changes from scaring kids to get screams to making them laugh to get them. Profits go through the roof.

If you are not prepared to be wrong, you will not come up with anything new.

Sir Ken Robinson

You don't learn creativity but you can get educated out of it.

Sir Ken Robinson

And for the math junkies like myself....

What I need is to find a woman who loves me for my money but doesn't understand math.

Mike Birbiglia

These are the Days of Our Lives

Remember these are real holidays celebrated by someone, somewhere. So just celebrate!

Month

Bingo's Birthday Month
National Stress-Free Holidays Month
National Write a Business Plan Month
Safe Toys and Gifts Month

Learn a Foreign Language Month
National Sign-up for Summer Camp Month
National Tie Month
Spiritual Literacy Month

Weeks

1-7	Cooking Cutter Week	1-7	Tolerance Week
1-22	Operation Santa Paws Week	1-8	Recipe Greetings for the Holidays Week
2-8	Nat. Handwashing Awareness Week	3-9	Clerc-Gallaudet Week
4-12	Chanukah (Hanukkah	10-16	Human Rights Week
15-21	International Language Week	15-19	Halcyon Days
16-24	Posadas	25-31	It's About Time Week
26-1/1	Kwanzaa		

Days

1	Bifocals at the Monitor Liberation Day	1	Day With(out) Art
1	Skywarn Recognition Day	1	World AIDS Day
2	Int. Day for the Abolition of Slavery	2	Special Education Day
3	International Day of Disabled Person	4	Chase's Calender of Events Birthday
4	National Dice Day	4	Extraordinary Work Team Recognition Day
5	Bathtub Party Day	5	Special Kids Day
5	Nat. Communicate w/ Your Baby Day	6	Miner's Day
6	National Pawn Brokers Day	6	St. Nicholas Day
7	FirePup Day	7	National Cotton Candy Day
7	Nat. Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	7	International Civil Aviation Day
8	International Shareware Day	9	Weary Willie Day
9	Day of the Horse	9	National Children's Memorial Day
10	Human Rights Day	10	Nobel Prize Day
11	International Mountain Day	12	Poinsettia Day
11	UNICEF Birthday	12	Ginger Bread House Day
15	Bill of Rights Day	15	Cat Herders Day
16	Barbie and Barney Backlash Day	16	National Chocolate Covered Anything Day
17	Clean Air Day	17	Wright Brothers Day
18	International Migrants Day	20	Sacagawea Day
20	Mudd Day	21	Forefathers Day
21	Humbug Day	21	Philleas Fogg Win a Wager Day
21	Underdog Day	22	Abilities Day
22	National Haiku Poetry Day	22	World Peace Day
23	Festivus	25	A'Phabet or No L Day
26	Boxing Day	26	National Candy Cane Day
26	National Whiner's Day	28	National Chocolate Day
28	No Interruptions Day	29	Tick Tock Day
30	Falling Needles Family Fest Day	31	Leap Second Time Adjustment Day
31	Make Up Your Mind Day	31	Universal Hour of Peace Day
31	World Peace Mediation Day		