

# FingerPoints

MARCH 2008 EDITION

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

## Go Fly a Kite

Now, don't take the title of this column the wrong way. I don't mean it in the negative sense of trying to get rid of anyone who reads this newsletter. In addition, I don't necessarily mean "Go fly a kite" literally, though that may have more to do with the fact that while I write this, there is an ice storm going on outside. What I mean is, "Go Fly a Kite" with your teaching and your life.

Somehow I'm not sure the above paragraph really clarifies anything, so let me explain. Even though we are having an ice storm today, we recently have had some nice days. This includes a Sunday a few weeks ago where the temperature got into the 60's, (followed two days later by severe storms, but oh well.)

Anyway, as my son and I were going through a local park, we noticed two people flying a kite. While flying a kite on a windy day wasn't unusual, what caught our attention was that the people flying the kite were at least 150 years old (okay, maybe 70.) The first thing we did when we saw this, was look for the grandchildren. There had to be some around somewhere for these two to be flying a kite. But after a while we realized, to our shock, there were no children around. The two of them were out in the park flying a kite on their own.

Think about that for a second. When was the last time you went kite flying without a child by your side? For me, it is never. The last time I went kite flying before I went with my son a few years ago, was when I was a kid. It is just not something we do as adults. However, here were two people, at least 70 years old, flying a kite like they were children. And the most important thing about the scene was they were having a blast. They were laughing and giggling like, well kids. It was a beautiful sight.

How does this translate to life? Well, obviously it shows that we need to act like kids from time to time. It keeps us young. But the big question is, how does this translate to teaching? The answer? The same way. It is so easy to get caught up in the seriousness of teaching, especially this time of year. But we need to remember that even though education is serious, learning and life can be fun.

So, as we move into spring, don't forget to be a kid in your teaching. Make it fun. Remember if you are bored with what you are teaching, think how bored your students are. Enjoy the spring and make sure to go fly your kite, both literally and educationally.

Have a Good Day,  
Scott Endres

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

While, there isn't an official Smile, Damn It! Smile! Day, March has a day, and a week, that is close. It is March 19th when we should all celebrate Act Happy Day (with the 17th through the 22nd being Act Happy Week.) We should celebrate this day because it is at the core of Smile, Damn It! Smile!

Act Happy Day and Week are wonderful times to, well, act happy, even if you are not. The question is, why would you do that? Why would you want to act happy when you aren't? Well, why not? Why be mad and miserable when you have a chance to be happy by acting happy.

From research throughout the world,

happiness is an extension of laughter. If you are stressed, some people believe that a hearty laugh can significantly reduce levels of cortisol and adrenaline hormones in the bloodstream and return the body to a more relaxed state. In fact, the power of laughter can be so powerful that researchers at UCLA found that when hospitalized children watch cartoons and funny movies, they are better able to tolerate painful treatments.

Let's make this simple. For Act Happy Day, smile all day long. Some research says that smiling can produce an immediate change of the physical, mental and emotional state. So, to act happy on the 19th, Smile, Damn It! Smile!

## What Would You Be...

I'll be up front with you. This article may not have much that is directly connected to teaching, because it is more about living daily life. But then again, isn't that teaching. If we are to be Super Models for our students, then how we live and see our life is directly related to our teaching. Therefore, read on.

This article is based on a recent episode of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. If you haven't seen the show, it is a reality show where people go in and rebuild homes for people in need. And if you have seen the show, you know that the "extreme" part of it is not only what they do on the houses, and it is amazing, but from the "extreme" emotional roller coaster you are put through watching these families. From the lows of their situations to the highs of seeing the reactions and gratitude shown by the people, it is guaranteed to make you cry. In fact, I know one person who has given up watching the show because they didn't want to be crying that hard at the beginning of every week. (Editors Note: That person would be me.)

So why did I watch the show again? I watched because they featured a story of a local family that nearly everyone in Louisville knows. The featured family was the Hughes family, but in particular, it focused on Patrick Henry Hughes. Patrick was born 19 years ago, without any eyes and without the ability to straighten his limbs. Many local people first learned of Patrick several years ago when he first started performing on the Crusade for Children, a local telethon for children causes. Patrick astonished us with his piano and vocal ability, something he had been doing since before the age of two.

Later, the rest of Louisville, and many others in the nation learned about Patrick when he started performing with the University of Louisville marching band. Why was this of interest? Well, remember he is blind but in addition, Patrick is also confined to a wheel chair. I don't know about you, but I sure haven't seen very many blind, wheel chair bound people marching in the band. However, with the help of his father, who wheels him through every practice and every formation, Patrick plays trumpet and is full member of the U of L marching band. Finally, Patrick and his family have become a source of inspiration and pride for the city of Louisville. In fact, last year he was the a marshall of the local St. Patrick's Day parade and I have never seen so many drunk people stop drinking and give a standing ovation as when Patrick came down the parade route.

Now this is all great, and the show was fantastic (you can go to [abc.go.com/prime-time/xtremehome](http://abc.go.com/prime-time/xtremehome) for more details) but how does this help us in our own lives? The two best examples came when they were interviewing Patrick. The first is when Patrick said, "I see sight as a disability."

I'm going to let you think about that for a moment. How could sight be a disability? I'll be truthful. When I heard him say this, I thought it was silly. But then he continued. He said that he saw sight as a disability because people that can see make judgements about people by what they see, while he gets to know people by who they really are without any prejudices. I can't add any more to that.

The last example of what this has to do with our lives, and teaching came when Patrick talked about how he didn't know he was blind until he went to pre-school. That made me think about something. What would you be, if you didn't know what you were? To Patrick, he wasn't blind because he didn't know he was blind. What about us? Would we be old, if we didn't know we were old.? Would we be unhappy, if we didn't know we were unhappy? Finally, would we be a teacher, if we didn't know we were a teacher?

## The TDS Moment of the Month

The Teaching DOESN'T Suck moment of the month for March is two words, Spring Break. I know that not everyone has Spring Break in March, but I do, so I am celebrating. However, remember if you don't have Spring Break until later, or if you have other reasons teaching sucks, write them down, wad them up and throw them away. Now we can get back to working on the things we can affect, our students.

In January I introduced a teaching philosophy called *Imagin*education, or IE, and last month we talked about why there is a need for a structure which helps promote the use of creative and imaginative thought in our curriculum. Well, so much for the why. Let's get to the what. As I mentioned last month, there are six major components to IE and over the last few months of the school year, I would like to highlight the most important components. For March, we will talk about the Story/Movie Component.

Based on the work and research of the Imagination in Education Research Group (IERG) of Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, basing a unit around a story allows students to become emotionally involved in the topic. Through their research they have shown that imagination is rooted in both the affective and cognitive domain. Therefore, the emotional connection that students receive from a Story Based connection to the content, translates into increased cognitive achievement. In addition the Story Based component helps to motivate students to learn the skills and content, and gives them the structure to allow students to develop and use their imagination to create something new with the new skills. In the end the combination of emotion and intellect is what we call imagination.

To get an understanding of how a Story can be the basis or overriding theme of the unit, it is sometimes easier to think of it as a movie. If you had to make a movie about the content in the unit, what would it look like? For example, think about solving Algebraic equations. (Sounds fun doesn't it?) An example of a Story/Movie I use for this topic is *The Legend of Nerdo the Mathnificant*. Nerdo is a Mathemagician who specializes in Good Math Magic, but Bad Math Humor. The story/movie is his life and his magic, and I use the Nerdo legend when I teach a unit on evaluating and solving Algebraic equations. It is used to attract interest in the topic and is the basis of most of the work for the unit, including the Project Based Learning Component, which we will talk about next month.

Creating a story/movie can be both exciting, and scary. It can be exciting, because you get to create something new that you know will interest your students, but it can be scary because it can seem overwhelming. For that reason, I have some guidelines on how to go about creating your story/movie. Creating a Story/Movie will be easier if you follow SE-USS (not the doctor.) You want your story to be a Simple, Emotional, Unexpected, Standard-based, Story. Those are the keys to creating a Story/Movie. Keep the concept simple. It can be long, but don't make it complicated. Make sure that students have an emotional connection to the story, whether it is because it connects with their lives and just the emotion of the story itself. Make sure there are unexpected turns and twists that keep students guessing. Make it standard-based, enough said. Finally, make sure that it is a story, with a beginning, a middle and an end. These are just a few hints, and he could talk for hours about techniques to enhance your own creativity, but that is for another time.



## Going to the ASCD Conference in New Orleans?

Come see *Imagin*education and *Nerdo the Mathnificant* live!

**Session 3354 - Monday, March 17th 1:30 - 2:30**  
**Morial Convention Center Rooms 256-257**

## These are the Days of Our Lives

This must be National Awareness Month. Take a look at how many of each are listed. oh well, remember these are real holidays celebrated by someone, somewhere. So just celebrate!

### Month

American Red Cross Month	Deaf History Month
Employee Spirit Month	Honor Society Awareness Month
Humorist are Artists Month	International Expect Success Month
International Ideas Month	International Listening Awareness Month
International Mirth Month	Irish American Heritage Month
Music in Our Schools Month	National Athletic Training Month
National Caffeine Awareness Month	National Cheerleading Safety Month
Nat. Chronic Fatigue Awareness Month	National Clean Up Your IRS Act Month
Nat. Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month	National Craft Month
National Ethics Awareness Month	National Eye Donor Month
National Frozen Food Month	National Kidney Month
National Nutrition Month	National On-Hold Month
National Social Work Month	National Umbrella Month
National Women's History Month	Optimism Month
Play the Recorder Month	Poison Prevention Awareness Month
Red Cross Month	Save Your Vision Month
Spiritual Awareness Month	Supply Management Month
Workplace Eye & Health Safety Month	Youth Art Month
Holy Humor Month	National Alternative Auto Fuels Month
Expanding Girls' Horizons in Science & Engineering Month	
National Multiple Sclerosis Education & Awareness Month	

### Weeks

1-7 National Ghost Writers Week	1-7 Nat. Write a Letter of Appreciation Week
1-7 Return the Borrowed Books Week	1-7 Nat. Week of the Ocean Festival Sea-son
1-7 Universal Human Beings Week	2-8 World Folk Tales and Fables Week
2-8 Celebrate Your Name Week	2-8 National Professional Pet Sitters Week
2-8 Read an E-book Week	2-8 Save Your Vision Week
2-8 Teen Tech Week	2-8 Telecommuter Appreciation Week
3-9 National Cheerleading Week	3-9 National School Breakfast Week
3-9 National Sleep Awareness Week	3-9 National Procrastination Week
3-7 Newspaper in Education Week	8-14 Universal Women's Week
9-15 Girl Scout Week	10-16 International Brain Awareness Week
10-17 Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week	11-17 Turkey Vultures Return to the Living Sign
14-21 National Toad Hollow Week	16-22 National Agriculture Week
16-22 Nat. Animal Poison Prevention Week	16-22 Nat. Inhalant & Poisons Awareness Week
16-22 National Poison Prevention Week	17-22 Act Happy Week
17-22 American Chocolate Week	17-23 Campfire USA Birthday Week
17-22 Welderly Week	17-25 National Spring Fever Week
20-26 National Bubble (Blowers) Week	23-29 Doctor-Patient Trust Week
23-30 National Protocol Officers Week	23-29 National Cleaning Week
24-30 Egg Salad Week	30-4/5 Root Canal Awareness Week

## These are the Days of Our Lives Continued

### Days

1	Be Positive - Do Something Day	1	Pig Day
1	Plan a Solo Vacation Day	2	Namesake Day
2	Sherlock Holmes Day	3	Fun Facts About Names Day
3	Read Across America	3	I Want You to Be Happy Day
3	What If Dogs and Cats had Opposable Thumbs Day		
4	Benjamin Harrison Day	4	Courageous Follower Day
4	National Grammar Day	4	International Scrapbooking Industry Day
4	Peace Corps Day	4	Unique Names Day
5	Learn What Your Name Means Day	5	St. Piran's Day
6	Nametag Day	7	Middle Name Pride Day
8	Eggsibit Day	8	Day for Women's Rights & Int. Peace
8	Genealogy Day	8	Girls Write Now Day
8	Private George Watson Day	8	International Working Women's Day
9	Check Your Batteries Day	9	Get Over It Day
9	Panic Day	10	Mario Day
10	Napping Day	10	Salvation Army Day
11	Dream 2008 Day	11	Organize Your Office Day
12	Girl Scout Day	13	Good Samaritan Involvement Day
13	World Kidney Day	13	National Open an Umbrella Indoors Day
14	International Ask a Question Day	14	Pi Day
15	Brutus Day	15	Ides of March
15	International Day of the Seal	15	Maple Syrup Day
15	National Quilting Day	15	True Confessions Day
16	Curlew Day	16	Lips Appreciation Day
16	St. Urho's Day	17	Campfire Girls Day
17	Freedom of Information Day	18	Awkward Moments Day
18	Forgive Mom and Dad Day	19	Act Happy Day
19	National Chocolate Caramel Day	19	Swallows Return to Capistrano Day
20	Absolutely Incredible Kids Day	20	Great American Meat Out Day
20	Proposal Day	20	National Agriculture Day
20	Snowman Burning Day	21	Memory Day
21	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination		
21	Common Courtesy Day	21	Purim
21	World Down Syndrome Day	22	As Young as You Feel Day
22	International Goof Off Day	22	World Day for Water
22	International Day of Radiant Peace	23	National Puppy Day
23	Near Miss Day	23	O.K. Day
23	World Meteorological Day	24	National Chocolate Covered Raisins Day
25	Pecan Day	26	Legal Assistants Day
26	Make Up Your Own Holiday	27	Quirky Country Music Song Titles Day
27	Education and Sharing Day	27	Kite Flying Day
29	Texas Loves the Children Day	29	National Mom & Pop Business Owners Day
30	Pencil Day	30	Doctors Day
30	Grass Is Always Browner on the Other Side of the Fence Day		
31	Bunsen Burner Day	31	National "She's Funny That Way" Day