

# FingerPoints

APRIL 2008 EDITION

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

## It's Time For Me to Get Out of Teaching

April Fools!

However, it's not too hard to believe that I or any teacher would be ready to get out. That's what makes the above joke work, because it is within the realm of possibility. I'm sure that every teacher has, at one time or another, thought about getting out teaching. It's natural. However, let me tell you a story that happened to me recently, that may help you when those thoughts come around.

This year for the first time, I am in charge of our Math-a-thon fundraiser at the school where I work. If you don't know about Math-a-thon, it is a fundraising event for St. Jude Children's Hospital in Memphis, where students collect money for the number of math problems they do. Sounds fun, doesn't it? You yeah, I forgot not everyone teaches math. (For details on how to participate, go to [www.mathathon.org](http://www.mathathon.org).)

Anyway, I was in charge of the whole thing. We started the fundraiser with a big kick off for the entire school to get everyone excited. But I have to admit, with a school of 900+ students, it can get a little complicated to try to get everyone to meet the deadlines. And since I don't have a regular set of classes I teach, I was relying on the regular math teachers to get everyone signed up, but that didn't keep students from tracking me down and asking me questions about it. This was really true during the last days before the sign up deadline. One time I had this student walk up to me out of nowhere and ask, "Where do I get one of those math things?" Assuming he meant the Math-a-thon, I politely told him to get with his math teacher, and I thought that would take care of it.

Apparently I was wrong, because the next day that same student, once again appeared out of nowhere to ask the same question. And once again, I politely told him where he could go (not that way.) After that, I went on through the day, hoping I wouldn't see the kid again., because I was sure he would ask the same question.

However, I did see him again later in the day. I saw him when I walked by the 6th special education class as they were getting lined up for lunch, and it was then that it hit me. The reason this kid hadn't gotten the materials was because he was in the special education classroom all day, and never went to a regular math class.

Immediately, I went and got the forms and brought them down to his class. When I came in with the forms, he couldn't have thanked me more. He thought I was doing him this great favor, when it was he who was doing the favor.

Later that day, the student came up to me again. I wasn't sure what he wanted, since he already had the information, but I made sure to stop what I was doing to talk to him. What did he want? He wanted to thank me again for getting him the Math-a-thon materials. He said, "I really feel like I am making a difference." Now I remember why I got into teaching.

Each of us has a story like this that we need to keep in a file and bring out whenever we are feeling bad about teaching. If you don't have that story yet, you will. Until then, feel free to use this one.

Have a Good Day,  
Scott Endres

## Finger of the Month #5 - Laugh at the World Around You

Because of the length, and importance, of the above story, the Finger of the Month gets the short end of the stick this month. Therefore, I will make this very quick. Be sure to laugh at the world around you this month because April is...

**National Humor Month...sounds like a party!**

## The TS Moment of the Month

This month we continue our series of why Teaching Sucks with a laundry list of reasons.

*No Child Left Behind...an old favorite*

*Budget Cuts...Why must education be one of the first to be cut?*

*RIF or Reduction in Force or Layoffs or let's call it what it is Firings...Enough said.*

*Parents coming in for the first time to ask what YOU can do to help their child...New parents?*

Anyway, whatever your reasons are for why Teaching Sucks, I'm going to ask you to wait to get them out. Yes, keep it all bottled inside you. In fact, let it fester a little. Maybe, if you get lucky, the things that suck will grow and create more new things that suck. Keep it all in until April 15th and then party because it is 4th annual *National That Sucks Day*.

Now I couldn't make something like that up (well, actually I could, but I didn't.) It is a real holiday. It is as real as Valentine's Day, but I wouldn't go looking for a card. What you need to look for is a big piece of paper, a nice room, party favors and some friends, then everyone can write down all the reasons Teaching Sucks. Seriously, make it a party. I'm sure you have thrown parties for less relevant reasons. If you want, gather as a staff and have everyone write down their reasons (This may require a half or full day of professional development to accomplish.)

Whatever you do to celebrate *National That Sucks Day*, make sure you write your reasons Teaching Sucks down, wad them up and throw them away. Now we can concentrate on the things we can control.

## The Opposite of the TS Moment of the Month

From time to time I get responses from people that they don't like the TS Moment of the Month, because they don't want to feel like they are complaining, and I can understand that. My point is that I have seen how taking time to productively release built up frustration is very helpful, but I really don't want to argue with people, and a really don't want to argue with a minister and CBS Sunday Morning.

This past Sunday the CBS show had a feature on Reverend Will Bowen and the Christ Church Unity in Kansas City, MO. It seems that a while ago in a sermon, Rev. Bowen put one of the biggest challenges I have ever seen put before a group of people. What was the challenge? It is to stop complaining. The challenge was to stop complaining for 21 days. Yes, no complaining for 3 weeks, or 504 hours, or 30,240 minutes or 1,814,400 seconds. See I told you it was a tough challenge.

The thought behind the challenge was that if you if keep the complaints from coming out of your mouth, the brain will stop developing the complaints because of the lack of need. To help with this, parishioners were given a purple wrist band to remind them to stop complaining. If they did happen to slip up and complain, then they were to switch the wristband to their other wrist and start the trek to 21 complaint free days, all over again.

From here the idea grew and grew to the point that, well, they had a feature on CBS Sunday Morning (and other shows.) In fact, the challenge is still going strong and has now gone around the world. Each Saturday volunteers meet at the church to stuff bags to fulfill orders for purple wrist bands from everywhere. (They say NYC buys the most.) If you would like to join the challenge, they now have a website. For \$1 a band you can start your own complaint free life.

**[www.acomplaintfreeworld.org](http://www.acomplaintfreeworld.org)**

## *Imagin*education - Part 4

In January I introduced a teaching philosophy called *Imagin*education, or IE, and last month we talked about the first component of IE, the Story/Movie foundation. The Story/Movie aspect of IE can be very engaging, as participants in the ASCD conference session found out, and helps to give an overall structure to the IE experience. However, while the Story/Movie aspect of IE gives students a direction to focus their work in creative and imaginative thought, we need something a little more focused. This structure and opportunity to creatively apply the skills based knowledge students are learning comes in the Project Based Learning Component of *Imagin*education.

A project based on the content and Story/Movie component is major part of the *Imagin*education philosophy. Research has shown that project based learning helps students learn skills more in depth, allows them to apply newly learned material, and puts students in a cooperative learning situation. The component also addresses the need for students to use skills in new and creative situations, something that numerous national educators have stressed is needed for our students to compete in an international job market. The project component answers the need to embrace new attitudes, new skills, risk failure and demands intelligence.

After determining content and developing your story, the project should be the next component designed. The project should be connected to the story developed for the content and should be relevant to the students, either in their personal life now, or there experiences in the future. Also, when possible, the project should have a humorous component of it. As always, the project should be state standard based. The project should be interdisciplinary when possible and should use the accepted vocabulary of the content. The key on the project is that in the end the students are using their new skills to create something new. This doesn't mean that they have to create something complicated that is a new found application, but the project should lead the students to creating something new to them.

What makes the IE Project Based Learning different from other PBL is two areas; grading and scheduling of the project. The grading should be based equally on the following components: Accuracy, Detail, Creativity (Originality), Presentation, and Organization. Through surveys of business and education leaders, these 5 areas have been emphasized to allow students to experience what is expected in the real world. For scheduling, the key point is to NOT have all Project Days grouped together, as is also true for Skills Days. Part of *Imagin*education is to have students learn the skills and their use simultaneously and not as separate entities. This way students can experience the idea that a project is an ongoing learning process and not an isolated activity. In general, the idea is schedule 2-3 days a week as project days.

For more information about *Imagin*education, go to

**[www.paperwadideas.com/ie](http://www.paperwadideas.com/ie)**

or contact us directly at

**[ie@paperwadideas.com](mailto:ie@paperwadideas.com) or 502-420-8584**

## These are the Days of Our Lives

Along with the flowers blooming in April, so apparently have the moments of celebrations. Remember these are real holidays celebrated by someone, somewhere. So just celebrate!

### Month

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Amateur Radio Month                 | Autism Awareness Month                      |
| Cancer Control Month                | Celebrate Diversity Month                   |
| Couple Appreciation Month           | Emotional Overeating Awareness Month        |
| Financial Literacy Month            | Fresh Florida Tomatoes Month                |
| Global Child Nutrition Month        | Grange Month                                |
| Holy Humor Month                    | Home Improvement Time                       |
| Injury Prevention Month             | International Customer Loyalty Month        |
| International Daffynitions Month    | International Twit Award Month              |
| Jazz Appreciation Month             | Keep America Beautiful                      |
| Month of the Young Child            | Month of the Military Child                 |
| National Car Care Month             | National Child Abuse Prevention Month       |
| National Decorating Month           | National Donate Life Month                  |
| National Humor Month                | National Kite Month                         |
| National Knuckles Down Month        | National Landscape Architecture Month       |
| National Occupational Therapy Month | National Parkinson's Awareness Month        |
| National Pecan Month                | National Pet First Aid Awareness Month      |
| National Poetry Month               | National Prepare Your Home to Be Sold Month |
| National Youth Sports Safety Month  | Pharmacists War on Diabetes Month           |
| Physical Wellness Month             | Prevent Lyme in Dogs Month                  |
| Prevention of Animal Cruelty Month  | School Library Media Month                  |
| Soy Foods Month                     | Straw Hat Month                             |
| Southern Belles Month               | Women's Eye Health and Safety Month         |
| Workplace Conflict Awareness Month  | International School Spirit Season          |

### Weeks

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1-7 Laugh at Work Week                        | 1-7 Golden Rule Week                      |
| 1-7 Medication Safety Week                    | 6-12 National Blue Ribbon Week            |
| 6-12 National Week of the Ocean               | 7-11 Explore Your Career Options Week     |
| 7-11 National Public Health Week              | 7-11 Nat. Work Zone Safety Awareness Week |
| 7-13 National Networking Week                 | 13-19 Pan American Week                   |
| 13-19 National Crime Victims Rights Week      | 13-19 National Library Week               |
| 13-20 National Personal Training Week         | 13-19 Week of the Young Child             |
| 13-19 National Inspirational News Week        | 14-20 Young People's Poetry Week          |
| 19-27 National Wildlife Week                  | 20-26 Administrative Professionals Week   |
| 20-26 Coin Week                               | 20-26 Cowboy Poetry Week                  |
| 20-26 Innovation Week                         | 20-26 National Karaoke Week               |
| 20-26 National Park Week                      | 20-26 National Window Safety Week         |
| 20-26 Sky Awareness Week                      | 21-26 Fish Fry Week                       |
| 21-27 Turn Off the TV Week                    | 23-29 Global Road Safety Week             |
| 24-30 National Scoop the Poop Week            | 25-5/4 National Dance Week                |
| 25-27 National Dream Hotline Week             | 25-5/3 National Volunteer Week            |
| 25-27 National and Global Youth Services Days |   |

## These are the Days of Our Lives - Continued

### Days

- |    |                                    |    |   |
|----|------------------------------------|----|---|
| 1  | April Fools Day or All Fools Day   | 1  | Boomer Bonus Day                            |
| 1  | National Fun Day                   | 1  | National Fun at Work Day                    |
| 1  | Poetry and the Creative Mind Day   | 1  | Sorry Charlie Day                           |
| 1  | St. Stupid Day                     | 1  | US Air Force Day                            |
| 2  | Kick Butts Day                     | 2  | International Children's Book Day           |
| 2  | National Day of Hope               | 2  | Paraprofessional Appreciation Day           |
| 2  | Reconciliation Day                 | 3  | Mule Day                                    |
| 3  | Pony Express Day                   | 3  | Tweed Day                                   |
| 4  | Hospital Admitting Clerks Day      | 4  | Victims of Violence Holy Day                |
| 4  | World Rat Day                      | 5  | National Birding Day                        |
| 5  | National Love Our Children Day     | 5  | Tangible Karma Day                          |
| 6  | Drowsy Driver Awareness Day        | 6  | Teflon day                                  |
| 7  | No Housework Day                   | 7  | World Health Day                            |
| 9  | National Cherish an Antique Day    | 9  | Nat. Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day |
| 10 | ASPCA Day                          | 10 | National D.A.R.E. Day                       |
| 10 | National Sibling Day               | 10 | Salvation Army Founder's Day                |
| 11 | Barbershop Quartet Day             | 11 | International "Louie Louie" Day             |
| 11 | World Parkinson's Disease Day      | 12 | Trivia Day                                  |
| 12 | Baby Massage Day                   | 12 | Licorice Day                                |
| 12 | Walk on the Wild Side Day          | 13 | International Plant Appreciation Day        |
| 13 | Thomas Jefferson Day               | 14 | Pan American Day                            |
| 15 | Income Tax Pay Day                 | 15 | Take a Wild Guess Day                       |
| 15 | That Sucks Day                     | 15 | Equal Pay Day                               |
| 16 | Int. Moment of Laughter Day        | 16 | National Wear Your Pajamas to Work Day      |
| 16 | International Stress Awareness Day | 17 | Blah! Blah! Blah! Day                       |
| 17 | Ellis Island Family History Day    | 17 | Ford Mustang Day                            |
| 17 | Get to Know Your Customers Day     | 17 | High Five Day                               |
| 18 | Comic (Books) Day                  | 18 | Pet Owners Independence Day                 |
| 18 | World Amateur Radio Day            | 18 | Yo-Yo Day                                   |
| 19 | Husband Appreciation Day           | 19 | Auctioneers Day                             |
| 19 | National Hanging Out Day           | 19 | World Cow Chip Day                          |
| 21 | Astronomy Day                      | 21 | Kindergarten Day                            |
| 21 | Nat. Chocolate Covered Cashews Day | 22 | Chemists Celebrate the Earth Day            |
| 22 | Earth Day                          | 22 | National Jelly Bean Day                     |
| 23 | Administrative Professionals Day   | 24 | Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day     |
| 25 | Arbor Day                          | 25 | Starman Days                                |
| 25 | Red Hat Society Day                | 26 | Bob Willis Day                              |
| 26 | Hug an Australian Day              | 26 | Rebuilding Day                              |
| 26 | Richter Scale Day                  | 27 | Mantanzas Mule Day                          |
| 27 | Rural Life Sunday                  | 28 | Bulldogs are Beautiful Day                  |
| 28 | Cubicle Day                        | 28 | Workers Memorial Day                        |
| 29 | National Hairball Awareness Day    | 29 | National Teach Your Children to Save Day    |
| 29 | Sense of Smell Day                 | 29 | National Dance Day                          |
| 30 | Beltane                            | 30 | Hairstylists Appreciation Day               |
| 30 | Spank Out Day                      | 30 | Walpurgis Day                               |