

FingerPoints

MAY 2007 EDITION

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

Celebrate...Celebrate...Dance to the Music

It is almost time to celebrate. It is almost, the end of the year.

Now I know a lot of people will celebrate that the year is finally over, and that is a good thing. However, this year I want you to celebrate something a little different. I want you to celebrate all the great things that were accomplished in your classroom or school.

As you know, we work in a very difficult profession. Yes, we know the basics; low pay, state and federal demands, etc., but there is another area that makes it difficult. We rarely get to see the fruits of our labor. The things we do to help students today, tend to have long reaching effects that we may never see. It is unique to this profession. It is like grilling the perfect burger, but never tasting it. (Can you tell I'm ready for summer?)

This is why I want you to take time to celebrate all your accomplishments from the past year. Sit down and make a list or better, get

a group together and go out and celebrate the year.

If you are having a hard time coming up with some (it's hard to think at the end of the year), let me give you an idea for next year. Right now, start a file where you put everything positive you get during a year. It might be something from a parent or student, or it might be a note you write yourself, but start this file day one. Now, put that file close to you, so you can access it on a regular basis. As this file grows over the years, you will see that you a lot to celebrate.

Finally, this is the last FingerPoints until August. I know some schools go until June, but luckily mine gets out in May, so I am out of here. Have a great summer, and have a great celebration!

Have a Good Day,
Scott Endres

The Finger of the Month - #1 Laugh is Good

Within the past year, there has been several new research reports released on the positive effects laughter. Please, don't worry. I don't plan on quoting all the research to you. The findings are great, but it is research reports and I don't want to put you to sleep.

I do want to point out two different reports that could have an effect on the spring testing season in our schools. Most states have some type of state testing this time of year. (Except Indiana, where I teach, where we do state testing in September. Don't ask.) Anyway, that means there is a lot of stress on teachers and students to score as high as possible on these tests. These reports, both have one suggestion for raising the scores, laughter.

The first findings come from the University of North Carolina, where researchers have shown that students with a positive mental state (and they used laughter) increase their

open-mindedness and creativity in testing situations. The second research comes from the John Hopkins University Medical School, where they gave two groups of student the exact same test, but with one change. One of the group's tests had humorous instructions in place of normal ones. The group that had the humorous instructions scored exceptional better on the tests.

So what does that mean? Find anyway you can to bring laughter into your state testing situation. Obviously, you can't change the test instructions, but there have been studies that show that students who watch a humorous movie before testing, perform better than students who watch nothing. Or you could do my favorite trick, which is to tell students right at the beginning of testing that you have something for them that will guarantee they will do better on the test. Then I pass out Smarties candies to everyone, so they can be "Smarter".



Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid

Last year, in this space I pushed everyone to do something that many people consider stupid; don't talk about teaching. That's right, don't talk about teaching and that is why I have declared July, Take a Break From Education Month.

Don't Be Afraid...

Several years ago, I took the month of July off from talking about anything that had to do with school. Several of my friends thought I was joking (I wasn't), and I'm sure some of them thought I was crazy, but it was one of the best things I ever did. It allowed me to get away from school. Most of us think school 24/7 (or at least 23/6), and by taking a break, it allows us to reset our system.

Now, I know that for a lot of us, teaching has become a year round profession, but I encourage you to celebrate Take a Break From Education Month as best you can. Commit yourself to not talking about school. Do it before you really have to be committed.

Dark Clouds in the Distance

Today has been one of those days. It has seemed like one dark cloud after another kept popping up in my life. Every cloud that arose had long term implications that could negatively affect my life, and I couldn't do anything about any of them.

I desperately needed a walk.

When I got home, I reluctantly cancel my plans for the evening, grabbed my ipod (greatest invention ever) and went for my walk. When I walk, most of the time I walk down the road 1.5 miles and then turn around and walk back. It's a good distance to clear my head and it's short enough that you don't have to call it exercise, because we wouldn't want that. The first half of the walk was great. The perfect songs came from the shuffle setting and I had gotten my head straight about all the things that had happened today. But, then I turned around to walk back.

As I turned to take the walk back, I looked into the distance and saw several gigantic dark clouds covering the skyline. I thought, here we go again. After a day of dark clouds in my life, the weather had decided to join in. There was no way I was going to make it back my house without being drenched, or considering how today was going, struck by lightening.

Well, luckily the music was still good and I had no choice but to start walking home. As I walked, I kept looking at the clouds to see if they were getting darker. With so much watching, I soon noticed the edges of the clouds and how beautiful they were. This intrigued me and I started looking more closely. It was a wonderful sight. I saw colors and shapes I have never seen, and before I knew it I was almost home.

As I was finishing my walk I started thinking about the edges of the dark clouds I had studied during my walk. They were much like the dark clouds I had experienced in my life during the day. I had spent a lot of times worrying about the impending doom the clouds represented, and didn't initially see the possibilities of the edges. Yes, some things may be coming to an end, but the edges of these clouds showed the possibilities of the new things coming.

Two things finish this story. One, as I was a block from my house, the perfect song came on my ipod. It was the song I use to close the Teaching Is... workshops, Joey Ramone's version of Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World." I use this song because it is a great upbeat song, and because Joey Ramone recorded it when he knew he was dying of cancer. Talk about seeing the beauty of a dark cloud.

Two, it never did rain on my walk.

These are the Days of Our Lives

Even though this is the May edition of FingerPoints, I am including the June Days of Our Lives, since there won't be a June newsletter. As for July, to follow the Don't Be Afraid... topic, I am officially declaring July to be Take a Break From Education Month. There is no need to celebrate anything else.

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

Month - May

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month	Clean Air Month
Creative Beginnings Month	Family Wellness Month
Get Caught Reading Month	Haitian Heritage Month
Heal the Children Month	Healthy Vision Month
International Victorious Woman Month	Learn German Month
National Barbeque Month	National Bike Month
National Correct Posture Month	National Egg Month
National Foster Care Month	National Good Car Keeping Month
National Hamburger Month	National Mental Health Month
National Moving Month	National Older Americans Month
Nat. Physical Fitness & Health Month	National Preservation Month
National Salsa Month	National Shoes for Orphans Month
National Smile Month	Navajo Code Talkers Month
Prepare Tomorrow's Parents Month	React Month
Sweet Vidalia Onions Month	Teen Self-Esteem Month
Young Achiever's Month	National Family Month

Weeks - May

1-7 Eat Dessert First Week	1-7 National Fairy Godmother Week
1-8 Tim & Tom Gullickson Week	7-12 National Wildflower Week
6-12 Be Kind to Animals Week	6-12 Goodwill Industries Week
6-12 National Family Week	6-12 National Hug Holiday Week
6-12 National Pet Week	6-12 TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK
12-20 National Tourism Week	13-19 National Transportation Week
13-19 National Women's Health Week	13-19 Reading Is Fun Week
13-19 National Police Week	15-21 National Running & Fitness Week
18-25 National Safe Boating Week	20-26 National Dog Bite Prevention Week
20-26 National Effectiveness Week	20-26 National New Friends, Old Friends Week
20-26 World Trade Week	21-28 National Backyard Games Week
21-27 National Etiquette Week	23-29 Cover the Uninsured Week
25-31 Week of Solidarity With the People of Non-Self Governing Territories	

Last night I played a blank tape at full blast.

The mime next door went nuts.

These are the Days of Our Lives - Part 2 May

Days - May

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| 1 | Beltaine | 1 | Lei Day |
| 1 | Law Day | 1 | Library Legislative Day |
| 1 | Loyalty Day | 1 | May Day |
| 1 | Mother Goose Day | 1 | Save the Rhino Day |
| 1 | School Principals' Day | 1 | Stepmother's Day |
| 2 | Roberts Rule of Orders Day | 3 | Emmett Kelly Clown Day |
| 3 | Lumpy Rug Day | 3 | Martin Z. Mollusk Day |
| 3 | National Public Radio Day | 3 | Paranormal Day |
| 3 | Wordsmith Day | 3 | World Press Freedom Day |
| 4 | Garage Sale Day | 4 | Respect for Chickens Day |
| 4 | Canada Day | 5 | Cartoonist Day |
| 5 | Cinco De Mayo | 5 | Free Comic Book Day |
| 5 | Join Hands Day | 5 | Make Up Junkie Day |
| 5 | Totally Chipotle Day | 6 | Do Dah Day |
| 6 | Joseph Brackett Day | 6 | No Diet Day |
| 6 | No Homework Day | 6 | Nurses Day |
| 6 | O. Henry Pun Day | 7 | National Scrapbooking Day |
| 7 | Unity in Diversity Day | 8 | Childhood Depression Awareness Day |
| 8 | NATIONAL TEACHERS DAY | 8 | No Socks Day |
| 8 | World Red Cross Day | 9 | National Night Shift Workers Day |
| 9 | National School Nurse Day | 10 | Donate a Day's Wages to Charity Day |
| 11 | Childcare Provider Day | 11 | Eat What You Want Day |
| 12 | Limerick Day | 12 | Native American Rights Day |
| 12 | National Nutty Fudge Day | 12 | Mother Ocean Day |
| 12 | National Babysitter's Day | 12 | Stamp Out Hunger - NALC Food Drive |
| 12 | Windmill Day | 12 | World Fair Trade Day |
| 13 | Mother's Day | 13 | Babysitter Safety Day |
| 14 | Receptionst's Day | 14 | Underground America Day |
| 15 | International Day of Families | 15 | National Chocolate Chip Day |
| 15 | Nylon Stockings Day | 16 | National Employee Health & Fitness Day |
| 16 | National Sea Monkey Day | 16 | Turn Beauty Inside Out Day |
| 18 | Dulcimer Days | 18 | National Bike to Work Day |
| 18 | National Pizza Party Day | 18 | Send an Electronic Greeting Card Day |
| 18 | Visit Your Relatives Day | 19 | Stagecoach Day |
| 19 | You Gotta Have Park Day | 20 | Eliza Doolittle Day |
| 20 | Neighbor Day | 21 | I Need a Patch for That Day |
| 21 | National Wait Staff Day | 22 | National Maritime Day |
| 23 | Declaration of the Bab Day | 23 | National Taffy Day |
| 23 | World Turtle Day | 24 | Brother's Day |
| 24 | Tiara Day | 25 | National Tap Dance Day |
| 25 | Old Time Player Piano Day | 28 | Slugs Return to Capistrano Day |
| 30 | Loomis Day | 31 | What You Think Upon Grows Up Day |

These are the Days of Our Lives - June

Month - June

Adopt a Shelter Cat Month	Child Vision Awareness Month
Dairy Alternative Month	Fireworks Safety Month
International Accordion Awareness Month	International Men's Month
Dairy Month	Learn French Month
National Candy Month	National Ice Tea Month
National Rose Month	National Safety Month
National Soul Food Month	Potty Training Awareness Month
Professional Wellness Month	Rebuild Your Life Month
Sports America Kids Month	Student Safety Month

Weeks - June

2-9 International Clothesline Week	3-8 National Headache Awareness Week
3-9 National Sun Safety Week	7-10 Superman Week
8-11 Youth Cowboy Poetry Week	8-10 Take a Kid Fishing Weekend
18-23 Fiddlers Week	18-24 International Letter Boxing Week
24-30 Carpenter Ant Awareness Week	26-7/2 Fish Are Friends, Not Food Week

Days - June

1 Hug Your Cat Day	1 Pen Pal Day
2 National Bubba Day	2 Yell "Fudge" at the Cobras in North America
3 Chimborazo Day	3 Doughnut Day
5 World Environment Day	5 National Hunger Awareness Day
6 National Tailors Day	7 (Daniel) Boone Day
7 VCR Day	8 Banana Split Day
8 Upsy Daisy Day	9 Croquet Day
9 Raggedy Ann & Andy Day	10 Race Unity Day
10 Write to Your Father Day	11 Multicultural American Child Awareness Day
12 Crowded Nest Awareness Day	13 Creating with Your Heart Day
14 Family History Day	15 Recess at Work Day
16 Bloomsday	16 Fudge Day
16 Professional Women in Drywall Day	16 Vinegar Day
16 World Juggling Day	17 Family Awareness Day
17 Father's Day	17 Stewart's Root Beer Day
18 National Splurge Day	19 Garfield the Cat Day
19 World Sauntering Day	21 Watermelon Seed Spitting Day
21 Baby Boomer's Recognition Day	22 Stupid Guy Thing Day
22 Take Your Dog to Work Day	23 Ann & Samantha Day
23 Great American Backyard Campout	23 Let It Go Day
23 Marble Day	23 Public Service Day
24 America's Kids Day	27 "Happy Birthday to You" Day
29 Chicken Wings Day	30 Leap Second Time Adjustment Day

July Days of Our Lives - Take a Break From Education Month