

FingerPoints

AUGUST 2007 EDITION

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

Welcome to the Teaching Circle of Life

Welcome back, and can you tell by the title that I took my son to see the play *The Lion King* over the summer. (There are few things better than watch a child during his first true theatre experience. I didn't know his eyes could get that big.) Anyway, welcome back to the Teaching Circle of Life.

Now don't think that I was sitting at the show thinking of school. I wasn't. But recently I got an email from an old friend getting ready for his second year at a school. To say that he had a difficult first year at this school would be an understatement. Within a few days in a new position at a new school, most of the school support people around this friend left for one reason or another. He ended up doing the job of three people in a situation where he was already learning his own new job and, unfortunately, the year went downhill from there.

However, in the e-mail all he could talk about was how he was looking forward to the new school year, and how he was looking to the new possibilities in front of him. I told him, welcome the Teaching Circle of Life.

Any of us that have taught for more than a year have experienced this circle. He was full of hope, and had dreams for the coming year. As I read the e-mail and his dreams, all I could think of was the song from *Cinderella*, *A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes*.

My question for you as you continue in your circle is, what is the dream in your heart? If you could accomplish your teaching dream this year, what would it be? Would it be trying a new teaching style? Would it be trying something new each week? Would it be using laughter more in your classroom? (I'm going to vote for that one.)

Whatever your dream is for your classroom, follow your heart this year and try to accomplish that dream. If you are ever going to do it, now is the time, because at the beginning of the year, everything is new again. That is the Teaching Circle of Life.

Have a Good Day,
Scott Endres

The Finger of the Month - #1 Laugh is Good

Every year, the first Finger of the Month is Laughter Is Good. I do this in order to remind us that, well, laughter is good. As I talk about in the book and in workshops, laughter is good in several ways.

First, laughter is good for helping our students learn. Not only does it help them learn things more quickly and for a longer period of time, but we can show that it helps our students to learn a subject more deeply, and enhance complex thinking and problem solving.

Now, as good as the first part is, laughter is also good for our classroom as we try to manage 30 or more sets of hormones. Laughter can help to ease tensions in our classrooms, and if used correctly, increase our student's self-esteem and build a sense of community.

Finally, laughter is good for our health. Enough said.

But so what. Who am I? Yes, I have done the research on education and laughter, but in the end I am just a veteran teacher who believed in the power of laughter, and wanted to share it with his colleagues. But am I a big name?

Well, what about this big name? Dr. Robert Marzano. I had heard that he had been doing work on the effect of humor in the classroom, but it wasn't until I saw that he was keynoting a conference on learning, achievement and humor, did I understand the extent. In fact, in his new book *The Art and Science of Teaching* he says effective teachers use humor.

So there, remember this year that laughter is good. Marzano says so.



Don't Be Afraid...

Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid... ...and Let the Games Begin!

Beginning in January, I declared 2007 the Year to Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid. To some of you this seemed like a stupid thing to do, but actually it is a very smart thing to do. From 20+ years of teaching experience I can tell you that stupid works.

Stupid is those things we do in teaching that aren't in any textbook, for example games. When you were going through education classes, how many classes did you have about creating games and using them as teaching tools in your classrooms? I'll bet very few. However, recent research is showing that game playing in our classrooms can increase student motivation and therefore comprehension in all academic subjects.

To promote this, I have spent a lot of time this summer working with teachers and showing them that games are not scary and are a great way to connect to students. Mostly we are worried that games are too hard to make, and will cause chaos in the classroom. However, we are able to show in the workshops, that with a consistent classroom management plan, no chaos will happen, and that you can create a simple game as quickly as 5 minutes. So go out this year and do something stupid, and let the games begin.

The TS Moment of the Month

The new section for 2006-2007 is the TS Moment of the Month. In this section I will highlight some of the reasons teaching sucks (stinks, if you want.) As you know from the book and presentation, I don't want to offend anyone, but sometimes that is how it feels. However, we also talk about how 90% of the reasons are things we don't have any control over, so why do we spend time worrying about them. Instead, we need to write these reasons down and get them out our system. Finally, we need to take those reasons, wad them up and throw them away. Only then can we concentrate on the things that we do have control over.

Okay, that is all great, but why the TS Moment of the Month? Two reasons, one is to share the humor and experiences of fellow teachers from across the country. Every time I speak about TS at a conference, you always give some new TS reasons and this way I can share them with you. Sometimes they are funny, sometimes they are sad, but every time they are about what we experience in our day to day teaching.

The second reason for the TS Moment, however, is the most important. It is a way to remind you on a monthly basis to get your frustrations with teaching out of your system. So, after you read the one I share, you need to then write down and throw away your own TS moments.

Now, without further ado, the TS Moment for August is the following.

At the end of the last school year, we had a book sale in our teacher's lounge. The books consisted of different new books that teacher's might be interested in having. Most of the books were not education related, but it was an education book that caught my attention. The front of the book read,

Numbers (including practice for standardized tests)

The problem with this is that the front of the book also said that it was for Grade 1 and 2. That is definitely one of the reasons teaching sucks.



2007 Teaching Is... Travelogue

This summer has been the busiest summer for travel that I have had in a long time. From Florida to North Carolina to Kentucky to driving through Alabama and Mississippi to get to New Orleans to Denver and finally Vancouver, Canada it has been a blast (I won't talk about the 7 hours in the plane in Canada.) I want to thank everyone for their hospitality and friendships, and now I would like to share a couple of my experiences, and let you in on a few things you should know.

Just Say N.O.

The last week of June I had the opportunity to chaperone a youth mission trip for my church and work on the rebuilding of New Orleans (specifically, Slidell, LA.) Every time it comes up in conversation that I did this, the questions is always the same. "There doing okay now, aren't they?"

No. I would like to lie and say everything is good, but I can't. Is it getting better? Well, yes, some. Is it good? No way.

The houses I worked on were in a typical ranch style subdivision that had been covered in 7-10 feet of water. From my estimation, half the homes had been abandoned. The other half had either been rebuilt, or were in some level of being rebuilt and the owners were living in a small trailer on the lot. This was not 2 months after Katrina, but 2 YEARS after. The group doing this rebuilding had originally been set up for 8 months, but 2 years into it they were looking for a next round of funding to take them to year 8 and expected to be there until year 15.

However, the magnitude of the troubles didn't hit me until we drove into New Orleans one night. Yes, we visited the lower 9th ward, but it was the drive in that struck me. There were miles and miles of abandoned apartment houses, along with miles of abandoned shopping centers like we see around us. Yes, there was a Home Depot, but it was right next to an abandoned PepBoys or Toys R Us. However, down the road was one of the strangest things I have ever seen, a completely abandoned Six Flags amusement park. It was eerie.

What do we do? I didn't have a clue until we took a walk. A friend and I were about a 1/2 block behind our group while they were touring the French Quarter. As we came around a corner there were 3 men sitting on their front steps, and they started teasing us about how they wondered where the group's chaperones were, and we both joked back with them. However, when we were walking by, one man came up and slapped me on the back and said "Thank you."

What was he thanking me for? He didn't know we were rebuilding houses, so why was he thanking me. As I talked to him and other people downtown, I learned he was thanking me for being there and bringing the kids to New Orleans. The number one fear I found that the people of New Orleans have is that we will forget them. They need us. They need our tourism, they need our work, they need us. That is why we need toJust Say N.O!

International Imagination in Education Conference - Vancouver, CA

I was going to give this experience more space, but I thought the N.O. story was too important. However, I want to briefly talk about this conference where I was asked to speak and the great group of educators at the Imaginative Education Research Group. This was a truly international group, with educators from all over the world. For example, only 16% of the participants in my session were from the US, and only half were from North America. It was a fabulous experience with people who really understand what we need in education. I will write a big article about them next month, but until then check out www.ierg.net.

These are the Days of Our Lives

For those of you who are new to *FingerPoints*, this is generally the most popular section, the funny days and weeks of the upcoming month. Some are education related, some are funny, and some are just stupid. I hope you enjoy them and remember these are real holidays celebrated by someone, somewhere. So just celebrate!

Month

Children's Eye Health and Safety Month	Children's Vision and Learning Month
Get ready for Kindergarten Month	Happiness Happens Month
Learn Japanese Month	National Inventor's Month
National Win with Civility Month	

Weeks

1-7 National Clown Week	4-10 National Fraud Awareness Week
6-10 Psychic Week	6-12 Don't Wait! Celebrate! Week
6-12 Sturgis Bike Rally Week	11-19 Elvis Week
12-18 National Resurrect Romance Week	12-18 Thanks for All the Gifts Week
13-17 Weird Contest Week	13-19 National Aviation Week
25-31 Be Kind to Humankind Week	31-9/2 Daniel Boone Week

Days - June

1 Girlfriend's Day	1 Lughnasa
1 National Urban Eden Day	1 Respect for Parents Day
1 Rounds Resounding Day	2 Hypnosis Day
2 Satchmo Day	3 Braham Pie Day
4 National Chocolate Chip Day	4 National Mustard Day
4 Women's Pro Football Day	4 National Gymnastics Day
5 Psychic Sunday	5 Sister's Day
5 Friendship Day	6 National Fresh Breath (Halitosis) Day
7 National Night Out Day	7 Particularly Preposterous Packaging Day
8 The Date to Create	8 Happiness Happens Day
8 Sneak Some Zucchini Onto Your Neighbor's Porch Night	
8 National Underwear Day	9 Int. Day of the World's Indigenous People
9 Veep Day	10 National Duran Duran Appreciation Day
10 Smores Day	10 Kool-Aid Day
11 National Garage Sale Day	12 International Youth Day
12 Vinyl Record Day	12 Eleanor Roosevelt Day
12 Elvis Presley Commemoration Day	13 Herbert Hoover Day
13 International Left Hander's Day	14 Native American Code Talkers Day
15 Best Friends Day	15 National Relaxation Day
15 World Day of Reiki	16 Joe Miller's Joke Day
17 Meaning of "Is" Day	17 Men's grooming Day Day

The Rest of August Is Continued on the Next Page

These are the Days of Our Lives Continued

Days

17 Sandcastle Day	18 Bad Poetry Day
18 National Homeless Animals Day	18 National Personal Chefs Day
19 Aviation Day	19 "Black Cow" Root Beer Float Day
19 Sandcastle and Sculpture Day	22 Southern Hemisphere Hoodie Hoo Day
22 Be an Angel Day	23 Valentino Day
23 Day of Remembrance of the Slave Trade and It's Abolition	
24 Vesuvius Day	24 National Waffle Day
25 Kiss and Make Up Day	25 National Second Hand Wardrobe Day
26 National Dog Day	26 Pony Express Day
26 Women's Equality Day	27 "The Duchess" Who Wasn't Day
28 Crackers Over the Keyboard Day	28 Race Your Mouse Around Your Icon Day
29 According to Hoyle Day	29 More Herbs, Less Salt Day
30 National Holistic Pet Day	30 National Toasted Marshmallow Day
31 Love Litigating Lawyers Day	

In Honor of National Duran Duran Day on August 10th, I bring you some lyrics from one of my favorites. From 1983 and "The Reflex"...

*So why don't you use it
Try not to bruise it
Buy time, don't lose it
The reflex is an only child, he's waiting in the park
The reflex is in charge of finding treasure in the dark
And watching over lucky clover isn't that bizarre
Every little thing the reflex does
Leaves you answered with a question mark*

Now if some one could example to me what all that means.

Supposedly Real Analogies Used in High School Essays

- She grew on him like she was a colony of E. coli and he was room-temperature Canadian beef.
- She had a deep, throaty, genuine laugh, like that sound a dog makes just before it throws up.
- The little boat gently drifted across the pond exactly the way a bowling ball wouldn't.
- Her hair glistened in the rain like nose hair after a sneeze.
- John and Mary had never met. They were like two hummingbirds who had also never met.
- The young fighter had a hungry look, the kind you get from not eating for a while.
- It was an American tradition, like fathers chasing kids around with power tools.
- She walked into my office like a centipede with 98 missing legs.
- It hurt the way your tongue hurts after you accidentally staple it to the wall.