

FingerPoints

SEPTEMBER 2007 EDITION

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

The Power of One Person

I have to admit something that most people, let alone men, will not admit. I have several times this past summer, cried very hard. Now that part may not seem strange, but the reason—what is strange. I spent this time crying about the death of a person I never met.

Now, for the background story. The person whose death I cried about, and continue to find myself tearful, was Coach Terry Hoepfner, who died of brain cancer June 19th. Unless you live in the state of Indiana, and even if you do, you have probably never heard of Coach Hoepfner. He was the head coach of the Indiana University football team, and this may explain why you have never heard of him, because you may not have thought Indiana had a college football team. Well, in a lot of ways they didn't. They didn't until Coach Hoepfner arrived.

Now, don't get the idea that Coach Hep made Indiana into a college football powerhouse, he didn't. Unfortunately, he ran out of time. What he did do was change the atmosphere of a moribund football team, and changed the lives of thousands of people. He brought an energy and a positive power to everyone he met. In fact, it is very difficult to describe the positive influence he brought to the people of Indiana. He brought the idea, that together we can do anything we set our minds to. Not "if" we accomplish it, but that we will.

I know this all sounds very rah, rah let's win a football game, but it was more than that. It was watching someone who believed in the power of positive thoughts and actions. It was watching someone who believed in the good in everyone and that everyone can do good.

As I was working on this newsletter, I went through some old issues to look at past Finger of

the Month topics and found a quote I used from Coach Hep from September of last year, after he had taken time off for further brain surgery. He said, "On a scale of 1 to 10 on a positive attitude, I'm an 11!" That is why he had such an effect on the people who knew him. That is why I cried on the afternoon of June 20th when I found out he had died.

This gives you an idea of the power of one person. Each of us can be that one person. None of us can be Coach Hep, but we can be our own powerful positive influence on the people around us. I finish with the poem Coach Hep often quoted about getting along in this world. It's not great poetry, but it's great Hep.

*When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest, if you must, but don't you quit.
Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out;
Don't give up though the pace seems slow --
You may succeed with another blow.
Success is failure turned inside out --
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are.
It may be near when it seems so far.
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit --
It's when things seem worst that you must not quit.*

Have a Good Day,
Scott Endres

The Finger of the Month - #4 Allow Yourself to Laugh

Obviously, because of the length of the previous article, the Finger of the Month is going to be very short this month. However, if you read

the article above, the advice is very simple.

Allow Yourself to Laugh...

...and Laugh Often!



Don't Be Afraid...

Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid...

One thing I can't stand is a person who preaches one thing and then does another. You know the type of people I'm talking about, the ones that tell their child that McDonald's isn't good for you, but will sneak a Big Mac when their child is away. Oh, wait a minute, that's me. Well, anyway, after the first full week at my school, you can't accuse me of being that type of person with Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid.

Here's the story. About a half an hour before the end of the last work day before students showed up to school, my assistant principal asked a favor. She said that since we wouldn't have our normal morning announcement program for a few weeks, could I put something together to teach the students about the four points we were trying to promote in the school. A few years ago we had put together 4 points that we felt signified what it meant to Be a Steamer (our nickname- don't ask.) The 4 points are Be Responsible, Be Respectful, Be a Peace Builder, and Be Committed to Excellence. She was concerned that we hadn't promoted them well over the past two years, and she wanted to stress that from the very beginning of the year. Considering I was one of the people that put this together, I agreed that we needed to do this, and was happy to help. However, she asked for one more thing. Make the announcements funny.

How in the world could I make this stuff funny? I mean what is a steamer? And what is funny being a peace builder? Well, after talking about it with my 7 year old son (for the best advice, go to a 7 year old), and thinking about what I have been preaching with DBA, I decided to be stupid. We, my son and I, put together a series of fake news reports where I was an undercover reporter Howie Duin, who spent the week trying to find out what the 4 parts of being a steamer were. In this series, I was as stupid as I have been. In fact, there was one day that I really wasn't sure it wasn't going to work, nor was I sure I could do it. I kept telling people, this segment was either going to be hilarious, or I was going to get fired. Well, I'm still employed, and it went great. The next day when our segment started on the announcements, you could here students applauding for the spot.

Well, so what. Alright, I made a fool of myself in front of the whole school, but did it make any difference? Simply, yes. I had teachers telling me that it was the most they had ever seen their students pay attention to the announcements, and that they had students telling other students to be quiet, so they could hear. In addition, I had several teachers tell me that they quizzed their students later about the 4 parts, and that a majority could name them. This definitely hadn't happened before.

The moral of the story. If you want students to listen to the announcements, don't be afraid to be stupid. And if you want an idea of how to be stupid on the announcements, take a look at the article below.

Second Annual "Talk Like a Pirate Day" Challenge

Let's make this simple. September 19th is Talk Like a Pirate Day and the challenge is on. Last year I challenged everyone to try to convince their administrative staff to do the announcements in pirate talk that day, and even though I really said it for fun, several people emailed me that they did it. So this year, let's sweep the nation with Talk Like a Pirate Announcements. If you need any motivation to do it, see the DBA article above, and if you need details go to www.talklikeapirate.com . Oh, yeah...ARRRRGGGHHH!!!



The September TS Moment of the Month

It is September, and the Teaching Sucks moment of the month is based here in Indiana where I work. Now, why is it based in Indiana for September? Well, this is the month that we have our end of the year state testing (it is called ISTEP.) Yes, you read that correctly. Indiana does their state testing in the fall. Right now, 6th grade teachers across the state are preparing their new middle school students on standards from elementary school, in particular 5th grade. Doesn't make sense does it?

Now, I know that in general, state testing sucks, but at least you get to test over things that you actually teach, that is if you don't teach in Indiana. Therefore, it is for that reason I am proud to say to my home state of Indiana, and to the lovely ISTEP test in September--Teaching Sucks!

Remember, it's not that we don't like teaching, just that sometimes it sucks. Take a moment to list your reasons that teaching sucks this month. Write them down, wad it up, and throw it away. Now let's get back to working on the things we can actually control.

International Imagination in Education Confernece

As I mentioned in the August issue, I had the honor of being invited to speak at the 6th International Imagination in Education Conference in Vancouver, Canada. This conference is presented each year by the Imaginative Education Research Group (IERG) based at Simon Fraser University, also in Canada.

Over the last 20 years researchers at IERG, led by Kieran Egan, and others around the world have been exploring the concepts of Imaginative Education (IE). What is IE? Well, do you have a few hours? No? Okay then check out the brief description below from an IERG handout.

IE offers a new approach to education that effectively meets the objectives most teachers have of helping students become excited about learning, understand the meaning of knowledge, and help their students improve on test performance and academic achievement. It accomplishes this principally by engaging students' emotions and also, connectedly, their imaginations in the material of the curriculum. It is not new to point out that children's thinking is most deeply and energetically engaged when their imagination and emotions are in play. What is new and unique about IE is that it offers a theory and a set of frameworks and techniques for actually accomplishing this within the mainstream academic curriculum.

What does this all mean? Well, I'm not sure yet because I'm still studying it. However, I can tell you this. What we believe as far as using the concepts of *Teaching Is Too Important to Take Seriously!* is at the heart of Imaginative Education (in fact, humor is listed as a major component of IE.), Why does that matter? Two reasons. First, there are some very important people behind IE, but second, and most important, we are starting to see that the drill and test of NCLB is leaving us all behind. From the lastest SAT drop in scores to the 1999 level, and the recent international math competition where the US dropped down to 11th out of 12 countries, our children have had their imagination and learning left behind. With the leadership of IERG, research is showing that tapping into students imagination not only broadens their problem solving skills, and helps to increase student achievement on standardized tests.

For more information about Imaginative Education go to www.ierg.net or wait to a 2008 FingerPoints where you will learn about PaperWad Ideas practical application of IE in the classroom.

These are the Days of Our Lives

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

Month

Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder Month
Baby Safety Month
Be Kind to Editors & Writers Month
Go Wild During California Wild Rice Month
International Self Awareness Month
International Strategic Thinking Month
Mold Awareness Month
National Chicken Month
National Coupon Month
National Honey Month
National Piano Month
National Preparedness Month
Reunion Planning Month
September Is Healthy Aging Month
Subliminal Communications Month
Update Your Resume Month
Backpack Safety America Month
College Savings Month
Fall Hat Month
Low Fat Pizza Bake Month
Library Card Sign-up Month
National Biscuit Month
National Civics Awareness Month
National 5-a-Day Month
National Mushroom Month
National Potato Month
National Rice Month
Sea Cadet Month
Shameless Promotion Month
United Planet Month
National Hispanic Heritage Month

Weeks

1-7 Childhood Injury Prevention Week
1-7 Self-University Week
2-8 National Waffle Week
3-7 National Payroll Week
4-8 United Tribes PowWow
10-15 Line Dance Week
11-18 Constitution Week
11-17 National Emergency Preparedness Week
15-21 National Singles Week
16-22 National Clean Hands Week
16-22 Nat. Farm and Ranch Safety Week
16-22 National Love Your Files Week
16-22 Prostate Cancer Awareness Week
16-22 Tolkien Week
16-22 Balance Awareness Week
17-23 Bottled Water Week
17-22 Substitution Teacher Appreciation Week
18-21 International Women's E-commerce Week
23-30 Banned Books Week - Celebrate the Freedom to Read Week
23-29 Deaf Awareness Week
23-29 National Adult Immunization Awareness Week
24-30 National Chimney Safety Week

These are the Days of Our Lives - Continued

Days

1 Building Code & Staff Appreciation Day	1 Chicken Boy's Day
1 Emmett M Nutt Day	2 Bison-Ten-Yell Day
3 Bathtub Race Day	3 Toy Tips Executive Toy Test Day
3 Waffle Day	4 Newspaper Carrier Day
4 Another Look Unlimited Day	5 Be Late for Something Day
6 Do It! Day (aka Fight Procrastination)	7 Google Commemoration Day
7 Grandma Moses Day	7 National Feel the Love Day
7 "Neither Snow Nor Rain" Day	8 Bald Is Beautiful Day
8 International Literacy Day	8 Potato Day
8 Prairie Day	9 National Grandparents Day
9 Wonderful Weirdos Day	10 Swap Ideas Day
10 National Boss/Employee Exchange Day	11 Libraries Remember Day
11 Remembrance Day	12 Video Games Day
13 International Chocolate Day	14 Doodle Soup Day
15 Big Whopper Liar Day	15 America's Day for Kids
15 International Sing-Out Day	15 International Eat an Apple Day
15 International Coastal Clean-Up Day	15 Responsible Dog Ownership Day
15 Wife Appreciation Day	16 Anne Bradstreet Day
16 Hurricane Katrina National Day of Prayer and Remembrance	
16 International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer	
16 Women's Friendship Day	17 Citizenship Day
17 Pledge Across America Day	19 TALK LIKE A PIRATE DAY
21 International Day of Peace	21 National POW/MIA Recognition Day
22 Dear Diary Day	22 Elephant Appreciation Day
22 Fish Amnesty Day	22 Hobbit Day
22 Kiwanis Kids Day	22 National Hunting and Fishing Day
22 National White Chocolate Day	22 R.E.A.D. in America Day
23 National Good Neighbor Day	24 Family Table Day
24 Innergize Day	24 Punctuation Day
25 National One-Hit Wonder Day	25 World Maritime Day
26 National Women's Health & Fitness Day	27 Ancestor Appreciation Day
27 World Tourism Day	28 Fish Tank Floorshow Night
28 Love Note Day	29 Family Health and Fitness Day USA

Amazingly Simple Home Remedies (Yeah, Right)

- If you are choking on an ice cube, don't panic Simply pour a cup of boiling water down your throat and presto, the blockage will be almost instantly removed.
- A mouse trap placed on top of your alarm clock will prevent you from rolling over and going back to sleep after you hit the snooze button.
- If you have a bad cough, take a large dose of laxatives. Then you will be afraid to cough.