

Kids do stupid things...

Just a quick third post of the day. I just read this one- kids do really stupid things in school. Here is the latest:

[Student Accused Of High-Fiving Teachers With Tacks](#)

I think I will skip giving middle-school students high-fives for awhile...

So what was the assignment?

The assignment I took for today at that furthest school was art and drama. Interesting combination as usually drama is the realm of the music teacher. It was actually a pretty easy day. School started at 8:00, so I was there at 7:45. My first class? 9:30. That's right, I had over an hour and a half to kill reading, answering nature's call, eating free food in the lounge...

This is teacher's appreciation week, so the PT0 provides food all week for the teachers. Well, I certainly wouldn't want to offend the PT0 by not doing my part here. Bagels, doughnuts, fruit, juice- a second breakfast! Okay, I didn't eat *that* much, but suffice to say I was satisfied with my mid-morning snack.

9:30 rolled around and the first of three classes came in. Now three doesn't sound like much, but remember this was art and drama so I had to teach two of the classes both, so it was really more like five classes- still an easy day though. This first class was 2nd/3rd grade, and it turned out I had subbed for this class before earlier in the year, which had its own

interesting tale of two subs showing up for this one job. The teacher had requested a particular sub, making the arrangements herself, then proceeded to put the job in the system as sub needed but not filled so I took that job when it showed up. The principal chose to side with the system, so the requested sub had to do work elsewhere in the building. She wasn't too happy because this apparently was the second time this had happened to her.

Anyway, back to today they just completed a project for art- in fact all three classes did, though differing projects of course- and then I got to teach some drama. Well, play some drama games with them. We did a game called "Change Three Things" which was an observation game. They partnered up and observed each other for several seconds. Then they turned around, changed three things about their appearance then turned back and tried to figure out what changed. It could have been something as simple as closing an eye, or as obvious as, well I will use one of the students as an example for this- one boy unbuttoned his shirt and put it on again, backwards. Yes, he held up the game doing this- it took as long as you can imagine. Now if it was a t-shirt like most kids wear it would have been quick. Oh, well. This was a pretty wild group so we only did one round of this. Next we moved on to a murder-mystery game, where one person is throwing a party (his/her choice of type of party) but there is a killer at the party. They walk around shaking each others hands while at the same time acting like the type of party it is- pizza, tea, whatever. The killer would "kill" someone by tickling another player with his/her finger while shaking hands. The "victim" would wait ten seconds before "dying" dramatically. The ten seconds being so we wouldn't catch the killer in the act. Of course, being 2nd and 3rd graders this more sophisticated game didn't go quite so smooth. Sometimes they would forget to wait ten seconds or the killer would forget to be discrete. And of course **everybody** wanted to guess at once.

6th grade was only art, so I will move on to the last class, 4th/5th grade. This class was supposed to be a pretty bad class, but to be honest, aside from a few boys who just wanted to make origami "[fortune tellers](#)" because they were finished with the project then go and bug everyone around them with their fortune tellers, I had more trouble with the 2nd/3rd grade class. In any event, for drama I didn't get to choose the mystery game, so for them we did skits about three items. In groups they would pick three unrelated items (example: frog/basketball/telephone) and make a skit around these three things. The trick was they were not allowed to say the names of these objects in the skit. When a group finished, the rest would try to guess the three objects. Of course the goal was to make the objects easy to guess and this would be an indicator of how well they got their message across in the skit. In the end, many were easy to guess but there were a few tough ones. In all, I would say they did a pretty good job with it. Only some audience participation left something to be desired.

Well, I was able to find another job in the same district tomorrow while writing this. More free food I hope. ☐ Same school as the rejected job, a school I will be at on Friday as well. So far four days in this same district this week.

Choices

When I got home from small group last night, I did a check again for jobs, and came up with one district that had two postings. One was closer, one was one of the furthest schools from me. People who know me know my love for driving, or rather how much I love to **not** have to drive much in traffic. So the choice was obvious of course- I took the second one.

Say what? You're thinking, "Didn't he just get through saying...?" Well, yes, but I mentioned in one of my comments a couple of days ago that there is a position I vowed never to take again. This was for one of those teachers. ELL at that one middle school is a nightmare I wish never to repeat, err, again. I actually subbed for these teachers (two ELL teachers on the team) a few times but I finally had enough last year. My theory is that discipline is far more strict in Mexico (these were primarily Hispanic kids) and so when they come to the US and enter our education system, we are far more limited on what we can do for punishment and so it's like a cake-walk to them. Our worst is no problem to them as long as they only break rules and not laws in which case they finally have justice meted toward them. In any event, coupled with typical low-income for this area they are very difficult to work with. There is another middle school in the district, but oddly enough I have never actively chosen to not sub for ELL there. Maybe the difference is the grades are separated over there but all combined at the first school. 6th-graders learn how to play the system sooner from the 8th-graders since they spend a lot of time in the same room. In any event, as possible proof of this theory one of the days a student actually threw his binder at another student's head (in retribution). In front of me while I started to deal with the initial problem. Besides this, there was just a constant lack of respect overall.

Never again.

So of course that same position just showed up for tomorrow, but no alternative assignment. I am still looking for something for tomorrow...

Of course there are even worse positions. A nearby district actually has a lot of gang activity at their middle schools, though it is really not as bad as what I hear of from the city. I no longer sub in that district.

4th-grader I DID know!

Usually I go a long time between seeing kids from my church in their natural daily habitats. Tuesday was the super day, way out of the ordinary. Today I ran into another one, apparently whose memory was not as good as the one I ran into on Tuesday. This time he wasn't in my class, but he was in a nearby 4th grade classroom. I passed him in the hall, then turned and did a double take- I actually recognized him. At the same time, he did his own double take, but he wasn't as sure. When I went to pick up my class from fine arts, there were two other classes in the same room, sort of a special fine arts day. His class was one of them, and his teacher was already leading the class away. He asked if he knew me, maybe from church. I just smiled and said, "I'll see you on Sunday, Brandon!" (okay, I guess first names are okay- I've been a bit paranoid on identifying people). Then he knew. At the end of the day I gave him a high five. So on Sunday, I will see two fourth-graders at 11:15 who I encountered this week, maybe three if Daniel (from Tuesday) brings his friend again.

As far as the day went, it was very easy- no teaching at all. Ordinarily this wouldn't make me happy, but it's been a long week and I was ready for some rest. I even made two errors this morning since I was so tired. This morning went like this: fine arts (combined classes), math test, fine arts (single class), finish math test, lunch. That was it. The afternoon was a little more complex with SSR (silent reading), spelling test, reading test, computer lab. Yes, they took three tests in one day- not a fun day for them. I guess I did do more than babysit in the afternoon. I of course had to give the words and sentences for the spelling test, and additionally I had to proofread and correct papers on the

computer before the kids printed.

In any event, I am glad for the weekend. I enjoy what I do (mostly) but I need the break. Before I sign off, I should mention that all went well except for a couple of boys. One was *constantly* talking, even during the math test in the morning, which he did not have to take since he was in a different math class. Unlucky for me the teacher didn't tell me what he should do so I had to find him something to do. He said he finished the poetry project, didn't have a book, and wasn't allowed to read one of the books in the room because they had to be "checked out" and he had lost a book so he couldn't check out another. I didn't think the teacher would mind, as long as he didn't bring it home, but no dice. Sigh. He was actually elsewhere for most of the afternoon, so that time went better. The other boy was really only a problem while the first one was in the room- they kind of fed off of each other.

Well, that's it for now. Time to torture myself by taking out my contacts, then winding down for bed. Yeah, I know- Friday night. Well, I still haven't gone back to the singles group. They have a movie night tonight, I am David, but I think I have seen it and I just didn't want to go. I really need to force myself next time. Why the torture? Well I just made myself some salsa, 3½ pasta-sauce-sized jars of it. Made with habanero, serrano, jalapeño, and other hot peppers, tomatillos, tomatoes, onions, and cilantro. The hot pepper juice of course clings to the skin for several hours, so hot pepper meets eye and... If I don't post tomorrow it may be because I'm blind from this. Anyway, goodnight.

Okay then

You have spoken (or rather, **not** spoken- that is, no comments) and it seems that my links posts are not welcome. Whether it be the links, retrogaming, or whatnot, I guess I need to stick to the teaching posts. Right then.

Today I was a teaching assistant. It's okay- in the district I was in subs get paid the same whether it's teaching or assisting, unlike the other three districts where assistant subs get paid far less. In one district, in fact they get paid half the amount of teacher subs! I was actually supposed to sub in a junior high, but they canceled so I got my choice of this position or a preschool teacher. No choice at all... Of course, when I got there I was in charge of three kindergarteners, so maybe not a win after all. Well, it really wasn't bad at all. The three actually worked very well and I didn't have to intervene a great deal. This was a special education class, so I wouldn't have expected that considering my experience in these rooms in the past. Unlike the regular kindergarten students these three were there the entire day. They were mainstreamed into the same classroom twice in one day which one would think would give them the same instruction twice, but they must have worked out a schedule with the kindergarten teacher because while they were in there a total of almost three hours between morning and afternoon they did not repeat any instruction.

In the morning following announcements I brought them to the regular class where they worked on an assessment of their number and letter skills as well as their self-image, and then followed with science. I feel I'm missing something, but it is so late I can't think of what. Anyway, they had to color and label the parts of a flower. Oh yes, there was a worksheet that they completed and got checked off for as well. Finally recess, then I brought them back for calendar and computer time where they typed up (with the help of the

specialized software) the calendar info and practiced writing their addresses and phone numbers. By coincidence, two of them had the exact same numerical address, though of course the street was different. A teacher was supposed to be there to help, but she had observations to do and they were short a sub, so they pulled her sub somewhere else. Probably because I'm a "certified" sub and could be with them without a regular teacher. Anyway, as a teaching assistant I had to go with them to lunch and help where needed. When they went out for lunch recess I finally got my lunch.

In the afternoon I went to a music class with a second-grade girl for a half-hour, then it was back to the three tykes. In the afternoon K class they did reading and math. Get this—they were given decks of cards and played war! I guess number recognition was the key here, but after a couple games of mostly standard war they added the two numbers together instead, but then still won the cards or not by regular war rules. Back to the self-contained class again, and back to the computers. This time I had to watch them use the computers to make sure they went through the program the way they were supposed to. Finally, the teacher came back, had them pack up, did a couple of dance songs (chicken dance and hokey-pokey) with them, and then finally they were ready to board the buses. Whew. Long day, and long post. It is now past my bedtime for eight hours of sleep. Goodnight.

Those kids I (should) know...

I have mentioned in the past occasionally running into students who I know from church. The most interesting response one has ever given me was a few years ago in a district I used to sub in. It was an afternoon position and the kids just came

back from lunch. Then one boy just shouted out, "Hey, I know you!!!" Well, as is often the case working with so many kids, plus my faulty memory when it comes to names and faces I only vaguely remembered him, but at least I knew from where I knew him, so I said so then slyly looked up his name. From that point on I got to know him better at church, as well as his brother who would enter the 4th grade the following year. Today I found myself in a similar situation. He didn't blurt it out like the one a few years ago, but quietly let me know. Unfortunately my memory of him was no better than that other time. In my defense I should say that I work two services and interact with about 80-90 each weekend. Some I interact with more than others, and he unfortunately was one of those others. No sly tricks this time though, but I mentioned that I may have to have him put in my cabin at camp this June so I remember him better.

So of course this wouldn't be as interesting a post if there wasn't more to this story. After the kids had PE in the morning, they came back and switched classes for science/social studies (my class went to social studies, another class came in for science). So then *another* boy told me he remembered me from church too! After telling him I didn't recognize him, he confessed he'd only been there twice as a guest of the first boy. So, not as much coincidence then since the first boy was involved. Later, after lunch, you guessed it... I ran into someone else from my church. What three in one day? Is God telling me something? If so He will need to be clearer unfortunately- this mind of mine isn't seeing it. I actually ran into someone from church picking up his daughter for a dental appointment. In fact, I had worked with him one year in [AWANA](#). He was the new director of TNT boys (Truth in Training, 3rd-5th grades) and I was a leader. Anyway, care to guess which class his daughter was in? Just by my asking the question you know it was mine. She didn't know me though as far as I know- it's possible she goes to the service I don't lead in. I'll have to find out.

Speaking of AWANA, I had one of my bigger memory freezes with the former director of the 3rd-5th grade boys. After about six weeks of working with him once a week, I saw him at a churchgoer's get-together at someone's farm. He saw me and said hello, and I recognized that I knew him, but I suddenly couldn't place where I knew him from! Ah, that mind of mine-short-circuits from time to time. Once I said so and he told me, it was the biggest duh! moment ever.

Well, until next time.

Update: Here's a story about someone with a memory opposite of mine:

[Would you like to remember every day of your life?](#)

It's nice to not have to drive far...

When they say the average American is stuck in traffic (i.e. not moving or moving slowly, **not** the total commute) commuting to work 38 hours per year (nearly **double** that if you hail from L.A.) it is nice to have a short trip. In fact, this is a trip that I could easily walk if not for the heavy bag I carry. I suppose I could stick my stuff in a backpack, but that really wouldn't look very professional. In any event, coincidence gave me two half-day jobs- for two team teachers! From my understanding they did not coordinate this, but had to take off half-days for two different reasons. I literally walked through the wall to get to the other class. Okay, it was a collapsible wall that was partly open, but still. Both teachers taught 3rd/4th grade multiage and so I even saw some of the same students both morning and afternoon due to

switching classes- they switched for spelling and math. It was a pretty pleasant day overall, in the top 15-20% of all my workdays. I just had to look around, because this is exactly the sort of thing I will see in June if I get to do camp again. What I mean is, combined 3rd/4th grades just graduated to 4th/5th. I would put up a video here of last year, but since I am not their parent I don't think I can since I'm sure more than my friends read this even if they don't post (hint, hint!). Perhaps I can be persuaded to give a private viewing if asked though. Of course it's possible I already showed a couple of you the video last year, but not all. What, still with me? Go on, leave a comment already! ☐

Science Court

Back to middle school, thankfully. Not many would actually say middle school is an improvement over younger grades, but it is over yesterday's special needs preschool classroom. In any event, I mostly enjoy middle school though there are **those days** of course. Science was the subject, and will be tomorrow as well since this is a two-day assignment. Today's repeated middle school lesson, only four times at least instead of six, was a video (surprise, surprise). This video was one of several [Squigglevision/Science Court](#) episodes. This series uses the really bad (in my opinion) [Squigglevision](#) method of animation and is about two lawyers who battle against each other over some science fact, one science-challenged and one who basically does the teaching and (you guessed it) always wins the case. There were some funny moments, and it was entertaining. However for education it seems like they could have put more content in there. For a half-hour show (commercials were included, yikes!) it really could have said much more about the topic at hand, which by the way was work.

Not that one episode necessarily defines the series, mind you- I haven't seen any other episodes. The students just started a unit on simple machines and this video taught the [scientific definition of work](#). In it they also talked about a few simple machines that would make the work seem easier by increasing the distance moved (work = force × distance, so increasing distance will decrease force if the work the same). We wrapped up after the video with a short discussion and a few minutes of silent ball.

If Squigglevision sounds familiar, it may be because of one of the other shows produced using this patented method. I specifically remember a show called [Home Movies](#) back in 1999. I'll tell you, I watched one episode of this show and that was enough for me. One of the drawbacks of Squigglevision animation is the lack of fluid, well, animation. Squiggly outlines are in abundance but the animation of the characters and whatnot is just lacking. Case in point is the entrance of a character. Rather than appearing a little at a time to show fluid motion, the character will just all of a sudden just be there. One frame not there at all, next frame, **bam** there he is. This is part of the reason I really disliked the show. The other was I just didn't care for the premise. All in all I found the show to be quite a snooze. So, when the show creators switched to [Flash animation](#) for the second season I still did not switch back.

Anyway, back to school. You may have noticed I wrote that I only had to do this lesson four times. The reason for this is: 1) this is the school that has tutorial for one of the periods (some students do a foreign language instead of tutorial), and 2) at this school each core teacher does one social studies class. Why they don't have a dedicated social studies teacher is a mystery, probably budgeting. So for social studies they just colored pictures of African masks. All period. Well, you wanted to know, right? ☐

There's a guy in the preschool classroom!

People who know me know that my preference for teaching is about 3rd-7th grades. Stretch a year in either direction, and those are pretty much the jobs I gravitate toward when I have a choice. Of course specials are an exception; I do take those no problem though they may include kindergarten or 1st grade. Since you are an observant reader, you will have noticed the words *when I have a choice*. Well, I was unable to procure an assignment yesterday leaving me at the mercy of what's available in the morning. First call came in at about 5:40 and was for kindergarten. I thought about it and foolishly chose not to do it. I figured I would take a chance and check the web since I was awake. I did find a couple of half-day jobs which I also skipped. Then came the full-day preschool assignment. I didn't think I would see anything younger than the one I rejected, but here it was. Being about 5:50 I decided to gamble again and keep hoping for a better assignment to show up. Nope. Oddly enough though, no one was picking up this full-day assignment for some reason. Finally, the system called me for the assignment so I gave in and took it. At least it was a lot closer to me than the kindergarten job. Then I went back to sleep for an hour.

As it turns out, this district as far as I know does not offer normal preschool. It does however offer special education preschool for the "developmentally delayed." The morning had eight of ten students there, and was actually kind of a breeze. This kind of classroom has teaching assistants (three!), and today the speech teacher actually came in to take over the class! I had absolutely no problem with this as this age is really out of my comfort zone anyway. I just acted

as another T.A. The most I did teachingwise was running a center where they matched patterns and did a connect-the-dots worksheet. Other than that it was keeping kids focused and helping as needed.

The afternoon was a little different. There were slightly fewer students (seven), but this was a more challenging group. One was very autistic and needed special attention, and as a whole the group was lower than the morning group and like the one autistic boy, required more attention. The title of this post refers to me, but in actuality one of the part-time T.A.s in the afternoon was a guy! I would guess he really likes kids to do this, because he is a retired principal from the school I was at and retirement packages for top school administrators tend to be very generous. Either that or some bad investments, but his actions during the afternoon clearly showed the former. He was very good with the kids- unlike a T.A. from another school I worked with recently. That T.A. really yelled at the kids, sometimes for very minor things. To be fair, that school was a middle school, but I really felt for those kids. Aside from that she did a pretty good job, doing things for the students she didn't have to. If not for this I would have thought she was in the wrong profession entirely.

I was somewhat relieved to go home a little early- preschool ends 15 minutes before the regular grades- partly due to the afternoon class and partly due to the relative inactivity of my job. This is one reason, aside from the very low pay, that I would not want to be a teaching assistant full time. The absolute worst times I have had subbing were as teaching assistants, particularly one-one-one assignments. Never again on those, though I would sub (at regular pay) for other types of teaching assistants, like those with multiple kids or general classroom helpers.

Small classes and early starts

7:15. That's what time a sub has to be at the junior high schools (still called that even though they are on a middle-school system- I guess they didn't want to change the letterheads ☐) in the district I was in today. That means being up before six. At least I had a solid night's sleep instead of constantly waking up like I often do. Once I got there, it turned out this teacher had a class that started ten minutes before the regular classes. Say what? Fortunately the plans said another teacher was asked to run this class so no problem not being able to completely go over the plans. The one I was subbing for was also a traveling teacher, which in this case could be called class-on-a-cart. This teacher had a class in a different room every period. One class even had two different rooms- more on that below.

So I got to the room with my cart and the teacher who was supposed to take over (surprise to him!) just said that I could handle this and just ask if I had any questions since he would be in and out of the room. Well then, I had to look at the plans again after all. It really wasn't hard like he said. All I had to do was pass out quizzes they had to complete, inform them of their class/homework assignment once finished, and then monitor them. Fortunately I had second period off to look at the rest of the day.

The next period was communications, basically a speech class. Well, they were good at speaking all right- to each other in conversation that is. They were completing an assignment as well, so again no teaching- just monitoring. The next two classes actually lasted for a period plus another half-

period. Being math classes this was a bit odd. This is actually why one of the classes was in two different rooms. They spent one period in one room, then had to move for the next period. I would gather the regular teacher in that room doesn't have two periods off in a row to allow us to be there for the full time. To get the half-period the students actually sacrificed their study hall half of lunch to have the longer math period.

Where does the small classes part come into play? Well, you three who actually read this blog (☹) already know special education classes can be smaller. Well, two of the math classes were such classes- the first had about eight students in it. Most of them worked well, but there were two girls who thought they were in that communications class and chatted pretty much the entire time, sometimes with others across the room. At least they did *some* work so I was able to put up with it without sending anyone to the office. I left a note about this of course. This was the first of the two special-ed math classes. The second, get this, had **two students**. That's right, just two. They pay for a teacher to teach a class of two students?? I would really like to know more about this but as a sub for just the day I really only know what's in the notes- nothing about it there!- and from what I might pick up from other teachers, but I didn't want to be nosy. Oh well, some things just remain mysteries.

Until tomorrow then. Time for me to sleep...