

# Unreasonable punishment?

Or incomplete reporting? A story in today's paper talks about a choir director who quit after the school disciplined him by reducing him from director to assistant director, accompanied by a 20% pay cut. What was his infraction? He let two students who "recently violated the school's co-curricular code" dress for a concert though they did not actually perform. School code says they could not even dress for the event. Wait, they *dressed for a performance??* How... how could the director *allow* this? Hang him by his thumbs! The students didn't actually sing? Well so what? Hang him up anyway! To me, this punishment is only a little less ridiculous. However, before I get all bent out of shape, I have to admit to myself there may be more that the paper isn't reporting, such as were there any problems before this that may have caused the punishment to be more severe than it otherwise would have been? However, the article really gives no indication there could be more than meets the eye.

## [Prospect High School choir director quits over punishment](#)

On a side note, the former choir director at this school was convicted a couple years ago of sexual abuse of some of his students. It was all over the paper at the time and I actually had been in a musical with him at one time. So had someone else somehow involved at this blog site- you know who you are. □ Just thought I'd mention it even if it's not at all relevant.

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# Just a laid-back day

I was a substitute today, but hardly a teacher. As middle school science goes, all the classes were the same unlike a subject such as math where there are usually different levels taught or a foreign language where different grades are taught. I pretty much just announced a pending notebook check and then let them continue on their projects which they started yesterday. That is to say, they already knew what they were doing so I didn't even get to go over that. Ah, well. Mostly I just sat and watched them work, periodically cycling around the room to remind them of my presence and to help out if needed. Fortunately so I didn't expire from boredom, some did need my help from time to time.

This went on for six. long. periods. But it could have been worse. At least I was in a district where most of the kids had a work ethic. Some schools I have been in have had a large number of kids with a goof-off-while-the-teacher-is-away ethic instead.

Well, language arts tomorrow at another middle school. Until then.

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## Will your child graduate?

The answer we all want for this question is of course a resounding yes (I hope :P). However, if you live in an urban environment the statistics show that his or her chances are lower than if they live in the surrounding suburbs, at least for most of the 50 largest cities. Chicago, for example, has a 55.7% graduation rate while the Chicago suburbs are at 84.1%. Two Ohio cities have more drastic statistics with

Cleveland at 42.2% vs. 78.1% and Columbus being 40.9% vs. 82.9%, and Baltimore, Md. has the largest gap at 34.6% vs. 81.5% for its suburbs! However, at the other end of the scale your child is about 10% more likely to graduate in the city of Colorado Springs (83.7%) than its surrounding suburbs (73.5%). Click the link for rest of the 50 largest cities.

['Crisis' graduation gap found between cities, suburbs](#)

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## Oops...

I saw this on Channel One this morning (news briefs shown at some schools). How important are grades to you? Well, in Indiana they are probably as important as they are elsewhere, but nevertheless they managed to lose a month of grades over spring break due to what they say was a computer glitch. Click link for story:

[Tech error wipes out Ind. school's grades](#)

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## Great day today!

Today was possibly one of the best days I have had in a long time. It really reminded me why I am most comfortable with kids in 4th-6th grades. The class really went well. Remember the one fifth grade class I talked about in my music entry a few days ago? This was pretty much opposite, more like the two 4th grade classes I had that day. It is really unfortunate I am not so comfortable teaching things like

reading and writing. What other career can place me with this age group but not involve standard teaching? Coaching is out of course as I am definitely not sports oriented- speaking of which, did you hear about what boys are doing now for sport in Missouri? Put it this way: it is *illegal* in most states. [Check it out at this link \(click\)](#). Actually, once I saw the video (there is a video at that link, but I'm not sure it's the same one I saw) it didn't seem so bad, which is why I am not telling you what it is and making you go to the link instead. □ The only reservations I have is that they are teaching this to boys as young as six.

Anyway, back to today. I didn't do much teaching this morning, what with computer lab time and art taking up an hour and a half, but what teaching I did I really enjoyed. Following art, they had spelling (still no teaching, but some preparation and study time for their test Friday) and reading. I got to read aloud a book that was actually pretty good, though I didn't like the ending **at all**. It was called [My Brother Sam is Dead](#). With what happened in the chapter I read to the class, one would hope for a miracle to happen in the next chapter, but what happens is really quite sad. I'll leave it a little mysterious in case you want to read it- hopefully I didn't say too much. I don't think I did.

This led us to lunch. After lunch there was just math and science left. For math I got the advanced group with only around 15 students. This group was in the 6th grade book. I actually almost got through what the teacher expected me to get through. I only needed about five minutes more instead of the typical 15-30 minutes more... For science we talked about energy sources. They had read about fossil fuels and hydropower yesterday, and we picked up with solar, nuclear, and other forms of energy today. It was a good read and discussion. By the time we finished, I was a little disappointed it was time to go home, it was such a good day. Oh well, it couldn't last forever. And tomorrow I've got 7th

grade... Well, 7th grade science! I just hope I don't have to show another video like that Al Gore one I showed at this school last time. That was not fun, though not as bad as 7th grade sex-ed I had to do at another school around that same time. ☐

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## Believe it or not

It is April 1 after all. How old does one have to be to have criminal intent? Well, there were those ten-year-olds a few years ago who tossed a five-year-old off of a balcony, but how about eight or nine? And an actual plot to attack a teacher? Among not one, not two, but **nine** students? Read on...

[Police Release Photos of Weapons in Waycross Plot](#)

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## Help me make the music of the...

Hmm. Mr. Webber's Phantom of the Opera line doesn't quite work since this was during the day. How about, "The hills are alive, with the sound of music..." Yep, that works better. If you haven't guessed by now the position I subbed for today was music. Elementary music. Like most specials jobs in the district I was in, it was a traveling job, but fortunately this time I went to the right school first. The first two classes were great. They were fourth graders and they were really focused. As they were in a unit about stage

productions/musicals, they got to watch a video with scenes with a couple of famous dancers if you thought of Billy Elliot, you are dead wrong. In fact, he's not even real. Did you know there is actually a [musical based on this movie](#) by the way?. Nope, not [Michael Flatley](#). At least he's real, but you are thinking too modern! Go way back to the 1930s-1950s to get this one. Okay, you have them- Fred Astaire and Gene Austry... No wait, not the kind of dancing that involves bullets at your feet- Gene Kelly of course.

Anyway, they saw scenes from a few shows including [Ziegfeld Follies](#), [Royal Wedding](#), and, of course, [Singin' in the Rain](#). In [Royal Wedding](#), There was a strange scene where Astaire danced not only on the floor, but on the walls and ceiling as well! If you go to the [Royal Wedding](#) link and check out the trivia for it you can find out how they did it. These days they would just use computers of course. The kids really enjoyed that scene, as well as Kelly getting wet in [Singin' in the Rain](#).

I wish I could say that the fifth graders at the other school did as well with this video, but I can't. There were technical difficulties (the LMC gave me a DVD player that was broken- it wouldn't play the disc) and the first class just talked and talked, even after I finally got another player and started the movie. The second class was a little better, but still excitable during some scenes. The third class did much better, though not quite up to the fourth graders.

Finally, I had lunch then four afternoon classes with younger grades. No video for them, but instead the second graders worked on a show they were doing- we just went through all their songs on CD. I noticed this show involves the fifth grade as well. At first I wondered why the teacher didn't have me do this plan with that grade, but remembering how the first two classes went I quickly shelved that question. First grade had yet a different lesson, which we only got partway through, but that was expected by the teacher. Well, that's it for now.

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## Math dyslexia?

I have heard of dyslexia of course, but this is the first time I have heard of *math* dyslexia. Apparently this condition makes for a very hard time in math. One Florida teacher is finding that he may not be allowed to teach since he can't pass a required basic math skills test due to his disability. Where this gets interesting is he is an art teacher. No math involved in what he teaches. The rules say it doesn't matter, all teachers must pass this test. However, he has people fighting for him. Click the link to read the article:

[Math dyslexia imperils Orange County art teacher's job](#)

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## Can't we all just get along?

This was a favorite line of one of my past coworkers. Speaking of coworkers, this isn't a story about students not getting along- it's about two middle school teachers! Someone tell these two that they're supposed to be role models! Click link for story.

[Teachers Who Got in Fist-Fight Arrested](#)

And just so I don't have to write another post, there's a link on that page about a school staff member dying his hair green for St. Pat's day. The principal apparently wasn't a fan of the day...

Update: News item scrolled off the links. Here it is:

## I know you...

A date with the familiar happens all the time, déjà vu and all that. I think we can all think of more than a few times that has happened. Today I was in 6th grade science, a field which has sort of been a goal of mine for teaching. As part of the lesson plan, another teacher would come in for two of the classes and pretty much take over. This being a good thing of course as I don't have much experience with the applications they were using on a computer project (iMovie, iPhoto, Photo Booth), nor did I even know anything about the project. Anyway, I looked at her name and thought to myself, "isn't she...?" When it came time for the first of the two periods we got to talking and sure enough, she was the sub-caller for another district I once worked in. Apparently she got downsized last year when the district went to a computer system (*hmm. looks like I can sign up in that district again if I have to keep working as a sub...*) and so she got a job in the district I was in today.

But this wouldn't make for a good blog entry if she was the only one. During one of the classes I was handing out new textbooks and I came across a familiar last name, so I asked the student if his dad worked at another school I sub in. Yep. I told him I subbed for his dad a couple of times. Well, then a *third* coincidence happened. Well, possible coincidence. I was afraid to ask this time and push the odds. She had the last name of someone I went to school with when I was in 6th grade. Now this has happened to me before, one at a time anyway, in other schools- which is only natural given the fact that I grew up in this same area. I have met



my share students whose moms or dads I went to school with or whose parent I've seen elsewhere, like a professor at a local college.

Slightly related to this I just remembered I had one student with the last name of Fogerty one time. I joked about her being related to [John Fogerty](#), of [Creedence Clearwater Revival](#) fame if you don't know him, and she said he was her uncle. She was serious too; either that or a good actress. Anyway, I wonder who I will meet tomorrow?