

What's in a name?

I had accepted a grade 1/2 assignment for today due to the trouble I had earlier in the week getting jobs. It's slightly below my comfort zone because of the 1st grade students. However, had I not taken it I wouldn't have this to write about! Well, it's not much of a topic, but it is a little different. Not much really goes into naming kids these days in Western culture. We choose a name usually because we had a relative with that name, there was a role model with that name (such as in the Bible) or we just like the sound of it. Once upon a time, and still in some cultures names carry meaning. But that's not what this post is about. It's also not about people who try to change names for [special recognition](#).

What it's about is why some parents choose to give their kids names that, well, just don't fit... I once read a story about new guardians who would go to court to get kids' names changed because their parents cursed them with ridiculous names, like the drug-shot parents who named their daughter Cocaina (guess which was their drug of choice?) or the parents who [tried to name their child Friday](#). The name itself may not be ridiculous, but rather given to the wrong gender. I mean, do such parents regret having the "wrong sex" and give them the name they picked out anyway- like the parents who really wanted a boy so when they had a girl they dressed her up like a boy until she was to start school (and were mystified when she refused to put on a dress for her first day of school)? Of course there are some names that go both ways, at least the shortened version like Chris, Alex, Terry, etc. And I am still getting used to **Leslie** and **Cameron** being both male and female names. However, some just don't work. Can you imagine a girl named Matt or Mike? Or a boy named Elizabeth or Jessica? Well, you may have to have some Hispanic blood to understand this one, but a boy in the class I was in today was named [Guadalupe](#). That's right. Named after Mary in the Bible as **Our**

Lady of Guadalupe (well, an [apparition of Mary](#), but I won't split hairs). Apparently a very popular name for girls (click the name for more information). Why?? This is just setting up this boy for future problems with schoolmates. I predict that by the time he is in Junior High he will be going by his middle name, whatever it is, assuming that it too isn't a girl's name. I really hope it isn't for his sake.

Not enough links for you in the above post? Try out [these unusual names on Wikipedia](#). I had forgotten that Nicholas Cage had named his son Kal-El (you know, Superman)!

Wake up sleeping student and get sued?

Apparently parents of a high school student are considering just that after a teacher woke up a student by slapping her hand on the student's desk. According to their claim he suffered hearing loss as his ear was on the desk at the time and the sudden sound ruptured his eardrum. If this is true, then I fully understand the parents' concern, but something doesn't seem quite right here. From the article:

Barry said the boy's ear hurt instantly after Nadeau hit his desk.

"He woke up and immediately felt pain in his ear," Barry said. "I think he was so taken aback that he didn't say anything at the time."

The next day, Vinicios' parents took him to the hospital after he complained of hearing loss and they discovered a bloody fluid on his pillow.

If his eardrum burst as they say, wouldn't he have been in so much pain he would have said *something*? Screamed out in pain? Immediately gone to the nurse? I just don't know...

[Sleepy Student Claims Teacher's Wake-Up Slam Caused Hearing Loss](#)

Drop the candy and put your hands up!

Okay, it wasn't an arrest but apparently an 8th grade student got in trouble for buying a bag of *Skittles* of all things. Not pot, not meth, but Skittles. This boy was suspended, stripped of his title as class vice-president, and uninvited from an honors dinner as a result of this episode. What next, expulsion for running in the hall? I realize this school has a rule banning candy sales (according to the article), but this is just going overboard. Read for yourselves:

[Connecticut 8th-grader suspended for buying Skittles in school](#)

Expert or one-time-struggler as a teacher?

I have often reflected on teaching a particular subject I was good at in school- math. Face it, either you're good at math or you're not- it's just one of those subjects. If you get it then you're well on your way to high grades, but if you don't...

As a great student in math I have struggled to teach it sometimes. It's like, "Why don't you get it? I just showed you how to do it!" Even now, with all this sub experience, I often either go too fast and leave some students struggling or I take too long to teach it as if I'm afraid of going too fast. It's difficult to find the right balance. Okay, to be fair as a sub I don't know the students, so getting the right balance is just not possible, but it doesn't stop me from wondering. Today I subbed in 6th grade, but this kind of goes back to last week too when I was in that 3rd/4th grade class for a few days and only taught math. Then, the teacher wanted one section taught per day if at all possible. Four days, didn't quite finish two sections. Well, three days really since there was no math on the last day.

Today was a little different- she assigned five journal pages out of **two sections**! Well, I guess she didn't really want me to teach it. I wound up just going over a few examples on the board from each section and letting them work, asking questions or work with a partner as needed. I think in this case working with a partner was almost mandatory since I didn't have time to teach full lessons. Did she want it done this way? I'll never know.

This makes me think of a proof that I am slow at teaching math: the University of Chicago math program. This seems to be used *everywhere*. Well, at least in elementary schools. This is a very structured program meant to be taught in about one hour. This includes a game included in most lessons, but I rarely have time for when I teach the program for some reason. It starts off with a "math message," which is a math problem that will lead into the lesson. This is followed by a full-group lesson that often involves some sort of manipulative which aids kinesthetic learners (touch), which believe it or not is most people. True, many can learn by seeing or even by hearing, but touch really makes a difference in many people. A Chinese sage once said after all:

I hear and I forget.

I see and I remember.

I do and I understand.

In any event, following the full-group lesson there are small group, partner, and/or individual activities (one of which is the aforementioned game). I think I need a full 90 minutes to get through all of it sometimes!

Half days

These are the bane of my substitute existence, next to holidays. No, I don't mean the days students get off early but rather days where the teacher take off only half a day. It seems I may have three of these this week unless I can find a full day to take their place (I can cancel jobs in two districts via the web) or find a half day job for the other half of the day. The latter almost never happens. As for the first, it can happen but on this side of spring break with the testing going on it is very uncertain. Yet I keep trying.

One of the half days was today, for the afternoon. At least I got to sleep in, but I depend on this income so I really need to work as much as I can. It was for industrial tech, what used to be called "industrial arts" when I was a kid, and "shop" even earlier than that. Naturally with a sub the kids can't do shop, but many times they are allowed to use computers. See, that is the "tech" part, technology. They could be running some sort of modeling or simulation program, or programming a robotic arm. Today one class was working on ifilm projects. All stuff that didn't exist back in the eighties. We had metals, plastics, and wood. That's it. Now these teachers need to be trained on so much more to do this

job. As for the other class (only two today! :)) they clearly were working on a project, probably woodwork, so they got to do some paperwork today. Oh well.

Just call in sick...

Well, that is just what half the class did today. Literally. The flu is just knocking everybody down for the count. Okay, the class size was only six students being a special education class so half the class was only three students, but that is still very high statistically speaking. Plus, the teacher I was in for was out due to the flu as well. When all was said and done, there were practically two adults per students, and apparently from what I was told the three that were out were the most **ahem** *challenging* students. Apparently it wasn't just this class either. In the afternoon they combined our three students with another class's two students for speech, still less than the full six students of the **one** class! Wow.

As one can imagine this turned out to be a very easy day. So easy that a couple of the assistants just decided to disinfect the room in hopes of avoiding more illness. As for me, I helped a little bit with calendar time and yoga (very low-ability students due to their disabilities) and colored. Yes- I colored some pieces of a game that would be cut out, laminated, and added to the file-folder game collection. I'll tell you, there are days where they just don't pay me enough, but today wasn't one of them.

State of our times

It is really a bit sad when a school feels it cannot post pictures of kids on the internet due to the possibility of something happening to one of the children in the photo. But what happens when a school feels this way but *really* wants to post the pictures anyway? One U.K. school has a stab at an answer... (click the picture for a link to the full story)



Motivation

I am having some motivation problems with this blog- lately I just don't feel like writing about work. It seems like the things I go through are either just too uninteresting to write about when I think about it, or it is similar to something I already wrote. Sometimes I just don't get around to it and am too tired by the time I think about it. These past few days have really all been similar. I really only got to teach math for the last three days, and today we didn't even do that so I didn't do much of anything except help out like a teaching assistant. Not that there's really anything wrong with that but it is rather unexciting to write about. The most tedious part I think was during the morning today, and again at the start of the afternoon when the third graders just played educational games on their laptops (only 4th-6th did testing today, and the other half of the multiage rooms were fourth grade). I of course had to walk around and make *sure* they were playing only educational games. They are not as devious as middle-schoolers, but fun will still win out over education

if left unwatched, even with third graders.

Today was actually a very easy teaching day overall, even for the other teacher. In fact, the only subject actually taught/worked on was reading. The rest of the day was spend on laptops, read-alouds, silent reading, down-time packets, and classroom games. Sub + already messed up schedules due to testing = even even worse schedules. From the last four days, I would say the teacher I was subbing for really owes the other teacher big time for getting sick and leaving her pretty much all of the planning work and team teaching.

Hmm... This was actually going to be very short due to my lack of motivation, but turned out to be quite reasonable in length. Goes to show that once one gets started, the writing can just keep going.

Multiday position!

This morning I was woken up again at about 5:45 after failing to find an assignment before this. This definitely turned out to be a plus. Most sub jobs for me are a day at a time. The longest I have had in the past was five days, but that was the only one that long. This morning I was offered one for four days. Not record-breaking, but still nice as it fills in my week- and no phone ringing before 6AM! It is especially nice as this is testing time and so subs are not needed as much. The test of course blocks out a little more than an hour each morning where I have to do next to nothing as a regular teacher has to administer the test. A couple other lessons are taught by the other 3/4 teacher to a double-size class (the wall between the rooms is a folding wall). In fact, I really only had to teach one lesson today, math, though I don't

expect it to remain like that all week. Unfortunately the kids were quite chatty during math. That, coupled with only 40 minutes to teach an hour lesson means I didn't finish- I'm not sure how the regular teacher expects one lesson to be taught each day with the shorter time slot. Well, I think she's *hoping* for one a day in any event. I expect tomorrow besides math I will be at least doing *something* during reading other than going around keeping kids on task even though I think it's going to be a double-class activity again (though broken down into groups). If this post is a little nonsensical it is because I am running on fumes right now as it were. 5:45AM wakeup + lack of sleep = one tired sub. Signing off for now...

Waiting...

Subbing has traditionally been a waiting game, waiting for that call to come inviting you to take over someone's classroom for a day or sometimes more. There is one district that for some reason last fall seems to have just stopped calling me altogether. Actually, that is not strictly true- the sub for the sub caller (yes, even they have 'em!) actually called me a couple of weeks ago, but the regular caller hasn't called for over two months now. Well, at least I am blessed to work in an age where I can grab jobs off the internet (by the way, I refuse to capitalize this as if "internet" is the name of a town or country). Unfortunately, that doesn't always work so I am left waiting until the morning of for some district to call (yes even the computer systems call) or for a last-minute bout before the day starts to at least find a half-day position on the online systems.

Well, this morning I indeed received a call from one of the districts. Enter password, this middle-school resource teacher

needs a sub, yada-yada. However, when it got to the end and I selected "yes" for the job, the system said, "sorry, we are unable to assign to job- goodbye." Nice- why did you call me then? Another district's system locks the job when calling someone so someone can't select the job on the online system when it is offering it to someone by phone; I guess this one doesn't. Either that or the teacher canceled while I was listening to the instructions. Since I was then awake, I sat down at the computer and looked for a job. Fortunately I found one right away- and one I wouldn't need to be at until after 8:30, so back to bed I went for another hour. As usual, I slept for only half that- I don't know what it is, but I can't get good sleep lately. I constantly wake up and fall back asleep throughout the night, sometimes laying awake or half-awake for a while before going to sleep. It seems I have picked up this problem from one of my parents...