

$$y=mx+b$$



My three day assignment that was cancelled earlier this week would have been at the school I wound up at today. You can say it turned into a one day assignment I suppose. Oddly enough, the teacher I would have subbed for was the “team teacher” in two of the classes. In those classes I of course acted as an assistant, but I did get to teach four classes. I couldn’t let the opportunity pass by and I mentioned the three day assignment to her and she told me she just rescheduled because she didn’t like taking days off in October. I didn’t ask why, but conferences are around this time I think so that’s a possibility.

So the four classes were run pretty much the same way though they were actually two different levels. The regular math classes were working on percent markups and discounts. Given a cost and a percentage, they had to determine the final price. The other two classes were algebra. They were working on graphing equations and determining solutions from the graphs. I actually got a high complement in one of these classes. One of the students told me I taught this better than the regular teacher. I didn’t know what else to say but to just thank him. So... Besides the last class having a couple of characters in it (I expected it, being a class of just eight students, and one of the regular classes as opposed to algebra) it was another pretty good day. First period was one of the two “team teaching” period, so Just watching for the one period and seeing things not in the plans definitely helped here in keeping with the routine though I suppose being eighth grade they wouldn’t have had a tough time adjusting to a different routine if necessary.

It is now the start of a three-day weekend and time to get some rest...

7th to 7

No comments at all on the last blog post? I either posted this story before or I caught all of you on a bad day I guess. Anyway, I moved from 7th grade the other day to two different 2nd grade classes, and I do mean *different* in more ways than the obvious. Yesterday was generally a good day. I unfortunately had no break for specials like PE or music, but even without I didn't have much to complain about. There was an hour at the end of the day for computer lab and research, but though another ran that class I still had to be there. They were researching dinosaurs. Their entire day (well, almost) was actually based on this topic, from books to read for silent reading to centers work to the research at the end of the day. This topic is an early speller's nightmare by the way, with all those crazy names. I think I can spell some of the more common ones like T-Rex, er- I mean tyrannasaurus rex and pterodactyl. Those of course have come with practice. Let me just take a quick look at Wikipedia for some of the more unusual ones... Okay, just looking at [one single classification of dinosaurs](#) I found names like archaeornithomimus, anserimimus, struthiomimus, ornithomimus, pelecanimimus, shenzhousaurus, and harpymimus. Yech- see what I mean?

So again that day went well. A few students had to flip cards (oops, I mean "pull tickets" – small details like what things are called is of utmost importance to these concrete thinkers) but they were pretty well behaved. I wish I could say the same about today's class- some of them were all over the walls (figuratively). I would often have to repeat myself when I told someone to just sit down. Very chatty too. They did not seem to know how to do work with no talking. This is the sort

of class I had when student teaching. The teacher also didn't leave directions for her behavior plan so I had to try to figure out how the one they had, one I was not familiar with, worked. They tried to tell me, but they couldn't agree on the details. I did mention doing things just right did I not? I had one boy who would just complain how I would do it. Needless to say I will not be using this plan if and when I have my own classroom someday.

This class also had no break, but there was a shorter lunch and less "off" (someone else in charge) time. In fact, the only time I had outside the classroom besides lunch was fifteen minutes to check out books in the LMC- they didn't even get recess outside of lunch. It wasn't in the plans, but even if it was they would have lost it. Needless to say between these two things the day felt quite longer than yesterday. Does this tell me I am not able to do it? Not at all. I think I need to come up with my own behavior plan next time rather than conform to the cooperating teacher's plan if I don't like it. That was probably also a mistake- trying to conform with how she ran things, automatically taking a follower (read: teaching assistant) role. Not good when I'm supposed to be training to be a leader. So, should I go back if the college agrees to give me another chance?

Fire! No wait, just that time of the year.

Today was a special day that occurs just once a month. 10AM, first Tuesday of the month- the testing of the disaster sirens all over the area. I've always wondered what if there was a real disaster at this time? No one would believe it. It is

also the season for testing something else. For the past two days I have been lucky enough to work at the two closest schools to me. One elementary, one middle. For the past two days I've been blessed with the classroom disruption known as the fire drill. I was warned of the impending one this week at the first school, and eventually told that Monday was in fact the day, but today at the middle school I didn't have much warning. In fact, I would have had none at all if it weren't for the happenstance of one of the students leaving the room (with permission) to do something, and being told by another student that there would be a fire drill. He came back and told us (there was a teaching assistant there as well). Of course student-to-student information cannot always be trusted when you're talking 7th grade, but we prepared for the possibility anyway. Sure enough, about ten minutes later we were headed out of the building and across the street. I bet that van driver coming up the street was none too happy about having to wait for a few hundred students to cross in front...

Yesterday I was with fourth grade, and had such a good day that, coupled with the clarity of being wide awake from an energy drink imbibed at dinner I was thinking- what if my calling to teach the grades I'm comfortable with was an accurate interpretation after all? I speak of a calling I felt back around ten years ago to teach. I was reading an article about teachers that day when I felt the overwhelming presence of the Holy Spirit on me seeming to tell me "this is what I want of you." After that I started to teach, badly at first due to my lack of experience, 4th grade at my church. A new 4th and 5th grade ministry was formed that same year which I joined and still teach to this day. A couple years after I went back to school to finish a degree. I had come so close to an electronic engineering degree and failed at the very end. This time I would be going to become certified as a teacher. Well, I did very well for most of it, just like with my electronic engineering degree some years earlier, but like

that degree I failed to pass the ultimate test. Back then it was a senior design project. This time it was student teaching. I did an excellent job on my lesson planning, an okay job on teaching the plans, and a horrible job managing the classroom. One of the rooms had over thirty students, but that's no excuse I guess. After that, I cooled my heels and started substituting- the professors at the school felt sorry for me and gave me a degree anyway, calling it success after so much time spent in school, but to this day it hasn't felt like success.

A couple years later, I had an idea that I would get secondary certification (6th-12th) and get certification that way. I would teach science in middle school I thought. Well, after being told by a professor there, who had even filled in as head of the education department for a short time, I was later informed that no, it was a mistake and the policy of no second chances at student teaching still applied, even if I changed from elementary to secondary. I then applied to another school and was accepted, but then once again I was later told that no, it was a mistake and they couldn't take someone who started a teaching program elsewhere. It has now been a year since that decision and a lot of wasted money taking classes to fulfill that secondary degree. Thanks a lot. ☐

This brings me back to today. As I was saying, last night I had some sort of clarity on this and the shortcomings I have thought I had seemed somehow miniscule, and that I could indeed teach reading and writing as well as the things I'm good at- what was I thinking? I am most comfortable with upper elementary so why should I have settled for a secondary degree anyway? I am now seeking confirmation with God that I am ready for this and have His approval and blessing. My mind has been changed so often that I can't be sure on my own that this clarity is true or just caffeine-induced. I do have some other lifestyle changes I need to make, particularly as I am not sleeping well again. I had started Tae-Bo about a month

ago, but then I pulled some leg muscles, followed by severe lower back pain (both are gone now), and finally the flood in the basement where I was working out. I'm still not positive about guys and aerobics, even if it is martial-arts aerobics, but it's better than running or laying out big \$\$ for weight training equipment or a fitness center membership. Hopefully this can help me sleep once I start again.

So... how was today? Well, I had no problems. It was another LD/BD resource position like last week, but the kids were much better behaved than the one job. In fact, talking was the only issue leading me to believe they were strictly LD (learning) issues. I am a little perturbed about the rest of the week though. I had a three day assignment that was cancelled at the last minute. I logged in to the system to confirm it again and it was gone, no call about it no nothing. I called the system as that is where it actually does the cancellations- for some reason it doesn't do them through the web interface- and all I got was a busy signal. That explains the lack of a call I guess- the phone interface was down. I eventually got through and it did tell me the job was cancelled, so now I have to fill those days again. Actually I did find a local 2nd-grade position for tomorrow, so that beats getting up at 6AM (other job) but now I work until 3:30 instead of 1:45 (Wednesdays are early dismissal days in the one district). Well, that's part of being a sub I guess.

First full week, finally

Did I really not post about my teaching for the last week? Well, let's see what I can remember. Monday I worked as a special ed teacher at a junior high. The teacher I subbed for

I remember used to work in the district's therapeutic day school program which is a program for students with particularly strong behavioral problems. They even had large people specifically trained to restrain problem students and bring them to a cooling-off room when required. I actually subbed for him in that position a couple of years ago. These days he has moved to those with lesser, but still behavioral, problems. Much of the day was quite simple with either team teaching (read "sub acts as teaching assistant") or resource periods where students would work on homework. He did have a language arts block at the end of the day though. I did have an assistant to help as I worked with a group at a time so it wasn't too bad. We read a story about grey wolves. The fun began last period, which was a study hall. That's when a lot of the behavior problems came out. No, that's not true- the last group of language arts was a struggle as well. They were pretty much the same students in both cases in any event.

Tuesday I worked in grade 1. And 2. And 3. And 4. And 5. And- no, I'm finished... I was in fact a floater. I took over classes for an hour at a time. I do wish they had organized the meetings a little more in my favor though. I actually had to go from one end of the school to the other end at one point, a few minute walk due to the design of the building when I had to be in the next room right away. Fortunately in that case the kids in the second class had been sent out to recess so the teacher was able to go to her meeting though I had not yet arrived. It was overall an easy day and I was mostly able to talk directly with the teachers before and after meaning no written notes.

Wednesday I was in music. This was actually the most challenging assignment. The kids in many of the classes were very talkative. Grades were mixed here too of course, from second to sixth (not inclusive- I had no third graders). The older ones were the most challenging. We did some music games the teacher had left, including instrument bingo (a standard)

and a game where they formed musical symbols on the ground with their bodies. *That* one was fun.

Thursday- let me look it up. Ah yes, 5th grade. Pretty normal though I had one very challenging boy in that class. I'm not the only one who had problems with him either- I overheard a conversation in the lounge about him. Apparently when we switched for math (I had the advanced class and did pan balance problems with them- similar to hands on equations I think I mentioned once before) he refused to do any work at all. Well, with me he worked slowly but he did work. He got distracted very easily though. In the end he wasn't as bad as some students I have had, but still a challenge nonetheless.

Friday I was in another special ed classroom. The three sixth graders- wow. Next to ELL a couple of years ago they were the most troublesome. It was at this same school by the way... One of the sixth grades is apparently on ADHD medication. His parents I'm told are quite good at making sure he comes to school ready and medicated. Guess which day they forgot? Yep. Once he had his meds after lunch he was a pleasure to work with. Of the other two one was got very easily distracted and the other tended to work on only what he wanted to work on and was quite belligerent toward another student. Two of the three finished their science assignment by the end of the day (worked on during no less than three periods...) and one even finished his math assignment. There was one seventh grader who mostly worked independently and an eighth grader who wasn't a problem when working, but he got some bad family news in the middle of the day and he was pretty much done working at that point.

Well, that was how my week went. Now who would like to join me in subbing? Come on, there must be one of you... ☐

And your job for this week is...

Most elementary classrooms share a common theme. Besides behavior boards, displayed classwork, televisions, etc. there are those boards that show who has what jobs for the week. I have seen job boards with only a few jobs listed and most students on deck for another week and I have seen job boards where every student in the room has a job. Once the common jobs like lunch basket, paper passer, mailman/messenger, and librarian are filled the teacher has to start getting creative with jobs like watering the plants, policing the floor, watching the clock (so the teacher doesn't go into that valuable recess time of course), massage the teacher, window... wait, what? Back up there- massage the teacher?? Okay, I admit I have not seen this one myself but apparently a Florida third-grade teacher had this job on her board. I say *had* as not only does the job not exist anymore in that classroom but neither does the teacher. Needless to say, when the parents found out about this one some were quite upset. Fifty years ago everyone might have just gotten a laugh out of it but in today's climate of teachers, erm, getting just a bit *too close* to their students (and going to prison for it) it is understandable that parents wouldn't like this. The article makes it clear there was nothing like that sort of hanky-panky going on, but the district decided to let the teacher go for her inappropriateness. Well, we can all guess that's why she was fired- the school just said it was a "personnel matter." Anyway, read the article here:

[Teacher Fired After Asking Her Students For Massages](#)

PS. I am now waiting for this sort of job to show up in the

classrooms I sub in- would be nice...

Mine is smaller than yours!

Wait- that's not quite how the saying goes of two boys comparing sizes, is it? Well, in second grade apparently that is quite the appropriate comparison for comparing the lengths of their pencils. Literally speaking of course- how can you even think...! □ Oh, never mind. Anyway, the lower grades can prove to be quite interesting as the way a small child thinks is so alien to adults. In the case I mentioned, two boys were in competition to see who could use the shortest stub of a pencil. The clear winner was the one who sharpened his pencil so much only the metal eraser band was left with only a small point at the other end. The next day, there was a boy who would break the point on his pencil on purpose and just use the broken tip. I guess that actually beats the stub from the day before. Including last Wednesday, I kind of just worked my way down the hall from one second grade room to the next. Each room had its own challenges and own interesting characters.

Umm, 'scuse me a minute while I close my window. A skunk just walked by... There. Whew. Where was I? Oh- characters. The latest room had a boy who liked to fight and apparently did so at recess time yesterday. He was supposed to spend lunch with the principal today, but he didn't show up. Did his mom keep him home? There was also the hearing-impaired girl who required me to wear a microphone. I had to try to remember to take it off when I wasn't talking to the whole class or to her. For some reason I thought it would be a good idea to stuff it in my shirt pocket when not in use. Bad idea of course. Instead of getting me talking to others, she got the

scratching of the microphone against the material of my shirt. She never told me. Only during the afternoon today did she tell her one-on-one assistant who told me. Apparently Pokemon is still in fashion, as one boy showed me his small book of cards he would take with him to lunch. And you already read about the pencil boys.

Of course as is normal for primary grades, there was the ever-present "this is how we do things and so you'd better get it exactly right." Okay, it wasn't that bad but small children really aren't as flexible as older ones when it comes to routine. speaking of routine, it was nice how the teachers worked together and had their classes doing a lot of the same things. Some of the stuff I got to teach more than one class, making it easier for the second since I already knew what I was doing. All-in-all, it really wasn't that bad working the five days with second grade. Experience normally has me dreading multiple primary days as so much extra focus is required compared to the older ones, but this wasn't bad at all, perhaps because the teachers were still there (doing testing) and checked in from time to time taking some of the pressure off. I don't know. Tomorrow will be a little different in any event. I have two half-days for music, but I might drop the afternoon because there's a job fair going on at that time that I should attend.

EDIT: I forgot to mention the "does this look like the face of a guilty person" look of innocence one of the boys gave me when I asked him to change his card (behavior system). It reminded me of when a sixth-grader tried this a couple of years ago with another teacher. It failed then too- the teacher just said (a little sarcastically), "aww- how cute" then gave him his punishment anyway.

Avast, ye scurvy dogs!

On this official [International Talk Like a Pirate Day](#), I forgot one thing while subbing- I forgot to talk like a pirate. Despite my reminder to myself. I think the kids would have enjoyed it. Oh, well. Cleanup continues here on the home flood front- I finally ripped up the carpet at the foot of the stairs which has not dried since getting flooded. The other day I also discovered that the dryer did not in fact survive the sump-pump failure. It started once for a test run, but then once I put a load of clothes in suddenly the dryer wouldn't keep going once the start button was released. Later that evening, I came down to an odd smell, which after looking up the problem was probably a fried heat control board which is \$130. Sigh. At least the washer works so I only have to dry at the laundromat for now.

Today completed a week (well, $3\frac{1}{2}$ days) of elementary subbing. Up until this week it was all middle school. Two days ago I showed up at a classroom expecting 4th/5th and it turned out to be 2nd. The teacher changed grades this year and her info was not updated I guess. I'm mad at myself about that day by the way. I overheard something from one of the kids and I said to myself, "blog moment." Now I can't remember what it was. Next time I will write it down I think. Anyway, an interesting thing happened that day. I walked in on a meeting- yes, even the elementary teachers sometimes have team meetings- they must time their specials to coincide- and one of the teachers mentioned that I subbed for her last year and the kids loved me, asking for me to sub again. And since the students were being tested, the whole reason a sub was needed in the first place in this case, and that teacher has two days scheduled *next* week to do the same, she took the opportunity to ask if I was available. Another teacher asked the same. One will be testing Monday and Tuesday, the other Wednesday and Thursday. So... long story short [too late] I have four

days in second grade next week. Will I survive? Well, you'll have to tune into the blog to find out. ☐

So... This brings me to yesterday, a half day of PE. Two mentally impaired classes where I really just helped the assistants work with the kids, and three 4th or 5th grade classes where the kids got to toss the pigskin around, preparing for the passing part of a pass, punt, and kick contest some time in the future, apparently sponsored by the NFL. A few of the 5th graders really had good arms- could throw pretty far.

Today was a mix. Between morning and afternoon I had 3rd-6th grade (one 3rd/4th multiage class, one 5th/6th multiage. They were at two different schools too, meaning I had to spend half my lunch leaving one school, travelling, and checking in at the other school. Fortunately the plans at the second school were pretty easy so I was able to go over them quickly. Nothing too special. A lot of worksheets in the morning and a lot of supervising while students read or wrote in the afternoon. Actually, scratch that- there was reading with a group for 45 minutes and during their independent reading time I did book conferences with a few kids so I did get to do some actual work beyond classroom management. Speaking of which, this was a slightly tough crowd to keep under control. Nothing like the ELL fiasco a couple of years back, mind you, but challenging just the same. Fortunately I did have help in the form of an assisatnt and a high-school helper. You know, why didn't I ever have the opportunity to go back to elementary school when I was in high school? It would have been fun I think, and a break from real schoolwork, though I suppose this high-schooler will have to write up her experience, or keeps some sort of log. That could take the fun out of it I expect.

9/11/01

We all know what that date represents. Well, most of us do. As I mentioned a couple of posts ago I worked with ELL students today. One student actually didn't know about what happened seven years ago as he just came to this country less than a year ago. I suspect there were others as well. Needless to say, he had a little trouble answering the journal question, "What happened on September 11, 2001?"

Believe it or not, I have been subbing for a few years but this is the first year that the school I was at had a big thing going for September 11. The morning started with the entire school crowding around the flagpole. No, it wasn't a "see you at the pole" event, though I would wish it would get these kinds of crowds. If more kids were followers of Jesus there would be so much less trouble at our schools. Back to the topic, the principal called out everyone to observe the all-too-recent holiday remembering what happened those seven years ago. There was the flag raising of course, a speech by the principal, and some students read poems they wrote. The principal made himself heard, but they really needed some amplification for the kids- I wasn't able to understand, or in some cases even hear a single poem.

After that, everyone went in and first period started (late). The 9/11 theme continued with the aforementioned journal question, and then we saw an interactive CDROM. Apparently the Chicago Tribune gave away these CDs back in 2002 commemorating the one-year anniversary. It provided archival footage of ten days of the Tribune headlines following the destruction with some commentary and a Flash intro to start. I was hoping to provide a download link for this, but I guess after six years it's either off the map or I didn't look hard

enough. Actually, I did find a torrent (peer-to-peer download) with the title (*When Evil Struck America*) but there didn't appear to be any seeds, meaning it couldn't be downloaded. I'll check Usenet in a bit, but I'm not holding my breath. To the students' credit, they really were engaged and asking questions. A few periods later I was helping in the 7th grade social studies classroom, and the teacher did his own presentation on 9/11. He chose some really thought-provoking pictures, including one building closeup where people could be seen to the side falling because they had jumped from the towers, perhaps hoping for a better outcome than death by fire or smoke inhalation.

These were the only periods I had dealing with this topic, but it seemed like half the day. The rest of the day had typical lessons. I either taught, helped out, or led a review. I could say more on that, but I think I will leave this post focusing more on 9/11. Until tomorrow.

EDIT: I may not be able to give you the Tribune CD, but the History Channel has it's own interactive media: [102 Minutes that Changed America](#)



(Not my picture. For more pictures like this, [CLICK HERE](#))

Busy busy

With a new school year comes not just employment but things going on at my church as well. Okay, I haven't been *that* busy, but compared to just a week ago it seems like it. Also, I have been catching up on my internet reading since I was down for much of last week. It still goes down daily, but

they tell me I have a perfect connection and it must be the work they're doing in the area. I can only hope it goes away after awhile proving them right, otherwise I'll be stuck since they'll never find anything with my "perfect" connection.

Monday I took a half-day job, but when I got there I found out the secretary put a teacher's request in for the wrong day. They then proceeded to remove the assignment from my job list so I can only hope I'll get some sort of compensation for it, but if not I least I can have the satisfaction of working only four periods today and getting a full day's pay for it (the norm for middle school is six periods). The teacher came in to work and decided he was too ill to work so I picked up the late assignment. I did not work first period as a result. Then I found out the teacher only has five periods, helping out in the office a 6th period. That is not normal and they didn't have me do it, though I did ask about it. To top it off, the teacher has a student teacher so he did most of the work. Cool.

Yesterday was an easy day too, though when I got there I was a little concerned as the teacher didn't leave any lesson plans. Fortunately I only had to teach one class. The rest were either co-teach classes (you know what that means- the other teacher does the teaching and I help as an assistant) or resource/study hall. As it turned out the one class they were just working out of a packet, so I just taught the next page of the packet and had them start their homework in class. Of course when I got home I found an email outlining the plans- apparently the system allows for a teacher to upload the plans to the sub-system and have them emailed to the sub. Having never had this happen before, I never realized it could do this so I never bothered to check my email before heading to work. Fortunately for me I had pretty much followed the plans without realizing it! Whew...

Besides work I had my usual small group Monday night and tonight I had rehearsals for both children's drama, which

starts up again this weekend, and choir. Since they overlapped, I had to miss a little bit of each. I just wish it hadn't been the first rehearsal as that is one that people shouldn't miss, even in part. Well, that's how it goes I guess. I have two more choir rehearsals next week and will have to miss small group as a result but they understand about that- it only happens a few times a year. I'll just have to make sure they are set on song lyrics as that's kind of my job- I usually set up a couple of powerpoints and bring my computer in. That's one of the nice things about this new computer. I guess I will just have to print something up and drop them off- I'll be in the same building after all. Someone else provides the music by the way in case you're wondering. My small group starts off each week with a couple of worship songs.

Well, that's it for now. Time to get ready for some sleep. It's going to be another early day tomorrow.

First full day of the year!

And only day this week, partly thanks to my connection issues which are unfortunately still ongoing. I had no internet at all for yesterday afternoon and evening, while today it's been intermittent. I wonder if the signal is now too powerful if that's possible? I mean, it was going through a cable that was chewed or worn to the center wire, so it's possible that in the past they have had to increase it to compensate (the cable didn't get that way overnight after all) and now that it's fixed, the signal may be too strong. Just throwing a guess out which is probably completely off. The tech who was here was unable to measure it as his portable reader needed recharging. Since the connection was up and I was getting

nice speeds (around 19000kbps on speakeasy.net), he just let it go.

Still in special ed on Friday, but not due to meetings this time. Apparently the teacher had a bad case of bronchitis on Thursday so he wisely opted to take Friday off. It was actually a rather easy day. Four classes (well, three really-one was a typical two-period-long language arts class) were team teaching, meaning that a sub just takes the role of a teaching assistant while the other teacher takes over the teaching part. The other two classes were resource periods. I just gave them a topic to write about in their journals and once finished they just worked on homework. There was also a teaching assistant in these classes (a sub too, by the way) so as you can imagine it was a pretty light day. Next Thursday and Friday I have a job lined up for ELL in another district. This is a teacher I refused to work for last year or most of the year before. I am hoping things have changed since most of the students from that problem class have gone on to high school. I will let you know how it goes, hopefully with other stories throughout the week.