

# Graduation part 3

Just kidding. Thursday I subbed at a middle school again, and eighth grade did have graduation rehearsal most of the day. Fortunate for me, I subbed for seventh grade. The end of year had already come for three of the districts I sub in, but this one district actually finishes next week with a half-day Thursday and a one-hour day Friday. I currently have an assignment for Tuesday, but I am not sure if it will last. I didn't get along well with one of the TAs in that class and even got a call from the principal on the day, but I have a good record with that school so he recognized it as an anomaly. I did skip out on an assignment with this teacher since, but being the end of the year with only one district still in school I can't be too fussy.

So, back to this week, I subbed Thursday for a BD/LD teacher. The classes I had were two small-group reading classes and two tutorials. There were two other classes, but I acted more as an assistant in those. It was mostly self-work, but one class was end-of-year details, i.e. turning in books. Yippee.

Friday was a half-day with the class I was with Wednesday. Good for me as I left my lunch in his fridge... ☐ He never noticed, and I grabbed it Friday. Not much to do here- silent reading, correcting homework, math test, self-science review... The teacher is going to be out all day Monday too. Too bad for me someone else has that assignment.

Sweltering heat those last couple of days I will tell you. With temps in the high 80s (with high humidity!) and no AC in the schools we were all sweating, even with fans going. This district is finally entering the latter half of the 20th century starting next year, but that didn't help much those two days, or the at least one day I will be working next week. Can I wear shorts please?

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# Three days, three meetings

No, not *that* kind of meeting. I mean meeting three students from my church. I should add that none of them were in my class but rather I sort of just ran into them. Two of them approached me, and for the other I recognized his name and approached him. It started with graduation rehearsal the other day. They were going through the names and I heard his. I recognized it immediately. After all, I was his AWANA leader one year in addition to the 4th/5th grade ministry. Okay, that doesn't entirely mean anything as I didn't remember another such student right away who is one year younger than him and helps out in the ministry. Anyway, once I heard it I looked out for him and he was sitting in one of my (well, the teacher I was subbing for anyway) rows. I talked to him a little. I asked about his sister too who is two years younger. Now, sad to say I don't remember a lot of the girls but his sister... let's just say I had a reason to remember her. Something she will grow out of if she hasn't already.

The next meeting was the next day when I subbed for a librarian, who also helped out in the computer lab. There were four classes to come in that day, pared down to three when one of the teachers canceled. I sorted books when I wasn't helping students at the computers. Now aren't you glad I didn't actually write about this assignment yesterday? The three of you who still read this blog would have gone down to zero! ☐ So, in the afternoon a third grader asked me if I played the doctor in the drama at church. Of course I told her I did, and not only that, but I would see her in fourth grade this weekend, even though she will still be in third grade for another week at school.

Finally, just today I ran into yet another one. She was in

one of the four fifth grade classes I was not subbing in (five total at that school! ☐ ). She saw me in the hall and asked if I worked in 4th/5th grade at my church. When I said yes, I of course told her I *wouldn't* be seeing her there this weekend since she is no longer a fifth grader there, but a part of the junior high ministry. She was a little disappointed in this- I know I would, knowing I would have to attend regular worship from then on! True, now I willingly go and enjoy the service but I know at age eleven I wouldn't and didn't when I served as an acolyte once in awhile at the church I grew up in. And that was only an hour-long service. At my church now the service is half again as long.

Three students in three days- who would have guessed? Of course this doesn't beat the three students in one **day** a month ago, but still. As for my day today, as I said it was fifth grade. I corrected work with them, watched over their work on some projects in the morning, did some teaching in the afternoon, etc. The principal and I watched a few students play *Rock Band* in music. They were pretty good. Then he came and watched *me* teach science. About a topic I knew little about (cold/warm fronts, high/low pressure zones). Sigh. I hope he wasn't too disappointed, but then I'm sure he understands a sub will not necessarily be an expert in anything taught during the day. The students were pretty good. A few had their minds on other things during silent reading, but hey, summer's almost here.

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## What? Again?

If one awards ceremony wasn't enough, the school I was at today had its own awards show. Knowing that elementary students are far more impatient than older ones, this ceremony

was much shorter fortunately. **And** I got to sit down... Actually, the entire thing was one hour, but the presentations were only about 20 minutes. The rest of the time was raffling off various prizes. The entire event was based on reading. The class I subbed for, a fifth grade class, actually came out on top with more than 1600 books read. At least I *think* it was the number of books. But they also mentioned last month, and that is a huge number for just one month, even among 25 students. If it was for the entire year, then yes, 1600+ books. Anyway, the kids also received raffle tickets based on the number of "miles" they went. Come to think of it, it would have to be books, and therefore over the entire year. Or, if in a month, then I would guess a book carries a certain number of points like in the accelerated reader program found at many schools. Yes, that could be it. Anyway, each student in my class had anywhere from 50 to over a hundred of these miles, earning them two to four tickets. There were a lot of prizes, so that means a lot of chances to win. Some kids won more than once. I was holding a ticket for an absent student. Unfortunately, she didn't win at all.

After the assembly, the weather which had been rainy with a tornado watch all day had cleared up and the sun came out and dried the blacktop, so there was a 5th grade versus teachers kickball game. Yes, I got to play... ☐ After missing an easy catch, I did manage to score a few runs on our turns up to bat. So, it was a fun end of the day.

What? You want to know about the rest of the day, before the awards? Well, it was supposed to be a field day, meaning play time outside with special events. Remember the weather I mentioned above? Yeah, no field day. ☐ So, they did PE and music at the start of the day (yes! breaktime...) followed by some writing, and finally math games in the computer lab. I got a chance to try a game they loved called Lemonade Stand. I used to play a game by this name back when I was in school, only that game was for the Apple ][ instead of Java in

the web browser. Oops, did I just date myself? ☐ So, after that came lunch and free pizza. Not the best, but I doubt the kids cared. ☐ Yes, I had some too. This was supposed to be a part of the field day, but unlike field day they couldn't postpone the pizzas, so when they have their field day next Monday they will have to do their lunches the ordinary way.

Crazy days at the end of the year, I'll tell ya. If I manage to find work next week I'm sure I'll have some more interesting tales.

EDIT: Why don't all the smileys/emoticons render? Oh, well. Editing once got **one** of the four to work in any event.

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## Well, that's all she wrote...

...for the 5th graders in children's ministry that is. What? Did you think I meant I was done with this blog? Today the 5th graders made their exit from children's ministry. In a couple of weeks they will officially enter student ministries as junior high students. Being Memorial Day weekend didn't help though as there were a few who didn't make it due to traveling, though fortunately not too many. The Junior high pastor (I think? I don't remember the other one leaving) came in with a couple other leaders and spoke with them about the welcome night, things to expect in junior high, etc. The kids were prayed over and given certificates- a sort of graduation I guess. Of course, some won't really be in junior high/middle school if they go to a public school in the area where 6th grade is still elementary, but at the church 6th grade is junior high even for them.

So, kids I have been working with for the last two years are

now gone and in two weeks the third grade moves up to take their place. They should recognize me though, at least Saturday night kids, as I have been in the kid's drama. This is supposed to be the time then to heavily advertise camp, but the early bird discount will be over by then as camp is one short month away, and unless things change significantly, yours truly will be joining them for the week. I have said before that that one week last year was very powerful for me spiritually, and I hope it will be the same for me this year- and for whoever will be in my cabin this time around.

Going back to drama, the headline applies here as well. It is done for the season, not to start again until next fall with a new theme. My usual exit line, to tell the audience to be sure to tune in next week, reflected this as well, instead telling them to be sure to trust Jesus since He's the only one who can make us super human. I also added a line for the third graders- that they would see me ("someone who looks like me") in two weeks. Heh, heh... So at the end, we added cast bows, and on reflection, I should have walked over to the puppet as well, since the puppeteer couldn't very well step out and take a bow too. Oh, well.

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## **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 PTO provides food all week for the teachers. Well, I certainly wouldn't want to offend the PTO 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 the 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.

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## Miscommunication

Well, I thought I was teaching at church today, but I found out otherwise- right before I was going to teach. As the kids sang worship songs, I went into an adjoining room to look over the lesson again. When I came out, the family pastor was there with his Bible ready to teach. Oh well. I was actually going to ask him last night, but I talked to another teacher who said he saw on the email the ones who would teach this weekend and he thought my name was on it- also that the email said that this month would be the same schedule as last month. So I decided not to bother John. It looks like I should have bothered him after all. Plus when I talked to him afterward I think I may have sounded like I was shifting the blame to that other teacher I talked to when in fact it was me who decided not to talk to the one I should have. I hope I'm just being critical of myself. Anyway, one of the kids I saw earlier this week made it to church, but the other one didn't. Oh well, I hope he shows up next week while I still remember his name. ☐

Well, perusing Worthyboards I encountered this Godtube video I thought I would share. It's about fitting into church. Just so you're prepared , it was in their humor forum...

[godtube][https://www.godtube.com/view\\_video.php?viewkey=a7bedeb99312cc5d7f4e](https://www.godtube.com/view_video.php?viewkey=a7bedeb99312cc5d7f4e)[/godtube]

I also learned of another video site while looking for a teaching example- it is called [Teachertube](#)! Needless to say, I will be looking through some of these videos, hopefully to post about here!

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# Memory not as sharp as it used to be?

Memory for remembering scripts that is. We all know about my memory for names and faces by now. Memorizing scripts used to be a breeze, but now I just can't seem to get it right. I had two weeks this time, and it was better, but I still changed a few of my lines because I couldn't quite remember them. I know part of this is actual rehearsal time- we seem to be able to run through it an average of 1.5 times before the performance- but even with this handicap I feel I had a better handle on the memorization at the beginning of the year.

Today we also had a crisis getting props together. There was supposed to be a squirt gun, for example, but I had to improvise by using a flashlight instead (cool flashlight by the way, in the shape of a cordless drill so I think it worked). Also I had to make a backpack have *some* semblance of a rocket jet pack using some printed graphics and rolled-up paper tubes. Of course the tape on this and another prop failed. I will have to bring duct tape for the two groups tomorrow.

And now, I have to study the lesson for tomorrow's 4th/5th grade class- it is my turn to teach again, and this time I have more than a half-hour notice so it needs to sound like it. ☐

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# The joy of videos

Many times when a teacher's absence is planned he or she will plan something even the most brainless substitute can handle. Often this is a test or book assignment. Other times, like today, it's a video. Actually yesterday I showed a video in 5th grade, but that was only one half hour out of the entire day, so that doesn't count. You see, I am talking about middle school with its repeated lessons throughout the day. This is where videos can turn the most brainy into the one of those most brainless by the end of the day. Since it was social studies (not language arts as I said yesterday) the same lesson plan was done six times. That is six times showing the movie [Shenandoah](#), or at least the first 35 minutes of it. This movie stars the late [James Stewart](#) as a farmer and father of six boys and a girl in 1864 Virginia, during the Civil War (oxymoron: nothing civil about *that* war). His wife had died sixteen years ago and so he raised his family on his own. Though he is Virginian he is staunchly opposed to slavery, and will not support the war in any way, shape, or form. The part I saw has him at odds with a soldier trying to recruit his boys, a man who wants to buy a mule from him and pay him in Confederate dollars, and a buyer for the army who wants to buy or confiscate his horses for the army. Later on I understand his youngest gets kidnapped by one of the armies, but I didn't get that far yet. So thanks to this class, I now have to find the movie and watch the last hour fifteen of it. Just one time through though- six was a bit much ☐ .

At least this time the video was actually interesting. Previous videos in middle school included Al Gore's propagandistic global warming documentary and a 7th grade sex-ed film. Both made me feel dirty afterward.

Also interesting to note was today was another 5th grade tour day. It included 5th-graders from the school I was at the other day. The ones I had met were pleasantly surprised to

see me. One of the previous days this happened too with a different school I had subbed at. It's great to see their faces light up in recognition. Though it unfortunately reminds me of a time last year when I ran into a sixth-grader at a store who recognized me from a couple weeks before. I say unfortunately because he was so disappointed when I didn't recognize him. Names and faces have always been a weakness of mine, and this was exacerbated by memories of all the students I had seen since then pushing out memories from two weeks ago.

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## Bored

One thing about my life is that I don't easily form relational ties, as in friends. This does make it easier to live on a substitute teacher salary since I don't go to social events, but it does make for a boring life. I have strong ties with my church, particularly children's ministry, but outside of that I don't do much. I occasionally visit with friends I have made, particularly those now in Ohio, but making new friends? Really just acquaintances I only see at church and usually nowhere else. Is it any surprise then that I am still unmarried? Anyway, when I'm not teaching I am usually on the internet or watching TV. Tonight I came home, surfed the net, watched a few episodes of [Everybody Hates Chris](#), a hilarious weekly comedy loosely based on the teenage life of Chris Rock, and am using the internet again to write this. Unfortunately this is how just about every night looks. I have filled nights in the past with more schooling and musical theatre, but it has been awhile since either one so now I am just reflecting. I pray to meet someone I could eventually call my wife, but that requires social work on my part which just doesn't seem to happen. I really should make sure to get out tomorrow night to singles group at my church. It is a prayer

and worship night, but it is followed by fellowship. Unfortunately I am in my mid-thirties and still socially-challenged. I often say really stupid things among people I don't know (and sometimes with people I do!). Also, after this month the singles ministry is breaking for a month to revamp the ministry somehow. I do know I filled out a questionnaire on this about a month ago so I guess this shouldn't come as a surprise. Well, enough about this.

Today I had 5th grade again, only this time it was an ELL (English language learner) class. Mostly Hispanic, but other nationalities were represented as well. This was at a school where I have had problems before, so I wasn't expecting it to go as well as in my home district, though I tried to not act as if that were true. Expectations are important. I don't know if this is a true story or not, but in one of my classes in college we learned about a new teacher who was hired to teach a class, and one of the first things she noticed were numbers by their names. These numbers were in the lower to mid 100's, but all starting somewhat above 100 (120 maybe? I don't remember). She assumed these to be IQs of the students, so knowing that smart kids would easily get bored with a standard curriculum she prepared a challenging and engaging curriculum which over the length of the school year tremendously grew her students. She ended up with a very successful class with top grades. After it was over her principal (I think) asked her how she was so successful and she pointed out to him the IQ numbers for the students which made her try hard to keep them challenged so they would better learn. To this the principal replied that he was very happy with her teaching, but those were their locker numbers not their IQs.

Anyway, the day actually did not go as badly as I had feared. Sure, there were a few incidents involving a desk falling on the floor and a couple of boys getting hurt by slapping and punching each other, and also some strong-willed kids, but

they did their work and they learned. In the end it wasn't a case where I just wanted to be done with it like some days.

Tomorrow: 7th grade language arts

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## Preparing students for middle school?

When subbing for a regular classroom teacher in an elementary school one would expect to have the same class for at least *most* of the day, granting of course switching for math which is common in the intermediate grades. Aside from the start of the day and a very short time in the morning for snack, I did not have the same class until after 2:30 PM! They had a special in the morning so that accounted for part of it, but then they came back, had snack time, and left just 15 minutes later to go to another classroom for science while another class came in for social studies. Following that was math, which of course all four 5th grade classes mixed up according to ability which as mentioned is pretty standard. After lunch they came up, I took afternoon attendance, and then they split for reading- and I don't mean a few students left for resource while the majority stayed. I mean just the opposite: most left while only a few stayed. The students were doing a [Roald Dahl](#) unit and the students who came in were reading [The BFG](#). Other classes were reading different books. Finally, after reading the class came back together again... and promptly left for recess. **Finally** I had the class together, working together for language arts. I don't know why I bothered making a seating chart when I came in. ☐

I have heard of preparing students for middle school, but I

have never seen it to this extent. The closest I had seen before was a school where they actually had a set of lockers which the fifth-graders would take turns using to practice for middle school, but even there I don't think they switched classes so much. I know I never did when I was in fifth grade. At least I don't remember doing so aside from specials. But that was the early eighties we're talking about, somewhat removed from today's teaching methods.

By the way, [The BFG](#) reading assignment included making a comic strip based on the chapters they read. So, to make a connection here I will give you a couple of links for your reading enjoyment. Of course since this blog is primarily about education these won't be your regular comics.com (hah! You thought I would give [a link](#), not just the name! Uh, whoops... ☹ ) newspaper comics. On both sites they have links to purchase their 'toons, but they are free to view on the web so you don't need to bother. Well, enjoy!

[Cartoons by Randy Glasbergen](#)

[EDUCATION CARTOONS](#)