

Time to close this blog?

Seeing that today is the one month anniversary of my last blog post about my life, that is a valid question. The filler is interesting, but what about my two jobs, one of which was once the emphasis of this blog? This week was actually a milestone for my new job. For the first time my commission exceeds the \$50/day they have been paying me since the start of training last June. It's still not much, but the job promises to pay more eventually. And what about the camera training the owners have asked me to take charge of? One of them has plugged me as the national camera trainer to one of the clients after they noticed my pictures are pretty good. Great- a standard to live up to! ☐ .I still wonder how much I will be paid for this training whenever it happens.

At the moment I am subbing, or trying to, for two full days a week plus mornings five days every two weeks (every other week I go to two places on Friday so I can't sub that day). I am signed up in three districts this year but so far have only worked in two. What? Yes I did say two before, but then the third sent me a welcome note without my having signed up again so I stuck with it. Since they were the source of some of my jobs so far, it looks like I made the right choice there. I have subbed for one (half) day of middle school so far- the rest have been in elementary schools. I actually took a bilingual first grade job- something I try to avoid during the main part of the year. I also just took a job for a kindergarten morning Monday at the very school I went to for K through most of 2. Oddly enough, while I can remember the names of all my other elementary teachers, I can't for this school. I wonder if I will be in the same classroom I was in for my own kindergarten? I wonder if I will even recognize anything at the school. I am pretty sure I took no assignments there last year.

Let's see what I can say about the jobs I've taken so far.

The first-grade bilingual class was a little rough as the plans the teacher left were not very detailed, often requiring me or one of the assistants who were in and out of the room throughout the day to find the required materials. The kids were also not very good listeners, but whether that was because of limited English skills or other reasons I couldn't say. Another couple of days I was in a position where there were *no* plans. These were for special-ed teachers who didn't even have set schedules yet being the beginning of the year so I ended up helping out in different classrooms throughout the day. I wouldn't be the least bit surprised if I found out that they came in the next day and said, "I had a sub?" I don't think I was expected... The junior high job was a teacher who had both 7th and 8th grade classes, and all I did was supervise as they used computers to work on projects. I was worried when not just my classes, but others as well used the laptops throughout the morning with little time to charge them, but according to one teacher the batteries actually hold out for some six hours or so, something I have never heard of in laptops. My own computer lasts for three or less, but with its specs I am not surprised.

So why have I not been keeping up on my friend's blogs even if I couldn't be bothered to update my own? I don't know. If you want refrain from ~~posting~~ commenting in return I will understand.

Oh, the irony

Last weekend I picked up a job in hometown district for first grade. In fact, it was the school nearest my home. Later, a job in supersized district appears for a resource teacher (they call it by a different name, but that's what the job is-

for those students who need the extra boost). It was of course much further so why would I want to change over to this one? Yet, for some reason I did. Probably because I hadn't worked in that district for a month thanks to them canceling most of the jobs I've taken in recent days. Yes, the expected one included. That actually lasted an entire week believe it or not. I guess no one bothered to check and see that a mere 90-day (noncertified) sub had their three-week assignment. We're the ones who get the unwanted/last minute scraps at the table. Did you know 120-day (certified) subs in this state can work more than 120 days? They have to get a waiver from the state to do it, but for some reason they get it. There was one year the state said no, but with some finagling they managed to get it back for the next year. For the end of that one year, jobs were easier for me to come by. So back to the story, I did change the job. 1st grade is a little below my comfort zone anyway, as I have mentioned. So Monday I arrived and guess what? They told me I was needed in first grade at the start of the day because another sub was going to be late! Sigh. It happened to take away my only break that day outside of a 45-minute lunch (the teacher didn't have any students for nearly the first hour, after that it was one group of students to the next. Actually, they offered to let me stay in first grade and bump the other sub to my assignment. After having worked in this class for the last hour I thanked them for the offer but moved on. And, the other teacher worked with older kids.

The first grade irony continued on Wednesday. I subbed for elementary PE where we played hockey tag all day, a combination of the two games in the name. The "it" players are armed with hockey sticks and they try to hit other players with yarn balls. Depending on the rules the players hit could be out or become "it" as the stick is handed over. The morning was all 4th-6th grades, most of whom knew what they were doing. The afternoon had four groups, one 4th grade, one 2nd grade, and two 1st grade. So, back to first grade for

another hour □ Not only that, but one of the classes, probably the roughest group all day, was a class I had subbed in for a couple of days last year. Several older students had asked if they could help me during their lunch, and this was the class they would have helped with had I said yes. I should have said yes. Oh, well.

In case you're wondering, Tuesday was pretty much a repeat of IT in hometown district, same school as last week. The 6th graders were working on house floor plans instead of enlarging cartoons, and the 7th and 8th graders were still doing modules like last time. Nothing much to say.

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 heals 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.

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...

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, 3½ 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 assistant 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.

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! ☐

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](#)

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. ☐

Back to drama

It was a little exhilarating to get back to the children's drama this weekend. We had been off for over a month, partly due to Easter. So this weekend we were back with a vengeance, err- three of us were. I guess the other two were still on spring break or something. Fortunately the head director, I guess I can call him, was there with his son who plays one of the roles on Sunday morning (this is Saturday night I'm talking about), though unfortunately not one of the characters who was needed. Young as he is (4th grade!) he happily brought out a script and filled in. No, he couldn't be expected to memorize it in a half hour. The other character was a puppet, so another drama regular easily filled in, no memorization even required for that role.

I play sort of a clumsy, bumbling, absent-minded TV scientist in the spirit (but not the intelligence) of [Christopher](#)

[Lloyd's](#) Doc Brown character from [Back to the Future](#). There are two assistants played by kids, one an airhead-ish lab assistant and the other a geeky research assistant. The one tends to ask some very silly questions (to which my character has a wacky response) and the other is immersed in a computer and constantly correcting anything misspoke (usually by me). There is also a puppet I mentioned and a guest character, a recurring role played about once every other month.

The lesson was about being thankful. My character was the one who had something to learn about it, as almost usual, but comes up with the proper thankfulness in the end, attributing all power to Jesus, to whom we should be thankful. Presumably this leads into the actual lesson taught after the drama which should be on the same topic. However, I have never heard any of the lessons as I usually go directly to 4th/5th grade (drama is only for K-3) right after the drama, or head into the worship service if it is a last weekend of the month like this weekend.

I wish I could say it went perfectly, but a couple of us had some minor line trouble (nothing the kids in the audience would notice) and for some reason none of us thought of putting a microphone on our young 4th-grade fill-in so he was very hard to hear. Well, nothing can be done for it now but to move forward. I will be looking forward to the monthly rehearsal this Wednesday.