

# ELS, not ELL- dang acronyms...

Not sure what to write tonight. I was at one of the few schools one district ever calls me for- I am not sure what's going on with that district. I guess it helps that this school is the largest in the district at over 900 students 6th-8th grades. At first when I saw the acronym ELS when I looked up the teacher online, a practice I often do when I'm not told what subject or grade I'm teaching, I confused it with ELL, or English language learners. Middle school ELL as I've posted before can be, well just add an **h** in front of it and you'll know what I'm talking about. Oh, joy. But I should have remembered from another district that ELS stands for *(something) life skills*. I am not sure what the E stands for, but in short this refers to mentally impaired students, whether it be autism, down syndrome, or what-have-you.

So I arrived and found out about the class, confirmed by the lessons on the plans, and the students arrived one by one. Announcements, attendance, then off some went while others came in- a bit unusual for a middle school where the students start in their first class except for a few schools that have homeroom scheduled at the beginning of the day. So the first class was all the lowest students who could barely read even at a first grade level. Mostly, they repeated what I or the assistant read but some could read a little bit without the help. Second period was quite the opposite. I had the higher level ELS students, and we discussed ancient China and their inventions. Yes, gunpowder was one of them along with paper money, ship rudders, and porcelain. Then there was math. Most students worked out of packets while I worked with some of the lower-level students again, practicing counting to twenty (well, I did say low-level). Actually, before math I had to relieve another teacher who had a meeting with a parent. That class just colored. Anyway, following math the kids did "vocational education," which today was putting together

Hawaiian leis (those flowery things that go around the neck) using construction paper flowers, cut up colored straws, and yarn. The teacher who prepared these actually cut the yarn too short so they wound up more like strange headbands. Oh, well.

Following lunch I got the higher level class again and we worked on list poems. An example similar to one we did together is:

*What I like about summer  
Swimming at the local pool,  
Playing baseball at the park,  
Hanging out with friends all day,  
Chasing down the ice cream truck,  
Sleeping in until late morning.*

The last period (not counting my off-period) was kind of a laid back period. Some students played a game, others used the computers, and one did some reading. Anyway, that was it. Not exciting, but different.

And I just picked up my job for tomorrow. It looks like I will be back at middle school I was at Monday for... PE again! If that isn't strange enough, it is for a third PE teacher out of the five there. Two to go... ☐

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## **Industrial Technology**

IT for short, not to be confused with [information technology](#) which was a possible career track for me once, was where I was Monday and today. This is the class that was once know as shop, as it used to consist solely of things like woods, plastics, and metals. Nowadays those three still exist, but are played down by the age of computers and such lessons as

audio engineering, CAD, CAM, robotics, digital music and photography, and more. How does a teacher fit all this in in one quarter (eight weeks)? Well, in the case of one school the students select different "modules" they will work in for ten days apiece. That means if a student abhors woods he doesn't have to take it. How other schools do it I am not sure. It does seem that at the school I was at today they are always working with wood so it may simply be up to the teacher or district. How do these two districts compare? Read on.

The school I was at Monday actually has an assistant in the room meaning the students do not have to give up their regular work. Ordinarily a sub in IT would mean a video or seatwork as subs are generally not certified on the machinery. Thankfully, as I do not want the responsibility of keeping 20-30 students at a time from getting hurt. It was extremely fortunate that this school had the assistant because apparently the teacher had been out for a week before I came in. If they had to do seatwork all this time they would have had some serious catching up to do. Plus, with two there [situations like this](#) can't happen...

So Monday my time was spent signing off on modules, passing out module quizzes, getting items students needed, and otherwise helping students. Well, the latter generally consisted of "let me get the TA for you." Okay, I am a computer person but even so I can't know all there is to each of the computer modules. I did help where I could though. All in all this was a fulfilling day and I enjoyed it. I forgot to give back the keys and had to come back, but I enjoyed it.

Then there was today. One teacher, no assistant. I arrived before the teacher left (half day afternoon position) and of course the students were working with wood. Well, now that I think about it I guess some of the class was in the computer room so that would be why there is so much working with wood. Still, even with this in mind this school does a lot more with

wood than the other one. Anyway, with no assistant that meant- drum roll please- seatwork. Last time I was there it was a video on drywalling. A time before that the video was tiling. Today, seatwork. And not just any seatwork- they worked on *word searches* of all things. All period. Eight of them. Well, only one or two got through all eight. A few students barely got through one. Which type of student were you in middle school? Anyway, this was not nearly as fulfilling as Monday. I just sat back and handed out new word searches as they finished the old. Thankfully it was only a half day. Two full periods, and a period with only seven ELL students. Difficult students I may add, but I don't want to get into the whole ELL student thing again...

The next two days will be middle school PE again. Same two districts I just compared IT in. Maybe a PE comparison in the future? We'll see.

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## Choices

When I got home from small group last night, I did a check again for jobs, and came up with one district that had two postings. One was closer, one was one of the furthest schools from me. People who know me know my love for driving, or rather how much I love to **not** have to drive much in traffic. So the choice was obvious of course- I took the second one. Say what? You're thinking, "Didn't he just get through saying...?" Well, yes, but I mentioned in one of my comments a couple of days ago that there is a position I vowed never to take again. This was for one of those teachers. ELL at that one middle school is a nightmare I wish never to repeat, err, again. I actually subbed for these teachers (two ELL teachers on the team) a few times but I finally had enough last year.

My theory is that discipline is far more strict in Mexico (these were primarily Hispanic kids) and so when they come to the US and enter our education system, we are far more limited on what we can do for punishment and so it's like a cake-walk to them. Our worst is no problem to them as long as they only break rules and not laws in which case they finally have justice meted toward them. In any event, coupled with typical low-income for this area they are very difficult to work with. There is another middle school in the district, but oddly enough I have never actively chosen to not sub for ELL there. Maybe the difference is the grades are separated over there but all combined at the first school. 6th-graders learn how to play the system sooner from the 8th-graders since they spend a lot of time in the same room. In any event, as possible proof of this theory one of the days a student actually threw his binder at another student's head (in retribution). In front of me while I started to deal with the initial problem. Besides this, there was just a constant lack of respect overall.

Never again.

So of course that same position just showed up for tomorrow, but no alternative assignment. I am still looking for something for tomorrow...

Of course there are even worse positions. A nearby district actually has a lot of gang activity at their middle schools, though it is really not as bad as what I hear of from the city. I no longer sub in that district.

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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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## School humor

Today was kind of a blah day. I subbed for a primary ELL teacher and really only taught twice- the rest of the time I

helped in classrooms. The lessons I taught weren't even that interesting really- one was on mammals and the other was brainstorming facts about frogs and toads. Sooo... I think I will start something new. I will periodically post some school humor (jokes, etc.). I claim none of them for myself but they will be pulled off of other sites. Well, here we go...

### **Terrible world history**

*The following is a "history" collected by teachers throughout the United States, from eighth grade through college level.*

*Read carefully, and you will learn a lot of incorrect information.*

The inhabitants of ancient Egypt were called mummies. They lived in the Sarah Dessert and traveled by Camelot. The climate of the Sarah is such that the inhabitants have to live elsewhere, so areas of the desert are cultivated by irritation. The Egyptians built the Pyramids in the shape of a huge triangular cube. The Pyramids are a range of mountains between France and Spain.

The Bible is full of interesting caricatures. In the first book of the Bible, Guinnesses, Adam and Eve were created from an apple tree. On of their children, Cain, once asked, "Am I my brother's son?" God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Montezuma. Jacob, son of Isaac, stole his brother's birth mark. Jacob was a patriarch who brought up his twelve sons to be patriarchs, but they did not take it. One of Jacob's sons, Joseph, gave refuse to the Israelites.

Pharaoh forced the Hebrew slaves to make bread without straw. Moses led them to the Red Sea, where they made unleavened bread, which is bread made without any ingredients.

Afterwards, Moses went up on Mount Cyanide to get the ten commandments. David was a Hebrew king skilled at playing the liar. He fought with the Philatelists, a race of people who lived in the Biblical times. Soloman, one of David's sons, had 500 wives and 500 porcupines.



Without the Greeks we wouldn't have history. The Greeks invented three kinds of columns – Corinthian, Doric, and Ionic. They also had myths. A myth is a female moth. One myth says that the mother of Achilles dipped him in the River Styx until he became intollerable. Achilles appears in The Iliad, by Homer. Homer also wrote The Oddity, in which Penelope was the last hardship that Ulysses endured on his journey. Actually, Homer was not written by Homer but by another man of that name.

Socrates was a famous Greek teacher who went around giving people advice. They killed him. Socrates died from an overdose of wedlock.

In the Olympic games, Greeks ran races, jumped, hurled the biscuits, the threw the java. The reward to the victor was a coral wreath. The government of Athens was democratic because people took the law into their own hands. There were no wars in Greece, as the mountains were so high that they couldn't climb over to see what their neighbors were doing. When they fought with the Persians, the Greeks were outnumbered because the Persians had more men.

Eventually, the Ramons conquered the Greeks. History calls people Romans because they never stayed in one place for very long. At Roman banquets, the guests wore garlic in their hair. Julius Caesar extinguished himself on the battlefields of Gaul. The Ides of March murdered him because they thought he was going to be made king. Nero was a cruel tyranny who would turture his poor subjects by playing the fiddle to them.

Then came the Middle Ages. King Alfred conquered the Dames. King Arthur lived in the Age of Shivery, King Harold mustarded his troops before the Battle of Hastings, Joan of Arc was canonized by Bernard Shaw, and victims of the Black Death grew boobs on their necks. Finally, Magna Carta provided that no free man should be hanged twice for the same offense.

In medieval time most of the people were illiterate. The greatest writer of the time was Chaucer, who wrote many poems and verses and also wrote literature. Another tale tells of William Tell, who shot an arrow through an apple while standing on his son's head.

The Renaissance was an age in which more individuals felt the value of their human being. Martin Luther was nailed to the church door at Wittenberg for selling papal indulgences. He died a horrible death, being excommunicated by a bull. It was the painter Donatello's interest in the female nude that made him the father of the Renaissance. It was an age of great inventions and discoveries. Gutenberg invented the printing press. Sir Walter Raleigh is a historical figure because he invented cigarettes. Another important invention was the circulation of blood. Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the world with a 100 foot clipper.

The government of England was a limited monarchy. Henry VIII found walking difficult because he had an abscess on his knee. Queen Elizabeth was the "Virgin Queen." As a queen she was a success. When Elizabeth exposed herself before her troops, they all shouted, "hurrah." Then her navy went out and defeated the Spanish Armada.

The greatest writer of the Renaissance was William Shakespeare. Shakespeare never made much money and is only famous because of his plays. He lived at Windsor with his merry wives, writing tragedies, comedies and errors. In one of Shakespeare's famous plays, Hamlet ratiocates out his situation by relieving himself in a long soliloquy. In another, Lady Macbeth tried to convince Macbeth to kill the King by attacking his manhood. Romeo and Juliet are an example of a heroic couplet. Writing at the same time as Shakespeare was Miguel Cervantes. He wrote Don Quixote. The next great author was John Milton. Milton wrote Paradise Lost. Then his wife died and he wrote Paradise Regained.

During the Renaissance America began. Christopher Columbus was a great navigator who discovered America while cursing about the Atlantic. His ships were called the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Fe. Later, the Pilgrims crossed the Ocean, and this was known as Pilgrims Progress. When they landed at Plymouth Rock, they were greeted by the Indians, who came down the hill rolling their war hoops before them. The Indian squabs carried porpoises on their back. Many of the Indian heroes were killed, along with their cabooses, which proved very fatal for them. The winter of 1620 was a hard one for the settlers. Many people died and many babies were born. Captain John Smith was responsible for all this.

One of the causes of the Revolutionary Wars was the English put tacks in their tea. Also, the colonists would send their parcels through the post without stamps. During the War, the Red Coats and Paul Revere was throwing balls over stone walls. The dogs were barking and the peacocks crowing. Finally, the colonists won the War and no longer had to pay for taxis.

Delegates from the original thirteen states formed the Contented Congress. Thomas Jefferson, a Virgin, and Benjamin Franklin were two singers of the Declaration of Independence. Franklin had gone to Boston carrying all his clothes in his pocket and a loaf of bread under each arm. He invented electricity by rubbing two cats backwards and declared, "A horse devided against itself cannot stand." Franklin died in 1790 and is still dead.

George Washington married Martha Curtis and in due time became the Father of Our Country. Then the Constitution of the United States was adopted to secure domestic hostility. Under the Constitution the people enjoyed the right to keep bare arms.

Abraham Lincoln became America's greatest president. Lincoln's mother died in infancy, and he was born in a log cabin which he built with his own hands. When Lincoln was President, he wore only a tall silk hat. He said, "In onion there is

strength." Abraham Lincoln wrote the Gettysburg address while traveling from Washington to Gettysburg on the back of an envelope. He also freed the slaves by signing the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Fourteenth Amendment gave the ex-Negroes citizenship. But the Ku Klux Klan would torch and lynch the ex-Negroes and other innocent victims. It claimed it represented law and order. On the night of April 14, 1865, Lincoln went to the theater and got shot in his seat by one of the actors in a moving picture show. The believed assassin was John Wilkes Booth, a supposedly insane actor. This ruined Booth's career.

Meanwhile in Europe, the enlightenment was a reasonable time. Voltaire invented electricity and also wrote a book called Candide. Gravity was invented by Isaac Newton. It is chiefly noticeable in the Autumn, when the apples are falling off trees.

Bach was the most famous composer in the world, and so was Handel. Handel was half German, half Italian, and half English. He was very large. Bach died from 1750 to the present. Beethoven wrote music even though he was deaf. He was so deaf he wrote loud music. He took long walks in the forest even when everyone was calling for him. Beethoven expired in 1827 and later died for this.

France was in a very serious state. The French Revolution was accomplished before it happened. The Marseillaise was the theme song of the French Revolution, and it catapulted into Napoleon. During the Napoleonic Wars, the crowned heads of Europe were trembling in their shoes. The Spanish guerrillas came down from the hills and nipped at Napoleon's flanks. Napoleon became ill with bladder problems and was very tense and unrestrained. He wanted an heir to inherit his power, but since Josephine was a baroness, she couldn't bear children.

The sun never set on the British Empire because the British Empire is in the East and the sun sets in the West. Queen

Victoria was the longest queen. She sat on a thorn for 63 years. Her reclining years and finally the end of her life were exemplary of a great personality. Her death was the final event which ended her reign.

The nineteenth century was a time of many great inventions and thoughts. The invention of the steamboat caused a network of rivers to spring up. Cyrus McCormick invented the McCormick reaper, which did the work of hundred men. Samuel Morse invented a code of telegraphy. Louis Pasteur discovered a cure for rabies. Charles Darwin was a naturalist who wrote the *Origin of the Species*.