

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](#)

Middle school

Middle school is an interesting age. Not quite child anymore, but not completely adolescent either. It is a transition state. Many teachers stay away from this age, but I don't mind it so much, depending on the class. They can range of course from not-a-problem to watch-your-back depending usually on the area. It is my belief that the family income has a lot to do with it, though really only because it leads to parental involvement. With low income families, kids are often left to their own devices much of the time when not in school, and I think we can all, by experience ☹ , attest to the fact that young pre/adolescents don't always make the best choices in life, especially when they are starting to listen to their peers more and the parents become even less active in their kids' lives, meaning if they were already less active then that almost leaves it at, "Hello son/daughter" and little else. I am not saying this to blame these parents, as they are often just trying to make ends meet with sometimes two or

three jobs and are often the sole parental figure doing it. I am merely trying to explain why sometimes students are very hard to handle.

Another group of kids that tend to be a problem are ELL kids. Often, but not always, low income is an issue here as well, but another factor causes these students to be a problem. That factor being that the school system they come from is far more disciplined and strict than our own. When they come here then, they see school as something to blow off. Detention has no effect as they just see it as a break instead of a punishment. Some see getting in trouble as an opportunity to see the teacher get steamed because our options are limited compared to back where they came from. They learn, in other words, to play our system knowing serious consequences (as they would see it) can't happen because then the *teacher* would be in trouble for improperly discipline. Typically I just warn these students, maybe move them, but other than that just leave a note to let the regular teacher deal with the problem. There is actually a school where I no longer accept ELL jobs.

Anyway, I just bring this up because for the last two days I was at middle schools. Thursday was my unexciting science day I already wrote about, and yesterday I did language arts/life skills at another school. Apparently they were short a sub at that school because they gave me an extra class one period and I know they were doing that throughout the day for that one teacher- every class period had a different sub. I actually worked with all three grades as a result. This teacher's (the main one I subbed for) normal schedule had language arts with 7th grade and life skills (cooking, sewing, ironing, washing clothes...) was with 6th grade. My added class was with 8th grade. It was certainly more interesting than the day before.

Well this post is getting really long so I think I will just wrap it up now. I will probably post tomorrow about drama this week at church and how my teaching goes in the morning- I

will be teaching about Saul. The king, not the pharisee
turned Apostle.