

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

Expert or one-time-struggler

as a teacher?

I have often reflected on teaching a particular subject I was good at in school- math. Face it, either you're good at math or you're not- it's just one of those subjects. If you get it then you're well on your way to high grades, but if you don't...

As a great student in math I have struggled to teach it sometimes. It's like, "Why don't you get it? I just showed you how to do it!" Even now, with all this sub experience, I often either go too fast and leave some students struggling or I take too long to teach it as if I'm afraid of going too fast. It's difficult to find the right balance. Okay, to be fair as a sub I don't know the students, so getting the right balance is just not possible, but it doesn't stop me from wondering. Today I subbed in 6th grade, but this kind of goes back to last week too when I was in that 3rd/4th grade class for a few days and only taught math. Then, the teacher wanted one section taught per day if at all possible. Four days, didn't quite finish two sections. Well, three days really since there was no math on the last day.

Today was a little different- she assigned five journal pages out of **two sections!** Well, I guess she didn't really want me to teach it. I wound up just going over a few examples on the board from each section and letting them work, asking questions or work with a partner as needed. I think in this case working with a partner was almost mandatory since I didn't have time to teach full lessons. Did she want it done this way? I'll never know.

This makes me think of a proof that I am slow at teaching math: the University of Chicago math program. This seems to be used *everywhere*. Well, at least in elementary schools. This is a very structured program meant to be taught in about one hour. This includes a game included in most lessons, but I rarely have time for when I teach the program for some

reason. It starts off with a "math message," which is a math problem that will lead into the lesson. This is followed by a full-group lesson that often involves some sort of manipulative which aids kinesthetic learners (touch), which believe it or not is most people. True, many can learn by seeing or even by hearing, but touch really makes a difference in many people. A Chinese sage once said after all:

I hear and I forget.

I see and I remember.

I do and I understand.

In any event, following the full-group lesson there are small group, partner, and/or individual activities (one of which is the aforementioned game). I think I need a full 90 minutes to get through all of it sometimes!