

# I hate going to the wrong place...

Sigh. If there is one thing that is deficient it is the software that one of the districts I'm in uses. No teacher comments on jobs, and no way to change the school in the case of a traveling teacher. So, it is up to the teacher to contact the sub and let that sub know when a position doesn't start where the system says it does. Needless to say, today I was that sub. Last time I took a social studies position the teacher called me to let me know where I would need to be. Not this time. While I was aware it was likely to be an itinerant position again, I just figured since no one contacted me I would be going right where the system said I would. Silly me. I went there and, you got it "Oh, she doesn't come in until the afternoon. You have to go to this other school..." I was pretty P0ed when I was told this. *Someone* has the responsibility of letting me know, whether it be the teacher or the office. At the other school I actually ran into the teacher in question. She was doing an observation so that was why she needed the sub. I ~~didn't want to be rude~~ played it calm and apologized for not being on time because the system said I was to go to the other school. Whether or not she got the hint I don't know as all she said was it was no problem since I didn't start teaching for another hour.

I'll have to say she did prepare thoroughly for me with all the materials separated by class, detailed plans, and whatnot. Meaning of course that I couldn't blame *her* if things went wrong. □ Okay, I wouldn't anyway, and nothing did go wrong. It was a rather pleasant day. Between the two schools I had four first-grade classes, one second, and three third. The lesson plans unfortunately were not quite the same for each class of the same grade so I was kept on my toes. The one thing I really didn't like having to do was pick one student from each

class to get an award for behavior. While I would like to say I was completely objective on the selection I really couldn't keep a constant eye on each student to determine who best earned it. It was inevitably more like picking three or four students to watch who seemed to be behaving themselves and look for reasons to disqualify them, then still winding up picking between two or three at the end, completely subjectively. Oh, well.

Yesterday I was at a local middle school as the industrial tech sub. Tomorrow I will have a half day (oh why do I take these? At least I will get to sleep in!) for IT at another school. I already know what to expect there, so I could write up a comparison of the two, but I will save it for tomorrow anyway, just because I can. ☐

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## **Guess it isn't banned from schools after all**

In days of banning tag from the playground because some kids "get too rough" it seems only natural that dodge-ball is so far banned, it is even anathema to mention it. Perhaps that is really only valid in the elementary school though. Or maybe the ones making the rules don't like the attitude of middle schoolers so they say to go ahead and bash each others' brains out with round throwable objects. In any event dodge ball is definitely allowed in middle school, or at least some middle schools. It was probably banned a while ago before the advent of soft foam balls more commonly known as gatorskin, or rhinoskin balls, though something tells me no alligators or rhinoceroses were hurt in the making of these balls. Softer even than Nerf™ balls ever were, it would take a pretty thin

head to actually get hurt by one of these balls, but yet they can still be thrown across the room or even used in a pinch for kickball.

If you haven't figured it out by now I subbed for a PE teacher today. I actually wanted to get up a 6AM to see what was available, but I woke up at 5:30 instead, and this was the only job on the systems so it's the one I took. Of course I didn't mind at all since it was only a mile away too. □ I probably mentioned earlier that middle school PE is one of the easier positions to sub for as the other teachers usually run the show with me helping out. Not always, but most of the time. Because there was another teacher out as well, and the field was still wet from yesterday's two downpours, they mixed up thing a little and instead of doing softball and whatever one of the other teachers was supposed to do (health?) we all played dodge-ball instead. We divided them up into six teams and they played three-minute games, rotating between games to keep things fresh. Three grades, six PE periods, all dodge-ball. There was one period where a girl came up to me and asked if she could take attendance. I had to do a double-take as she clearly had some hormonal problem. There were patches of hair on her face. Growth that would take a guy weeks to grow, so it wasn't just peach fuzz like on many eighth-grade boys. I just took a look at Wikipedia and it looks like it could be either [androgen](#) excess or a rare disorder called [hypertrichosis](#) (werewolf syndrome). I tried very hard not to stare at her, and felt guilty every time I so much as glanced in her direction. Of course I let her take attendance even though I was really just playing at it since I was told I didn't need to take attendance and didn't have a record book to take it in in any event. I just didn't want the kids to feel they could blow off gym sometime and not be missed.

The end of the day was kind of interesting. This school schedules homeroom at the end of the day, so I was on my way up to the 8th grade classroom I was supposed to be in when I

found out all the eighth-graders were on their way to the multipurpose room for an assembly. Okay then, I went there instead. They had a presentation from some Japanese-American people about World War II. I'm guessing it was put together by a teacher from one of the middle schools as she was there and she teaches world history. And she is Japanese-American. They had a video of shots taken in the WWII internment camps and then two elderly people who lived through it talked to them. It was interesting, especially as one of them after going through this decided to join a special Japanese-American infantry that was formed some time after Pearl Harbor. He did this even though he like the rest of the Japanese-Americans were treated so shabbily. He had a few reasons for doing this though other Japanese-Americans understandably refused to have any part of the not-so-good 'ol US of A at this point in history. One reason was he had very good childhood growing up under the tutelage of several teachers who left good impressions on him. Alo he wanted to prove that not all Japanese-Americans were on the side of Japan. In reality, I think very few were on Japan's side in this war making this whole internment camp thing a ridiculous waste of time in addition to being reprehensible. This man became a teacher himself, apparently well-regarded in the circle of Chicago's school system. It would be eye-opening for me if I didn't already think the whole thing was wrong. In fact, when 9/11 happened we didn't do anything even close to this to Middle-Easterners in this country and it looks like we're still here. I still don't trust Islam, and many others don't either, but there have been no more terrorist bombings in this country since so it was clearly the right choice to leave them be.

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# Life as a sub in Florida

If C ever wants to sub, he'd better not do it in Florida... This sub was unceremoniously let go after doing a magic trick for the students. His sub supervisor (I guess they do things differently over there- no sub supervisor here) called him in and accused him, of all things, *wizardry*. Seriously. Read the story at the link below:

[Teacher Fired for Magic Trick, County Calls It "Wizardry"](#)

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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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## **4th-grader I DID know!**

Usually I go a long time between seeing kids from my church in their natural daily habitats. Tuesday was the super day, way out of the ordinary. Today I ran into another one, apparently whose memory was not as good as the one I ran into on Tuesday. This time he wasn't in my class, but he was in a nearby 4th grade classroom. I passed him in the hall, then turned and did a double take- I actually recognized him. At

the same time, he did his own double take, but he wasn't as sure. When I went to pick up my class from fine arts, there were two other classes in the same room, sort of a special fine arts day. His class was one of them, and his teacher was already leading the class away. He asked if he knew me, maybe from church. I just smiled and said, "I'll see you on Sunday, Brandon!" (okay, I guess first names are okay- I've been a bit paranoid on identifying people). Then he knew. At the end of the day I gave him a high five. So on Sunday, I will see two fourth-graders at 11:15 who I encountered this week, maybe three if Daniel (from Tuesday) brings his friend again.

As far as the day went, it was very easy- no teaching at all. Ordinarily this wouldn't make me happy, but it's been a long week and I was ready for some rest. I even made two errors this morning since I was so tired. This morning went like this: fine arts (combined classes), math test, fine arts (single class), finish math test, lunch. That was it. The afternoon was a little more complex with SSR (silent reading), spelling test, reading test, computer lab. Yes, they took three tests in one day- not a fun day for them. I guess I did do more than babysit in the afternoon. I of course had to give the words and sentences for the spelling test, and additionally I had to proofread and correct papers on the computer before the kids printed.

In any event, I am glad for the weekend. I enjoy what I do (mostly) but I need the break. Before I sign off, I should mention that all went well except for a couple of boys. One was *constantly* talking, even during the math test in the morning, which he did not have to take since he was in a different math class. Unlucky for me the teacher didn't tell me what he should do so I had to find him something to do. He said he finished the poetry project, didn't have a book, and wasn't allowed to read one of the books in the room because they had to be "checked out" and he had lost a book so he couldn't check out another. I didn't think the teacher would

mind, as long as he didn't bring it home, but no dice. Sigh. He was actually elsewhere for most of the afternoon, so that time went better. The other boy was really only a problem while the first one was in the room- they kind of fed off of each other.

Well, that's it for now. Time to torture myself by taking out my contacts, then winding down for bed. Yeah, I know- Friday night. Well, I still haven't gone back to the singles group. They have a movie night tonight, I am David, but I think I have seen it and I just didn't want to go. I really need to force myself next time. Why the torture? Well I just made myself some salsa, 3½ pasta-sauce-sized jars of it. Made with habanero, serrano, jalapeño, and other hot peppers, tomatillos, tomatoes, onions, and cilantro. The hot pepper juice of course clings to the skin for several hours, so hot pepper meets eye and... If I don't post tomorrow it may be because I'm blind from this. Anyway, goodnight.

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## Okay then

You have spoken (or rather, **not** spoken- that is, no comments) and it seems that my links posts are not welcome. Whether it be the links, retrogaming, or whatnot, I guess I need to stick to the teaching posts. Right then.

Today I was a teaching assistant. It's okay- in the district I was in subs get paid the same whether it's teaching or assisting, unlike the other three districts where assistant subs get paid far less. In one district, in fact they get paid half the amount of teacher subs! I was actually supposed to sub in a junior high, but they canceled so I got my choice of this position or a preschool teacher. No choice at all...



Of course, when I got there I was in charge of three kindergarteners, so maybe not a win after all. Well, it really wasn't bad at all. The three actually worked very well and I didn't have to intervene a great deal. This was a special education class, so I wouldn't have expected that considering my experience in these rooms in the past. Unlike the regular kindergarten students these three were there the entire day. They were mainstreamed into the same classroom twice in one day which one would think would give them the same instruction twice, but they must have worked out a schedule with the kindergarten teacher because while they were in there a total of almost three hours between morning and afternoon they did not repeat any instruction.

In the morning following announcements I brought them to the regular class where they worked on an assessment of their number and letter skills as well as their self-image, and then followed with science. I feel I'm missing something, but it is so late I can't think of what. Anyway, they had to color and label the parts of a flower. Oh yes, there was a worksheet that they completed and got checked off for as well. Finally recess, then I brought them back for calendar and computer time where they typed up (with the help of the specialized software) the calendar info and practiced writing their addresses and phone numbers. By coincidence, two of them had the exact same numerical address, though of course the street was different. A teacher was supposed to be there to help, but she had observations to do and they were short a sub, so they pulled her sub somewhere else. Probably because I'm a "certified" sub and could be with them without a regular teacher. Anyway, as a teaching assistant I had to go with them to lunch and help where needed. When they went out for lunch recess I finally got my lunch.

In the afternoon I went to a music class with a second-grade girl for a half-hour, then it was back to the three tykes. In the afternoon K class they did reading and math. Get this-

they were given decks of cards and played war! I guess number recognition was the key here, but after a couple games of mostly standard war they added the two numbers together instead, but then still won the cards or not by regular war rules. Back to the self-contained class again, and back to the computers. This time I had to watch them use the computers to make sure they went through the program the way they were supposed to. Finally, the teacher came back, had them pack up, did a couple of dance songs (chicken dance and hokey-pokey) with them, and then finally they were ready to board the buses. Whew. Long day, and long post. It is now past my bedtime for eight hours of sleep. Goodnight.

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## **Those kids I (should) know...**

I have mentioned in the past occasionally running into students who I know from church. The most interesting response one has ever given me was a few years ago in a district I used to sub in. It was an afternoon position and the kids just came back from lunch. Then one boy just shouted out, "Hey, I know you!!!" Well, as is often the case working with so many kids, plus my faulty memory when it comes to names and faces I only vaguely remembered him, but at least I knew from where I knew him, so I said so then slyly looked up his name. From that point on I got to know him better at church, as well as his brother who would enter the 4th grade the following year. Today I found myself in a similar situation. He didn't blurt it out like the one a few years ago, but quietly let me know. Unfortunately my memory of him was no better than that other time. In my defense I should say that I work two services and interact with about 80-90 each weekend. Some I interact with more than others, and he unfortunately was one of those others. No sly tricks this time though, but I mentioned that I

may have to have him put in my cabin at camp this June so I remember him better.

So of course this wouldn't be as interesting a post if there wasn't more to this story. After the kids had PE in the morning, they came back and switched classes for science/social studies (my class went to social studies, another class came in for science). So then *another* boy told me he remembered me from church too! After telling him I didn't recognize him, he confessed he'd only been there twice as a guest of the first boy. So, not as much coincidence then since the first boy was involved. Later, after lunch, you guessed it... I ran into someone else from my church. What three in one day? Is God telling me something? If so He will need to be clearer unfortunately- this mind of mine isn't seeing it. I actually ran into someone from church picking up his daughter for a dental appointment. In fact, I had worked with him one year in [AWANA](#). He was the new director of TNT boys (Truth in Training, 3rd-5th grades) and I was a leader. Anyway, care to guess which class his daughter was in? Just by my asking the question you know it was mine. She didn't know me though as far as I know- it's possible she goes to the service I don't lead in. I'll have to find out.

Speaking of AWANA, I had one of my bigger memory freezes with the former director of the 3rd-5th grade boys. After about six weeks of working with him once a week, I saw him at a churchgoer's get-together at someone's farm. He saw me and said hello, and I recognized that I knew him, but I suddenly couldn't place where I knew him from! Ah, that mind of mine- short-circuits from time to time. Once I said so and he told me, it was the biggest duh! moment ever.

Well, until next time.

Update: Here's a story about someone with a memory opposite of mine:

Would you like to remember every day of your life?

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# There's a guy in the preschool classroom!

People who know me know that my preference for teaching is about 3rd-7th grades. Stretch a year in either direction, and those are pretty much the jobs I gravitate toward when I have a choice. Of course specials are an exception; I do take those no problem though they may include kindergarten or 1st grade. Since you are an observant reader, you will have noticed the words *when I have a choice*. Well, I was unable to procure an assignment yesterday leaving me at the mercy of what's available in the morning. First call came in at about 5:40 and was for kindergarten. I thought about it and foolishly chose not to do it. I figured I would take a chance and check the web since I was awake. I did find a couple of half-day jobs which I also skipped. Then came the full-day preschool assignment. I didn't think I would see anything younger than the one I rejected, but here it was. Being about 5:50 I decided to gamble again and keep hoping for a better assignment to show up. Nope. Oddly enough though, no one was picking up this full-day assignment for some reason. Finally, the system called me for the assignment so I gave in and took it. At least it was a lot closer to me than the kindergarten job. Then I went back to sleep for an hour.

As it turns out, this district as far as I know does not offer normal preschool. It does however offer special education preschool for the "developmentally delayed." The morning had eight of ten students there, and was actually kind of a breeze. This kind of classroom has teaching assistants

(three!), and today the speech teacher actually came in to take over the class! I had absolutely no problem with this as this age is really out of my comfort zone anyway. I just acted as another T.A. The most I did teachingwise was running a center where they matched patterns and did a connect-the-dots worksheet. Other than that it was keeping kids focused and helping as needed.

The afternoon was a little different. There were slightly fewer students (seven), but this was a more challenging group. One was very autistic and needed special attention, and as a whole the group was lower than the morning group and like the one autistic boy, required more attention. The title of this post refers to me, but in actuality one of the part-time T.A.s in the afternoon was a guy! I would guess he really likes kids to do this, because he is a retired principal from the school I was at and retirement packages for top school administrators tend to be very generous. Either that or some bad investments, but his actions during the afternoon clearly showed the former. He was very good with the kids- unlike a T.A. from another school I worked with recently. That T.A. really yelled at the kids, sometimes for very minor things. To be fair, that school was a middle school, but I really felt for those kids. Aside from that she did a pretty good job, doing things for the students she didn't have to. If not for this I would have thought she was in the wrong profession entirely.

I was somewhat relieved to go home a little early- preschool ends 15 minutes before the regular grades- partly due to the afternoon class and partly due to the relative inactivity of my job. This is one reason, aside from the very low pay, that I would not want to be a teaching assistant full time. The absolute worst times I have had subbing were as teaching assistants, particularly one-one-one assignments. Never again on those, though I would sub (at regular pay) for other types of teaching assistants, like those with multiple kids or general classroom helpers.

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# Small classes and early starts

7:15. That's what time a sub has to be at the junior high schools (still called that even though they are on a middle-school system- I guess they didn't want to change the letterheads ☐ ) in the district I was in today. That means being up before six. At least I had a solid night's sleep instead of constantly waking up like I often do. Once I got there, it turned out this teacher had a class that started ten minutes before the regular classes. Say what? Fortunately the plans said another teacher was asked to run this class so no problem not being able to completely go over the plans. The one I was subbing for was also a traveling teacher, which in this case could be called class-on-a-cart. This teacher had a class in a different room every period. One class even had two different rooms- more on that below.

So I got to the room with my cart and the teacher who was supposed to take over (surprise to him!) just said that I could handle this and just ask if I had any questions since he would be in and out of the room. Well then, I had to look at the plans again after all. It really wasn't hard like he said. All I had to do was pass out quizzes they had to complete, inform them of their class/homework assignment once finished, and then monitor them. Fortunately I had second period off to look at the rest of the day.

The next period was communications, basically a speech class. Well, they were good at speaking all right- to each other in conversation that is. They were completing an assignment as well, so again no teaching- just monitoring. The next two classes actually lasted for a period plus another half-

period. Being math classes this was a bit odd. This is actually why one of the classes was in two different rooms. They spent one period in one room, then had to move for the next period. I would gather the regular teacher in that room doesn't have two periods off in a row to allow us to be there for the full time. To get the half-period the students actually sacrificed their study hall half of lunch to have the longer math period.

Where does the small classes part come into play? Well, you three who actually read this blog ( ☺ ) already know special education classes can be smaller. Well, two of the math classes were such classes- the first had about eight students in it. Most of them worked well, but there were two girls who thought they were in that communications class and chatted pretty much the entire time, sometimes with others across the room. At least they did *some* work so I was able to put up with it without sending anyone to the office. I left a note about this of course. This was the first of the two special-ed math classes. The second, get this, had **two students**. That's right, just two. They pay for a teacher to teach a class of two students?? I would really like to know more about this but as a sub for just the day I really only know what's in the notes- nothing about it there!- and from what I might pick up from other teachers, but I didn't want to be nosy. Oh well, some things just remain mysteries.

Until tomorrow then. Time for me to sleep...

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## I feel stupid...

Well, today I was a floater at a middle school, meaning that I would sub for different teachers throughout the day as they

went to meetings. When I arrived they gave me a list. Four classes. Were they serious? I thought I had it fairly easy yesterday with five classes (in middle school six is typical, with a planning period, team meeting- subs not invited, and lunch). In this district one period is homeroom, making a total of ten periods of which a sub usually works seven when homeroom is added in. This meant that I had **three** extra periods off! A half-day of work for a full day's pay! Then again, this is me we're talking about. I didn't feel quite right about this so I asked at the office a few times if I was needed elsewhere during these breaks. They didn't have anything as was typical, so it would seem that I would get all the time off after all. However, in the afternoon the teacher I was subbing for for 7th and 10th periods decided she could use me after all to help out while she tried to get some other work done. I stress *tried* because in fact since she was in the room her students still came up to her and asked questions. By the way, they were doing research in the LMC so I mostly babysat as I couldn't answer a lot of the questions since I didn't know all the expectations of the project. Still not bad- a very easy day.

Now, some may think the title of this post applies to the above paragraph since I asked for extra work instead of just saying nothing and sitting in the lounge all day. Well, it always pays to not get on their bad side- I already don't take TA positions which pay about \$30 less per day- and besides, I would have missed the situation I am about to write on. □ Well, what happened was during one of the periods a couple of students came in who weren't a part of the class. Remember, this was the LMC and not a classroom. That would be very strange if random students just came into a classroom where they were not a part of the class... Anyway, I wasn't aware of this at first and so questioned them when I saw they were not doing the research with the rest of the class. They told me they were here while their class was on a field trip. Were they being punished? Nope. They were seventh graders in an



eighth grade math class, and all the eighth grade was on the field trip. Now I thought I was pretty good at math being in algebra in eighth grade, but here they were, two seventh graders in the eighth grade class. And to make matters worse, this seemed to be the top eighth grade math course, algebra 2. That's right, 2. I didn't take algebra 2 until my sophomore year (they split the two courses with geometry in the middle, which I took as a freshman). These two seventh graders were *two* years ahead of where I was when I was in middle school. They expect to be bused to high school next year for math as they apparently were bused to the middle school when they were in 5th grade... I guess if this keeps up they will be taking calculus in their junior year instead of in college, unless they bring themselves even further ahead in the next three years. Definitely two top engineers in the making.