

First full week, finally

Did I really not post about my teaching for the last week? Well, let's see what I can remember. Monday I worked as a special ed teacher at a junior high. The teacher I subbed for I remember used to work in the district's therapeutic day school program which is a program for students with particularly strong behavioral problems. They even had large people specifically trained to restrain problem students and bring them to a cooling-off room when required. I actually subbed for him in that position a couple of years ago. These days he has moved to those with lesser, but still behavioral, problems. Much of the day was quite simple with either team teaching (read "sub acts as teaching assistant") or resource periods where students would work on homework. He did have a language arts block at the end of the day though. I did have an assistant to help as I worked with a group at a time so it wasn't too bad. We read a story about grey wolves. The fun began last period, which was a study hall. That's when a lot of the behavior problems came out. No, that's not true- the last group of language arts was a struggle as well. They were pretty much the same students in both cases in any event.

Tuesday I worked in grade 1. And 2. And 3. And 4. And 5. And- no, I'm finished... I was in fact a floater. I took over classes for an hour at a time. I do wish they had organized the meetings a little more in my favor though. I actually had to go from one end of the school to the other end at one point, a few minute walk due to the design of the building when I had to be in the next room right away. Fortunately in that case the kids in the second class had been sent out to recess so the teacher was able to go to her meeting though I had not yet arrived. It was overall an easy day and I was mostly able to talk directly with the teachers before and after meaning no written notes.

Wednesday I was in music. This was actually the most

challenging assignment. The kids in many of the classes were very talkative. Grades were mixed here too of course, from second to sixth (not inclusive- I had no third graders). The older ones were the most challenging. We did some music games the teacher had left, including instrument bingo (a standard) and a game where they formed musical symbols on the ground with their bodies. *That* one was fun.

Thursday- let me look it up. Ah yes, 5th grade. Pretty normal though I had one very challenging boy in that class. I'm not the only one who had problems with him either- I overheard a conversation in the lounge about him. Apparently when we switched for math (I had the advanced class and did pan balance problems with them- similar to hands on equations I think I mentioned once before) he refused to do any work at all. Well, with me he worked slowly but he did work. He got distracted very easily though. In the end he wasn't as bad as some students I have had, but still a challenge nonetheless.

Friday I was in another special ed classroom. The three sixth graders- wow. Next to ELL a couple of years ago they were the most troublesome. It was at this same school by the way... One of the sixth grades is apparently on ADHD medication. His parents I'm told are quite good at making sure he comes to school ready and medicated. Guess which day they forgot? Yep. Once he had his meds after lunch he was a pleasure to work with. Of the other two one was got very easily distracted and the other tended to work on only what he wanted to work on and was quite belligerent toward another student. Two of the three finished their science assignment by the end of the day (worked on during no less than three periods...) and one even finished his math assignment. There was one seventh grader who mostly worked independently and an eighth grader who wasn't a problem when working, but he got some bad family news in the middle of the day and he was pretty much done working at that point.

Well, that was how my week went. Now who would like to join

me in subbing? Come on, there must be one of you... ☐

A new home

Our 4th and 5th grade ministry has been undergoing some changes as of late. Early this summer the one who headed it up for the last several years passed the reigns over to the one who had been running the younger ages for some time. His own duties now encompass the entire children's and student ministries, as well as co-running the church camp. Anyway, things for the last few months have been running pretty much as before with a few new policies thrown in- things like changing the reward system (for memorizing verses, doing devotions, etc) and having us interact more with the parents.

Well, transition period is over and things are a-changing. A few weeks ago someone who had been with us a few years ago came back and has been placed in a position organizing the 4th/5th grade ministry as a part of his studies at Moody Bible Institute, and he is full of ideas. He has made a few changes already and probably the biggest one this weekend is that we are now to call the children who are in our small groups weekly. We took down their phone numbers and I have a list of about six or seven who I will need to call this week. Next week some of them will go with one of the new leaders who has sat in the last couple of weeks and will be ready to lead some of the kids next week on his own and so he will become responsible for calling them. I hope we get more 5th graders next week though as they were pretty much outnumbered by the 4th graders and I would like to have a larger group than three or four after we split. Unfortunately at least one of them usually attends at a different service so I will lose him for sure. Oh, another change was to go back to splitting groups

by grade as we have been just splitting by gender for the last year. I will be first to admit that we have been getting lax over the years so changes are refreshing and will hopefully benefit the students.

The biggest change however has nothing to do with the staffing changes. While this weekend we started with phone lists, we also started in a different room. The room we are in now was at one time exclusively for junior high school, and on Sat night/Sun morning since junior high didn't meet (they meet Sunday nights) it was used as a live video feed for those who for some reason weren't in the regular worship center (parents with crying children who took their children out of the worship center for example). However, they redid the area in front of the church and that has become the new live video area. So now we are back in the junior high room. Wait, did I say *back*? Yes, when we started the ministry, breaking it off from the rest of the grade school ministry, it met in this very same room. I'm not sure why, but at some point they moved us to a different room (maybe this was the start of live video feed?) and we finally ended up in the school library after that wing was remodeled and second floor added. Now that we've outgrown that room we're back in the original room, only now it is better than before. We have a full sound and video system including microphones if we need it, we have games like foosball, carpetball, and air hockey that the kids can play before the service starts and while waiting to be picked up, and the room just looks nicer than it did nine years ago. Yes, I have been doing it for that long. Who knows, maybe my calling might be to leave this church and organize a similar ministry at a smaller church? Or maybe just stay here for another nine years.

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...

End of an era

Today marks the end of an era. No, I am not writing about the 102 years it has been since both Chicago MLB teams were last in the playoffs. I will leave that blog post to a more sports-interested blogger. I am referring to the end of Randhurst Mall. Today was the last day for all the stores inside the mall. According to the article I read they will soon start tearing it down inside, but the reconstruction won't begin in earnest until next year (as the anchor stores that remain open breathe a sigh of relief for the holidays). I wasn't alive when it first opened in the sixties, but I do remember going there as a child. I remember the Kresge's that used to be there a long time ago. I remember before they rebuilt the center and replaced the merry-go-round with a food court. I remember as a teen visiting the arcade known as Supercade. I even worked at two stores over there at different times- Circuit City and Software Etc. All gone now. I knew about this day coming and I could kick myself for not getting over there to take some pictures. I got busy and forgot I guess. Oh well. It's not as if I've never visited a virtual ghost-town mall before- I remember the last days of Meadows Mall before they tore it down to make way for a Walmart and Sam's Club- but I should have gotten pictures for this blog. They say the new so-called "lifestyle center" will be completed in 2010. I'll probably visit it once just to see, but it just won't be the same.

They are moving the movie theaters in the process, so I wonder what they will do to improve them, as I'm sure AMC won't miss the opportunity. They didn't build the theaters after all, merely purchased General Cinemas, who had the original theaters there. They were already rebuilt once after large-

capacity theaters went out of style and they replaced four theaters with sixteen smaller ones. I wonder what AMC will do to put their own mark on it?

Well, I guess you will be wanting a link to the story I mentioned. It even contains a few pictures that I fully do not take credit for as I missed my opportunity. ☐

[Randhurst Shopping Center reaches the end](#)

Mine is smaller than yours!

Wait- that's not quite how the saying goes of two boys comparing sizes, is it? Well, in second grade apparently that is quite the appropriate comparison for comparing the lengths of their pencils. Literally speaking of course- how can you even think...! ☐ Oh, never mind. Anyway, the lower grades can prove to be quite interesting as the way a small child thinks is so alien to adults. In the case I mentioned, two boys were in competition to see who could use the shortest stub of a pencil. The clear winner was the one who sharpened his pencil so much only the metal eraser band was left with only a small point at the other end. The next day, there was a boy who would break the point on his pencil on purpose and just use the broken tip. I guess that actually beats the stub from the day before. Including last Wednesday, I kind of just worked my way down the hall from one second grade room to the next. Each room had its own challenges and own interesting characters.

Umm, 'scuse me a minute while I close my window. A skunk just walked by... There. Whew. Where was I? Oh- characters. The latest room had a boy who liked to fight and apparently did so at recess time yesterday. He was supposed to spend lunch with

the principal today, but he didn't show up. Did his mom keep him home? There was also the hearing-impaired girl who required me to wear a microphone. I had to try to remember to take it off when I wasn't talking to the whole class or to her. For some reason I thought it would be a good idea to stuff it in my shirt pocket when not in use. Bad idea of course. Instead of getting me talking to others, she got the scratching of the microphone against the material of my shirt. She never told me. Only during the afternoon today did she tell her one-on-one assistant who told me. Apparently Pokemon is still in fashion, as one boy showed me his small book of cards he would take with him to lunch. And you already read about the pencil boys.

Of course as is normal for primary grades, there was the ever-present "this is how we do things and so you'd better get it exactly right." Okay, it wasn't that bad but small children really aren't as flexible as older ones when it comes to routine. speaking of routine, it was nice how the teachers worked together and had their classes doing a lot of the same things. Some of the stuff I got to teach more than one class, making it easier for the second since I already knew what I was doing. All-in-all, it really wasn't that bad working the five days with second grade. Experience normally has me dreading multiple primary days as so much extra focus is required compared to the older ones, but this wasn't bad at all, perhaps because the teachers were still there (doing testing) and checked in from time to time taking some of the pressure off. I don't know. Tomorrow will be a little different in any event. I have two half-days for music, but I might drop the afternoon because there's a job fair going on at that time that I should attend.

EDIT: I forgot to mention the "does this look like the face of a guilty person" look of innocence one of the boys gave me when I asked him to change his card (behavior system). It reminded me of when a sixth-grader tried this a couple of

years ago with another teacher. It failed then too- the teacher just said (a little sarcastically), “aww- how cute” then gave him his punishment anyway.

Near disaster

Last night I was a bit exhausted from work, short nights of sleep, choir on the weekend, small group... Well, you get the picture. So it is understandable that when I read a news item about some new Vista Ultimate extras and I went to Windows update to get them and saw SP1 asking to be installed instead, I decided why not?

Well, as it turns out, the answer to that question is the reason it showed up for me so many months after its release. I forgot that I rejected it a while back due to problems I read about. What problems you ask? Failed installations for starters. No problem, right? I can always restore if there's a problem. Why not just forget for the moment this is the infamous Microsoft we're discussing? Yeah, sure, I did. ☐

I didn't remember I rejected it, and I didn't remember the installation issues. So as I said I started the installation, which by the way said could take over an hour and did even on this fast machine of mine. I should say unsuccessful installation. It *seemed* like it worked, but then it rebooted, disk activity for a while, then... blue screen of death. Great... Okay, rebooted to try again, same results. Starting to feel the dread coming on I chose to repair next time and it asked me if I wanted to restore. Sigh. All that time wasted. I clicked yes and waited. And waited. And waited. Eventually, I looked at the hard drive activity light and no activity. What? I unsuccessfully tried a few other things

and eventually wound up at the restore application itself (the other was the repair app) and noticed all the points I could choose from. All one of them that is. The SP1 installation created a point and decided, hey why not delete the old restore points? Gee, thanks Microsoft. Well, I tried the one restore point and started the process. Things were looking good until it got to the end where it was "finalizing the restore." At this point (no pun intended) all hard drive activity stopped and the finalizing animation kept going, and going... Clearly, this was the point where the repair program failed.

I looked online on the other computer and found out that this was a common problem, and there were few solutions. I wound up downloading a Vista recovery CD and a Ubuntu (Linux) CD in case I had to restore the entire system. With that, I could hopefully move critical files to the D: drive before reformatting. You may have noticed in the headline I wrote **near** disaster. As it turned out, I didn't need the Linux CD because the Vista recovery CD worked. Not that I expected it to after I saw it just had the same tools as on my HD that I already tried. I tried the repair, and it actually found a problem. Maybe. It said the boot record was corrupt and repaired it. Reboot. Nope. Now it seemed worse. Wonderful. I booted the CD again and tried the restore program just for kicks. Well, surprise surprise- no, really- **it actually finished the restore!** By now the computer had my full attention as I watched it reboot, start loading, get past the problem point, get to the GUI, and... LOGIN SCREEN! YES!!

Lesson learned- no service packs on **this** computer, a big thanks but no thanks. Security updates, but no big service packs. And I think my next software purchase will be a good backup program that is hopefully mostly painless unlike the basic one included with the OS. Ghost maybe? During yesteryear it was supposed to be a good program. Now...?

Well, back to the regular posts next time.

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, $3\frac{1}{2}$ 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 assisatnt 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.

Hi Griffin, meet Griffin

Well, the new pump is installed and cleanup continues. We picked up some wet items from downstairs and put them outside to dry, afterwhich we'll try washing them. The second dehumidifier which I said doesn't work actually seems to after all. It just draws a lot of power. I switched it to another outlet and it worked fine, didn't trip the circuit breaker. However, I used an extension cord with it, an office-style 3-prong job, and the connector area got pretty warm. Now I know that the dehumidifier says not to use an extension cord, but the cord they provide is short, and with the basement outlets set high I have to have to have the dehumidifier practically against the wall in order to plug it in, but it seems that's what I will have to do.

Anyway, on to the headline. I was at a restaurant tonight and I overheard an encounter between two dads and their boys, both named Griffin. I have encountered boys with this name, but not two at once. It was a surprise to the dads too. One is seven and the other nine, so they are still quite young which is my experience as I haven't known any older boys or men with that name, though it's possible some that I met are teens now. According to [Behind the Name](#), the name Griffin has ranked in the mid 200's for the last decade, with its peak in 1998 at 215. The year before, it was at 225 with the popularity going down drastically with the years going back. Before the 80's, it doesn't rank at all. I bring up 1997 specifically because a certain event happened that may have improved the popularity of the name somewhat. That event being the release of the first book in a series of seven. The book I speak of is of course Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's/Philosopher's Stone. While not a main character's

name, or any character that I can recall for that matter, the name of his house was Griffyndor, and I believe they did encounter a griffin ([the mythical beast](#), not someone with the name) in the first book, though it could have been one of the next few. Is it a stretch to tie this book with the name? Maybe. I don't know. I think I've written enough on it though.

Today I had no job, but then one district had two days off due to flooding (the town is by a river) and another I am still waiting for my login info for, which the woman I talked to said would be a couple of weeks due to limited time processing new subs and taking it in order of hire. I do have a full day tomorrow though so perhaps something to write about. Until then.

Let the water flow...up

As in up out of the sump pump pit when the sump pump fails... You may have heard of, or even experienced the weather happening around here while Ike was pounding the Gulf coast. Rain. Lots of it. It wasn't as bad as the storm system that hovered over us for days last year [EDIT: According to this morning's paper it actually was worse], but then last year we had a working sump pump. Apparently our sump pump got its intake clogged causing it to run dry and burn out. I learned this the other morning when I went downstairs to use the bathroom so as not to disturb the other occupant here. I tend to not turn on the light at the bottom of the stairs because I know my way around. Normally not a problem, but this day I put my foot down the final stair to a splash. Yuck. Four inches of water. Not so bad, but then think about where the water came from and what goes through that pit...

Bottom line, we needed a new sump pump. So did hundreds of others around here. After learning that Lowes, Home Depot, Sears, etc. were out, I found that Menards apparently stocks hundreds of the things as when I got there they had dozens left on the shelf and the cashier told me they sold well over a hundred that day. In the meantime, we do have a backup pump and my brother and I set it up. Unfortunately a hose was securely attached so its status as a backup remained firm. We had to run the hose up the stairs, buying and attaching another length to make it possible to run it out the door. Once set up, it took a few hours to drain the basement while the rain poured mercilessly down. Later that night, after church, I was able to secure that new pump along with the attachments my brother said we needed. We would have had it hooked up tonight, but the PVC cement takes several hours to cure so we will have to finish tomorrow. Good thing the weather report shows that we are pretty much finished with the rain for now. After that, let the cleanup and damage assessment begin. Both of our dehumidifiers were caught in the indoor lake, but one of them still works. Hopefully once the other dries out it can be put into active duty as well.

Other casualties from the rain included a hot water heater that I only was able to restart a few hours ago and a closed road today next to a retention pond- pretty full when we passed it yesterday, and that was before another nearly 30 hours of rain. Another casualty was my lower back. It started hurting pretty bad yesterday to the point where I could only stand for a limited period of time and when sitting I had to make sure my back was supported. At one point I sat down and could not get back up it hurt so bad. It is a little better today and I am using a heating pad on it as I type. I did learn that Aleve does **not** ease back pain.

I am not looking forward to the rest of the week. So far I have 2½ days assigned (my first elementary jobs of the year- up to now it has been middle school only) and a large cleanup

job in the basement. By the way, the ELL assignment went without hitches. My boycott of ELL assignments in that school is over for now.

9/11/01

We all know what that date represents. Well, most of us do. As I mentioned a couple of posts ago I worked with ELL students today. One student actually didn't know about what happened seven years ago as he just came to this country less than a year ago. I suspect there were others as well. Needless to say, he had a little trouble answering the journal question, "What happened on September 11, 2001?"

Believe it or not, I have been subbing for a few years but this is the first year that the school I was at had a big thing going for September 11. The morning started with the entire school crowding around the flagpole. No, it wasn't a "see you at the pole" event, though I would wish it would get these kinds of crowds. If more kids were followers of Jesus there would be so much less trouble at our schools. Back to the topic, the principal called out everyone to observe the all-too-recent holiday remembering what happened those seven years ago. There was the flag raising of course, a speech by the principal, and some students read poems they wrote. The principal made himself heard, but they really needed some amplification for the kids- I wasn't able to understand, or in some cases even hear a single poem.

After that, everyone went in and first period started (late). The 9/11 theme continued with the aforementioned journal question, and then we saw an interactive CDROM. Apparently the Chicago Tribune gave away these CDs back in 2002

commemorating the one-year anniversary. It provided archival footage of ten days of the Tribune headlines following the destruction with some commentary and a Flash intro to start. I was hoping to provide a download link for this, but I guess after six years it's either off the map or I didn't look hard enough. Actually, I did find a torrent (peer-to-peer download) with the title (*When Evil Struck America*) but there didn't appear to be any seeds, meaning it couldn't be downloaded. I'll check Usenet in a bit, but I'm not holding my breath. To the students' credit, they really were engaged and asking questions. A few periods later I was helping in the 7th grade social studies classroom, and the teacher did his own presentation on 9/11. He chose some really thought-provoking pictures, including one building closeup where people could be seen to the side falling because they had jumped from the towers, perhaps hoping for a better outcome than death by fire or smoke inhalation.

These were the only periods I had dealing with this topic, but it seemed like half the day. The rest of the day had typical lessons. I either taught, helped out, or led a review. I could say more on that, but I think I will leave this post focusing more on 9/11. Until tomorrow.

EDIT: I may not be able to give you the Tribune CD, but the History Channel has it's own interactive media: [102 Minutes that Changed America](#)



(Not my picture. For more pictures like this, [CLICK HERE](#))