

The Young and the Restless



Continuing in the soap opera theme of a couple of posts ago, I have one to share from my own experience on Thursday. I didn't even have to adjust the title to fit as it works well just as it is- they are of course young, and they were quite restless. If anyone knows about autism, one of the things even the higher-functioning kids need is a structured environment and schedule- everything should remain the same from day to day. It appears that the same holds true for kids with behavioral issues. I was in a middle school BD/LD classroom on Thursday. I should start by saying I was in this class before several times and have never really had a problem before Thursday. The fact that there are usually two teachers and two assistants in the room has always helped a great deal. However, this time both teachers had subs. Also, the day before both teachers and both assistants were out sick- believe it or not, this was not engineered! Between these two events, the kids just fell apart. It didn't really help that the plans included having the kids do something they apparently never do even when the teachers are there. This was mentioned, loudly I should add, by 6th grade and 8th grade students alike- "We **never** do vocabulary!" In addition, they absolutely would not listen to any instruction from me. I tried to follow the plans as given, but they were already trying to go ahead, and were actually getting upset at me for trying to do what the teacher had written. Sigh. In the end I just had to give up and let them work on their own. The 8th graders I think actual did the work. The 6th graders, on the other hand, for the most part chose to do their own thing. One even brought in a video game book and would read only this. The assistants tried too, but in the end they were just back after being sick for a few days so it really wasn't worth getting on them until the teachers returned.

However, trying to get them to work was only part of this story. All day many of the students had anger issues, threw things at one another, and had to be pulled from their regular classes. There were a couple of teachers or social workers who were in on and off trying to keep the kids in line. Parents were called. What a drama. Even the class where I had only one student was a bust. She came to school late the period before, ate her lunch for that period (she was supposed to be doing math), and continued eating it during her social studies period. She refused to read until she was done, never mind that girls are generally good at multitasking. Clearly she was just stalling. Of course, when she *did* start reading she couldn't concentrate thanks to other kids in the room creating problems. If you're confused at this, you're not alone- it can be confusing. Most of the day there are two classes going on at once- one by each teacher. Additionally, there can be kids in there who cannot be in their regular classes for some reason or other (remember above where I mentioned pulling kids out of other classes). At this time, I had social studies with 7th grade (the one student), but the other sub had math with 6th grade. One of the 6th graders had big issues all day.

Well, tune in next time for hopefully a post with less drama. Well at least a better day for me- drama is great for the reader ☐ . Otherwise, I will have to work in another soap opera title. ☐

Fire! No wait, just that time

of the year.

Today was a special day that occurs just once a month. 10AM, first Tuesday of the month- the testing of the disaster sirens all over the area. I've always wondered what if there was a real disaster at this time? No one would believe it. It is also the season for testing something else. For the past two days I have been lucky enough to work at the two closest schools to me. One elementary, one middle. For the past two days I've been blessed with the classroom disruption known as the fire drill. I was warned of the impending one this week at the first school, and eventually told that Monday was in fact the day, but today at the middle school I didn't have much warning. In fact, I would have had none at all if it weren't for the happenstance of one of the students leaving the room (with permission) to do something, and being told by another student that there would be a fire drill. He came back and told us (there was a teaching assistant there as well). Of course student-to-student information cannot always be trusted when you're talking 7th grade, but we prepared for the possibility anyway. Sure enough, about ten minutes later we were headed out of the building and across the street. I bet that van driver coming up the street was none too happy about having to wait for a few hundred students to cross in front...

Yesterday I was with fourth grade, and had such a good day that, coupled with the clarity of being wide awake from an energy drink imbibed at dinner I was thinking- what if my calling to teach the grades I'm comfortable with was an accurate interpretation after all? I speak of a calling I felt back around ten years ago to teach. I was reading an article about teachers that day when I felt the overwhelming presence of the Holy Spirit on me seeming to tell me "this is what I want of you." After that I started to teach, badly at first due to my lack of experience, 4th grade at my church. A

new 4th and 5th grade ministry was formed that same year which I joined and still teach to this day. A couple years after I went back to school to finish a degree. I had come so close to an electronic engineering degree and failed at the very end. This time I would be going to become certified as a teacher. Well, I did very well for most of it, just like with my electronic engineering degree some years earlier, but like that degree I failed to pass the ultimate test. Back then it was a senior design project. This time it was student teaching. I did an excellent job on my lesson planning, an okay job on teaching the plans, and a horrible job managing the classroom. One of the rooms had over thirty students, but that's no excuse I guess. After that, I cooled my heels and started substituting- the professors at the school felt sorry for me and gave me a degree anyway, calling it success after so much time spent in school, but to this day it hasn't felt like success.

A couple years later, I had an idea that I would get secondary certification (6th-12th) and get certification that way. I would teach science in middle school I thought. Well, after being told by a professor there, who had even filled in as head of the education department for a short time, I was later informed that no, it was a mistake and the policy of no second chances at student teaching still applied, even if I changed from elementary to secondary. I then applied to another school and was accepted, but then once again I was later told that no, it was a mistake and they couldn't take someone who started a teaching program elsewhere. It has now been a year since that decision and a lot of wasted money taking classes to fulfill that secondary degree. Thanks a lot. ☐

This brings me back to today. As I was saying, last night I had some sort of clarity on this and the shortcomings I have thought I had seemed somehow miniscule, and that I could indeed teach reading and writing as well as the things I'm good at- what was I thinking? I am most comfortable with

upper elementary so why should I have settled for a secondary degree anyway? I am now seeking confirmation with God that I am ready for this and have His approval and blessing. My mind has been changed so often that I can't be sure on my own that this clarity is true or just caffeine-induced. I do have some other lifestyle changes I need to make, particularly as I am not sleeping well again. I had started Tae-Bo about a month ago, but then I pulled some leg muscles, followed by severe lower back pain (both are gone now), and finally the flood in the basement where I was working out. I'm still not positive about guys and aerobics, even if it is martial-arts aerobics, but it's better than running or laying out big \$\$ for weight training equipment or a fitness center membership. Hopefully this can help me sleep once I start again.

So... how was today? Well, I had no problems. It was another LD/BD resource position like last week, but the kids were much better behaved than the one job. In fact, talking was the only issue leading me to believe they were strictly LD (learning) issues. I am a little perturbed about the rest of the week though. I had a three day assignment that was cancelled at the last minute. I logged in to the system to confirm it again and it was gone, no call about it no nothing. I called the system as that is where it actually does the cancellations- for some reason it doesn't do them through the web interface- and all I got was a busy signal. That explains the lack of a call I guess- the phone interface was down. I eventually got through and it did tell me the job was cancelled, so now I have to fill those days again. Actually I did find a local 2nd-grade position for tomorrow, so that beats getting up at 6AM (other job) but now I work until 3:30 instead of 1:45 (Wednesdays are early dismissal days in the one district). Well, that's part of being a sub I guess.