

# ELS, not ELL- dang acronyms...

Not sure what to write tonight. I was at one of the few schools one district ever calls me for- I am not sure what's going on with that district. I guess it helps that this school is the largest in the district at over 900 students 6th-8th grades. At first when I saw the acronym ELS when I looked up the teacher online, a practice I often do when I'm not told what subject or grade I'm teaching, I confused it with ELL, or English language learners. Middle school ELL as I've posted before can be, well just add an **h** in front of it and you'll know what I'm talking about. Oh, joy. But I should have remembered from another district that ELS stands for *(something) life skills*. I am not sure what the E stands for, but in short this refers to mentally impaired students, whether it be autism, down syndrome, or what-have-you.

So I arrived and found out about the class, confirmed by the lessons on the plans, and the students arrived one by one. Announcements, attendance, then off some went while others came in- a bit unusual for a middle school where the students start in their first class except for a few schools that have homeroom scheduled at the beginning of the day. So the first class was all the lowest students who could barely read even at a first grade level. Mostly, they repeated what I or the assistant read but some could read a little bit without the help. Second period was quite the opposite. I had the higher level ELS students, and we discussed ancient China and their inventions. Yes, gunpowder was one of them along with paper money, ship rudders, and porcelain. Then there was math. Most students worked out of packets while I worked with some of the lower-level students again, practicing counting to twenty (well, I did say low-level). Actually, before math I had to relieve another teacher who had a meeting with a parent. That class just colored. Anyway, following math the kids did "vocational education," which today was putting together

Hawaiian leis (those flowery things that go around the neck) using construction paper flowers, cut up colored straws, and yarn. The teacher who prepared these actually cut the yarn too short so they wound up more like strange headbands. Oh, well.

Following lunch I got the higher level class again and we worked on list poems. An example similar to one we did together is:

*What I like about summer  
Swimming at the local pool,  
Playing baseball at the park,  
Hanging out with friends all day,  
Chasing down the ice cream truck,  
Sleeping in until late morning.*

The last period (not counting my off-period) was kind of a laid back period. Some students played a game, others used the computers, and one did some reading. Anyway, that was it. Not exciting, but different.

And I just picked up my job for tomorrow. It looks like I will be back at middle school I was at Monday for... PE again! If that isn't strange enough, it is for a third PE teacher out of the five there. Two to go... ☐

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## Special Ed

One of the most common roles I fill in for is special education. Sometimes it's quite challenging, sometimes quite easy. Well, it is only truly easy when there are teaching assistants who pretty much take over while I take the role of assistant. This is commonly the case in mentally impaired classrooms (autism, Down syndrome, etc.). Yesterday was

mostly on the easy side. I was subbing for a junior high teacher who actually only had one class of her own- the rest were "team teaching," which generally means the sub plays the part of assistant while the other teacher teaches. But what does one do when both teachers are out and both left plans saying the other teacher will take over? That appeared to be the case when I walked into second period and compared notes with the other sub. Fortunately, this turned out to be a non-crisis as the teacher he was subbing for left plans on the board in addition to saying that my teacher would take over. I can only guess his teacher found out about my teacher's absence only after writing the plans. Whew. The rest of the day was quite uneventful, just following the same group of students around through social studies, math, science and language arts. I also had to help look over a group of homework lunchers (detention really). It's just as it sounds- students who didn't turn in homework in one or more classes worked on it during lunch. I was told when they first started this program there were over 60 kids in the room at one time! Now that has to be against fire codes. I was quite happy there were only about 15. In any event this was definitely a position I would do again.