You have the right to work, but for the work's sake only.
You have no rights to the fruits of work. Desire for the fruits of work must never be your motive in working. Never give way to laziness, either... work done with anxiety about results is far inferior to work done without such anxiety, in the calm of self-surrender... they who work selfishly for results are miserable.

- From the Bhagavad Gita
"I'M JUST NO GOOD AT SCHOOL"

Maybe you're doing poorly in school. Or maybe you think that you just don't have what it takes. Keep your chin up, mate. Some of the greatest minds ever felt that way too. Did you know?

Albert Einstein, considered the most influential person of the 20th century, was four years old before he could speak and seven before he could read. His parents thought he was retarded. He spoke haltingly until age nine. He was advised by a teacher to drop out of grade school: "You'll never amount to anything, Einstein."

Isaac Newton, the scientist who invented modern day physics, did poorly in math.

Patricia Polacco, a prolific children’s author and illustrator, didn’t learn to read until she was 14.

Henry Ford, who developed the famous Model-T car and started Ford Motor Company, barely made it through high-school.

Lucille Ball, famous comedian and star of I Love Lucy, was once dismissed from drama school for being too quiet and shy.

Pablo Picasso, one of the great artists of all time, was pulled out of school at age 10 because he was doing so poorly. A tutor hired by Pablo’s father gave up on Pablo.

Ludwig van Beethoven was one of the world’s great composers. His music teacher once said of him, “As a composer, he is hopeless.”

Wernher von Braun, the world-renowned mathematician, flunked ninth-grade algebra.

Agatha Christie, the world’s best-known mystery writer and all-time bestselling author other than William Shakespeare of any genre, struggled to learn to read because of dyslexia.

Winston Churchill, famous English prime minister, failed the sixth grade.

In spite of their problems at school, these people made something of their lives and so can you. If school doesn’t come easily for you it doesn’t mean you’re not smart. There are many types of intelligence. Yet school is based mostly on one kind of intelligence, known as IQ (intelligence quotient) or mental intelligence. IQ is our ability to analyze, reason, think abstractly, and use language.
TEACHER INTERVIEW

After being interviewed by the school administration, the eager teaching prospect said:

"Let me see if I've got this right. You want me to go into that room with all those kids, and fill their every waking moment with a love for learning, and I'm supposed to instill a sense of pride in their ethnicity, modify their disruptive behavior, observe them for signs of abuse and even censor their T-shirt messages and dress habits. You want me to wage a war on drugs and sexually transmitted diseases, check their backpacks for weapons of mass destruction, and raise their self esteem. You want me to teach them patriotism, good citizenship, sportsmanship, fair play, how to register to vote, how to balance a checkbook, and how to apply for a job.

I am to check their heads for lice, maintain a safe environment, recognize signs of anti-social behavior, and make sure all students pass the state exams, even those who don’t come to school regularly or complete any of their assignments. Plus, I am to make sure that all of the students with handicaps get an equal education regardless of the extent of their mental or physical handicap.

I am to communicate regularly with the parents by letter, telephone, newsletter and report card. All of this I am to do with just a piece of chalk, a computer, a few books, a bulletin board, a big smile AND on a starting salary that qualifies my family for food stamps!

You want me to do all of this and then you tell me ... I CAN'T PRAY???
Let’s take the idea of creativity to another level. Why is effective teaching a creative process? ...Answer: No other option exists. First, step back and think of the complexity of teaching by considering the students who walk through the classroom door every day. Next, consider the variables over which the teacher has little or no control (gender, race, culture, divorce, drugs, alcohol, poverty, abuse in the home, multiple intelligence, learning styles, learning disabilities, etc.). Now consider the curriculum over which the teacher has little control, and juxtapose that with the time frame over which the teacher has little control. And last, consider the patterns that will “by default” and “in-the-moment” appear when the teacher spontaneously merges those variables. To respond to that complexity, teaching effectively has to be a creative process.

If you are reading this as a parent, think of the last time your son or daughter had a birthday party. How did you feel when it was over? Imagine having 190 birthdays, one after another. Imagine having only the weekends and evenings to prepare. Remember of course that you will have 30 at the party from 8:30 till 3:45; some will not speak English; some will not want to be at the party; some will have behaviour problems. The parents of some will tell you what to feed the kids at the party—of course what you feed them is math, reading, drama, music, art, history, French, etc. Oh yes, remember that one may be deaf, or have cerebral palsy; some will be isolates—others will tease them; and, 1 in 5 will have been abused or will have witnessed violence or will be living in poverty on public assistance in subsidized housing. Of course “the big birthday system” will test your birthday kids and compare them with other birthday kids from around the world. Don’t worry though, you can plan each night after you have spent quality time with your family. One last thing— the statistics on this type of “partying” indicate that if you retire at 65, your life expectancy will be around 18 months—one of the lowest of all vocations and professions.

As a comparison to teaching, think of an operating room containing two surgeons, an anesthetist, and two nurses working as a team, with one patient—who is anesthetized. Class size of 5 to 1. Now, consider those variables mentioned above: multiple intelligences, learning styles, brain research, learning disabilities, gender etc. They are likely irrelevant to the surgeon when the patient is anesthetized.

Think of the plumber working one-on-one with the leaky faucet in your washroom; think of your hairstylist working one-on-one with you while you both drink tea. Now, position yourself as a teacher. Is there any doubt that teachers are involved in one of the most complex, important, and demanding professions?
Teachers Get Paid TOO Much!

Teachers get paid TOO much...I'm fed up with teachers and their hefty salary schedules. What we need here is a little perspective.

If I had my way, I'd pay these teachers myself. I'd pay them babysitting wages. That's right-instead of paying these outrageous taxes, I'd give them $3 an hour out of my own pocket. And I'm only going to pay them for five hours, not coffee breaks. That would be $15 a day. Each parent should pay $15 a day for these teachers to baby-sit their child. Even if they have more than one child, it's still a lot cheaper than private day care.

Now, how many children do they teach every day-maybe 20? That's $15x20=$300 a day. But remember, they only work 180 days a year! I am not going to pay them for all those vacations! $300x180=$54,000. (Just a minute, I think my calculator needs new batteries.)

I know now you teachers will say-What about those who have 10 years experience and a master's degree? Well, maybe (to be fair) they could get the minimum wage, and instead of just baby-sitting, they could read the kids a story. We could round that off to about $5 an hour, times five hours, times 20 children. That's $500 a day times 180 days. That's $90,000...HUH?!?

Wait a minute, let's get a little perspective here. Baby-sitting wages are too good for these teachers. Did anyone see a salary schedule around here?
The dinner guests were sitting around the table discussing life. One man, a CEO, decided to explain the problem with education. He argued, "What's a kid going to learn from someone who decided his best option in life was to become a teacher?"

He reminded the other dinner guests what they say about teachers: "Those who do... do. Those who can't... teach!"

To emphasize his point he said to another guest; "You're a teacher Bonnie. Be honest. What do you make?"

Bonnie, who had a reputation for honesty and frankness replied, "You want to know what I make? (She paused for a second, then began...)

Well, I make children work harder than they ever thought they could. I make a C+ feel like the Congressional Medal of Honor.

I make kids sit through 40 minutes of class time when their parents can't make them sit for 5 minutes without an IPOD, Game Cube, or movie rental. You want to know what I make? (She paused again and looked at each and every person at the table.) I make kids wonder. I make them question. I make them apologize and mean it. I make them have respect and take responsibility for their actions. I teach them to write and then I make them write. I make them read, read, read. I make them show all their work in math.

I make my students from other countries learn everything they need to know in English while preserving their unique cultural identity. I make my classroom a place where all my students feel safe. I make my students stand, placing their hand over their heart to say the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

I make them understand that if they use the gifts they were given, work hard, and follow their hearts, they can succeed in life. (Bonnie paused one last time and then continued.)

You want to know what I make? I MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

What do you make Mr. CEO?"
Battle of the Wolves

One evening an old Cherokee told his Grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, "My son, the battle is between two wolves inside us all."

One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.

The Grandson thought about it and then asked his Grandfather, "Which wolf wins?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."
NEXT SEASON ON SURVIVOR

Have you heard about the next planned “Survivor” show? Three businessmen and three businesswomen will be dropped in an elementary school classroom for 6 weeks. Each business person will be provided with a copy of his/her school district’s curriculum and a class of 28 students.

Each class will have five learning-disabled children, three with ADD, one gifted child, and two who speak limited English. Three will be labeled with severe behavior problems.

Each business person must complete lesson plans at least 3 days in advance with annotations for curriculum objectives and modify, organize, or create materials accordingly. They will be required to teach students, correct homework, make bulletin boards, compute grades, complete report cards, document benchmarks, communicate with parents, and arrange parent conferences. They must also supervise recess and monitor the hallways. In addition, they will complete drills for fire, earthquakes, and shooting attacks. They must attend workshops (180 hours), faculty meetings, union meetings, and attend curriculum development meetings. They must also tutor those students who are behind and strive to get their two not-English speaking children proficient enough to take the standardized tests. If they are sick or having a bad day they must not let it show.

Each day they must incorporate reading, writing, math, science, and social studies into the program. They must maintain discipline and provide an educationally stimulating environment at all times.

The business people will only have access to the golf course on the weekends, but on their new salary they will not be able to afford it anyway. There will be no access to vendors who want to take them out to lunch, and lunch will be limited to 30 minutes. On days when they do not have recess duty, the business people will be permitted to use the staff restroom as long as another survival candidate is supervising their class.

They will be provided with two 40 minute planning periods per week while their students are attending assemblies. If the copier is operable, they may make copies of necessary materials at this time. The business people must continually advance their education on their own time and pay for this advanced training themselves. This can be accomplished by moonlighting at a second job or marrying someone with money.

The winner will be allowed to return to his or her job.
Give me the good ye know,
That I, the Child, may grow!
Light, for the whole day long,
Food that is pure and strong,
Housing and clothing fair,
Clean water and clean air.
Teaching from day to day,
And room - for a child to play!

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1908)
EXCUSES

The Graduate School of Education at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois, recently collected a number of excuses for absence turned in by my students at high schools around the state. A number of these are listed below: the spelling is exactly as it appeared on the notes.

Dear School: Please excuse John for being absent January 28, 29, 30, 32, and 33.

Chris has a acre on his side.

Mary could not come to school because she was bothered by very close veins.

John has been absent because he had two teeth taked out of his face.

Please excuse Gloria. She has been sick and under the doctor.

My son is under the doctor’s care and should not take PE. Please execute him.

Lily was absent from school yesterday as she had a going over.

Please excuse Joey Friday. He had loose vowels.

Please excuse from Blanche from Jum today. She is administrating.

Please excuse Blanche from PE for a few days. Yesterday she fell out of a tree and misplaced her hip.

Carlos was absent yesterday because he was playing football, he was hut in the growing part.

My daughter was absent yesterday because she was tired. She spent the weekend with the Marines.

Please excuse Jimmy for being. It was his father’s fault.

Please excuse Dianna from being absent yesterday. She was in bed with gramps.

Mary Ann was absent December 11-15 because she had a fever, sore throat, headache and upset stomach. Her sister was also sick, fever sore throat, her brother had a low grade fever and ached all over. I wasn’t the best either, sore throat and fever. There must be something going around, her father even got hot last night.
Please excuse Jason for being absent yesterday. He had a cold and missed the weekend with the Martises. My daughter was absent yesterday because she was tired. She spent a

(Oh sure...To "drift" is an acceptable excuse.)

Saturday won't be in school a week from Friday. We have to attend her funeral.

(Which "has" to be the same person with the 33 day calendar!)

(I'm so sorry I can understand.)

Please excuse Jennifer for being absent. It was his father's fault.

Please excuse May Friday from school. He has very loose vowels.

I mean could not come to school today because she has been bothered by

(Websites dictionary: Watmarch - $2.99)

Please excuse Qorla from Jim today. She is administerating.

(I'd love to see her appointment book.)

Dear School: Please excuse John being absent on Jan. 28, 29, 30, 31,

(sheesh...What ever happened to a good old spankning?)

With,

(execute)

please

is under a doctor's care and should not take P.E. today. Please

***

These are actual excuse notes teachers have received, spelling

mistakes
Elementary School Children Think Fast

TEACHER: Why are you late?
WEBSTER: Because of the sign.
TEACHER: What sign
WEBSTER: The one that says, "School Ahead, Go Slow."

TEACHER: Cindy, why are you doing your math multiplication on the floor?
CINDY: You told me to do it without using tables!

TEACHER: John, how do you spell "crocodile?"
TEACHER: No, that's wrong
JOHN: Maybe it's wrong, but you asked me how I spell it!

TEACHER: What is the chemical formula for water?
SARAH: H I J K L M N O!
TEACHER: What are you talking about?
SARAH: Yesterday you said it's H to O!

TEACHER: George, go to the map and find North America.
GEORGE: Here it is!
TEACHER: Correct. Now class, who discovered America?
CLASS: George!

TEACHER: Willie, name one important thing we have today that we didn't have ten years ago.
WILLIE: Me!
TEACHER: Tommy, why do you always get so dirty?
TOMMY: Well, I'm a lot closer to the ground than you are.

TEACHER: Ellen, give me a sentence starting with "I."
ELLEN: I is...
TEACHER: No, Ellen.... Always say, "I am."
ELLEN: All right.... "I am the ninth letter of the alphabet"

TEACHER: "Can anybody give an example of COINCIDENCE?"
JOHNNY: "Sir, my Mother and Father got married on the same day, same time."

TEACHER: "George Washington not only chopped down his father's cherry tree, but also admitted doing it. Now do you know why his father didn't punish him?"
JOHNNY: "Because George still had the ax in his hand."

TEACHER: Now, Sam, tell me frankly, do you say prayers before eating?
SAM: No sir, I don't have to, my Mom is a good cook.

TEACHER: Desmond, your composition on "My Dog" is exactly the same as your brother's. Did you copy his?
DESMOND: No, teacher, it's the same dog!

TEACHER: What do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?
PUPIL: A teacher.
Unity
by Pat Koppman

"I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there,
The clay they used was a young child's mind,
And they fashioned it with care.
One was a teacher, the tools she used
Were books and music and art:
One a parent with a guiding hand,
And a gentle, loving heart.
Day after day the teacher toiled,
With touch that was deft and sure,
While the parent labored by her side
And polished and smoothed it o'er.
And when at last their task was done,
They were proud of what they had wrought,
For the things they had molded into the child,
Could neither be sold nor bought.
And each agreed he would have failed,
If he had worked alone,
For behind the parent stood the school,
And behind the teacher, the home."
I Had Known When I Started Teaching

Current Collection of Tips

These tips were highlighted both in the Activity Books (ELEM MS HS) at the Annual Meeting and also in the New Teacher Strand.

For more highlights from the Annual Meeting, please check out the Blog and the WebCasts of selected sessions.

The following tips are from the series *Empowering the Beginning Teacher in Mathematics*, by Cynthia Thomas.

10. Not every student will be interested every minute. No matter how much experience you have or how great you are at teaching, you will encounter times in the classroom when no student is interested! The solution is to change your tone of voice, move around the room, or switch from lecturing to some other activity. Maybe you can even use a manipulative to increase the students’ understanding and, possibly, their level of interest.

9. If a lesson is going badly, stop. Even if you have planned a lesson and have a clear goal in mind, if your approach is not working—for whatever reason—stop! Regroup and start over with a different approach, or abandon your planned lesson entirely and go on to something else. At the end of the day, be honest with yourself as you examine what went wrong and make plans for the next day.

8. Teaching will get easier. Maybe not tomorrow or even next week, but at some point in the year, your job will get easier! Try to remember your first day in the classroom. Were you nervous? Of course; all of us were. See how much better you are as a teacher already? By next year, you will be able to look back on today and be amazed at how much you have learned and how much easier so many aspects of teaching are!

7. You do not have to volunteer for everything. Do not feel that you always have to say yes each time you are asked to participate. Know your limits. Practice saying, “Thank you for thinking of me, but I do not have the time to do a good job with another task right now.” Of course, you must accept your responsibility as a professional and do your fair share, but remember to be realistic about your limits.

6. Not every student or parent will love you. And you will not love every one of them, either! Those feelings are perfectly acceptable. We teachers are not hired to love students and their
parents; our job is to teach students and, at times, their parents as well. Students do not need a friend who is your age; they need a facilitator, a guide, a role model for learning.

5. You cannot be creative in every lesson. In your career, you will be creative, but for those subjects that do not inspire you, you can turn to other resources for help. Textbooks, teaching guides, and professional organizations, such as NCTM, are designed to support you in generating well-developed lessons for use in the classroom. When you do feel creative and come up with an effective and enjoyable lesson, be sure to share your ideas with other teachers, both veterans and newcomers to the profession.

4. No one can manage portfolios, projects, journals, creative writing, and student self-assessment all at the same time and stay sane! The task of assessing all these assignments is totally unreasonable to expect of yourself as a beginning teacher. If you want to incorporate these types of exercises into your teaching, pick one for this year and make it a priority in your classroom. Then, next year or even the year after that, when you are comfortable with the one extra assignment you picked, you can incorporate another innovation into your teaching.

3. Some days you will cry, but the good news is, some days you will laugh! Learn to laugh with your students and at yourself!

2. You will make mistakes. You cannot undo your mistakes, but berating yourself for them is counterproductive. If the mistake requires an apology, make it and move on. No one is keeping score.

1. This is the best job on earth! Stand up straight! Hold your head high! Look people in the eye and proudly announce, “I am a teacher!”
A Hand to Substitutes

Getting organized before the fact will ensure a smooth ride for your substitute teacher

BY ELLEN JAVERNICK

In the days before computers, passing on information to substitutes was difficult. It often seemed easier to drag yourself into school rather than prepare for a sub. Now we can individualize our lesson plans to guarantee that our substitute teacher and our students will both have a good day. Here are some plan-ahead procedures that have worked for me.

Hello, My Name Is... Classroom management is easier when substitutes can call children by name. I've found that substitutes appreciate names on desks or nametag necklaces for younger students. Be sure to also leave an up-to-date seating chart in a prominent place. If you're in a team-teaching situation where students move during the day, make sure your substitute is able to place the correct names with the correct students currently seated at the desks. Most substitute teachers prefer not to have teachers leave lists of disruptive students - that way, none of the boys or girls feel they have must live up to their reputations. I also like to designate a fellow teacher the substitute can check with in case he or she has questions throughout the day.

What's the plan? My substitutes' stress levels have dropped dramatically when I've left a lesson plan so they know exactly what I want to accomplish that day. They lose credibility when students are able to announce triumphantly, "We did that yesterday!"

I also like to let substitutes know what students should do with their completed work. Should it be sent home, graded together or left for you to check? What should students do when they've finished their assigned work? Classroom management will be much easier if the substitute knows and can follow your routine. It's also always reassuring for substitutes to discover that you've left emergency plans indicating what they could do in a pinch - for example, what to do when it rains during recess.

Be prepared. Nothing is more frustrating for a substitute than not being able to find the needed supplies. You may know that the rulers are in the storage cupboard down the hall, but your substitute will not without being told. Better yet, leave the day's supplies with your lesson plans.

Along with supplies and lesson plans, I like to make sure that a sub can quickly locate emergency procedure information. It's frightening for both the students and a substitute to not know where to go when an alarm bell rings. Along with those notes, it's a good idea to also leave tips on where to meet students at the beginning of the day, where to stand for recess duty, where to take students for lunch and whether he or she should walk up to the music room or wait in the classroom for the kids to return.

When should library books be returned? When are attendance and lunch counts sent in? Give your substitute a heads-up in advance and a good day will be had by all.

Ellen Javernick teaches first grade in Loveland, CO. She is the author of numerous books and articles for children.
My Biggest Fear

I am the child who tries each day,  
to learn and grow and find my way.  
And I know the message I send is clear;  
I'm okay, I can take it from here.  
Well, that bravado I share is all an act.  
A clever ruse to hide the fact that,  
what I need is you right here —  
To help me face my biggest fear.  
So, lean in close and listen well 'cause,  
My friends don't think that I should tell.  
My worry of worry, my biggest fear,  
is what would happen if you weren't here?  
So stay with me, at home and school,  
and ignore the fact that it's not cool.  
And try as I might to hold you at bay,  
it's at that very moment I need you to stay.

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