

# FingerPoints

OCTOBER 2006 EDITION

E-Newsletter for *Teaching Is Too Important to Take Seriously*

## Are We There Yet?

Do you remember that line?

Did you ever ask it?

At one time or another we have all been in a car when we heard that line. The first time we heard it, we probably said it at the beginning of a long drive with our parents. I remember sitting in the back of my dad's green Gran Torino station wagon with the fake wood panel sides, saying that, and wondering how my dad could stand such a long a drive. In fact, I remember thinking that he was purposely driving slowly, in order to make the drive last longer, because he loved it so much.

The next time we heard it, we were probably in the front seat when our own kids said it about 3 miles into a 759 mile trip. It was at that time that we understood that dad wasn't driving slowly those years ago, because he hated the drive as much as we did.

Since we are now a full two months into the school year, it is time to ask, are we there yet?

It feels like we are on a long trip from years ago, and that we will never make it to the end. The students are starting to show their true colors (and so are some staff members) and it doesn't feel like we will ever get to the end.

The moral of this story can be seen in the movie *National Lampoon's Vacation*. If there was ever an "Are We There Yet?" movie it is that one. However, in the end, the destination wasn't the best part. It was the trip that made the movie (especially the part where they tied Grandma to the roof of the car.) Remember that, as we push through this year. Yes, we want to get to the end, but it is the trip through the year which is the real fun. As someone once said, "The object of the journey is not to arrive." (Sorry, I listened to a lot of progressive rock in the 70's.)

Have a Good Day!  
Scott Endres

## The Finger of the Month - #3 Smile, Damn It! Smile!

Are things starting to get bad at school? Are tensions increasing with your staff and students? Are attitudes starting to take a negative turn? Well, as we are sitting in the back seat of our long trip to the end of another school year, it's time to remember what Dame Sybil Hathaway said, "Smile, Damn It! Smile!" (I always imagine she said it some sort of fancy accent, that sounded very intelligent and snooty.)

Smile Damn It! Smile! isn't just giving up, smiling and acting like nothing bad is happening. Smile, Damn It! Smile! is a proactive way of changing the negative attitudes around you. If you believe that negative comments can bring an entire group down, Smile, Damn It! Smile! is the way to bring the attitude up. The research shows that a positive attitude makes a difference and is contagious.

To start the upward spiral, just start smiling, even if you don't feel like. Research tests have shown that the simple act of smiling can increase your level of happiness. Research has also shown that, in some ways, happiness can be contagious. Therefore, if you start smiling, you can start the trend to a happier work place. A good day to start would be October 6th, World Smile Day. And while your smiling, remember to tell every one you meet to Have a Good Day!

## Quote of the Month

*On a scale of 1 to 10 on a positive attitude, I'm an 11!*

Indiana football coach Terry Hoepfner at the press conference to announce that he was taking a leave of absence because of brain surgery scheduled the following morning. He returned to the team 12 days later.

## Be Funny, Make Money (AATH Humor Essay Contest)



Are you looking for a unique writing assignment for your students? The Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH) may have something for you. If you don't know what the AATH is, take a look at their mission statement.

*To advance the understanding and application of humor and laughter for their positive benefits.*

In order bring this mission to the education field, the AATH recently announced it's second Humor Essay Contest. The contest is divided into four categories (K-5 Elementary, 6-8 Middle School, 9-12 High School and Teachers), with a nationwide winner being named in each category. The AATH is looking for essays of a maximum 400 words describing how humor has helped your life. You can discuss how you used humor in a difficult situation, how you benefited from humor to solve a problem, or how you applied humor in your everyday life. Basically, the essay needs to tell how humor has been good to you.

Oh yeah, what do you get? Cold hard cash (and other stuff.) Each category winner will receive \$50, a humor kit of fun humor goodies, and books for your school library. Do you want fame along with the money? Well, you get that, too. The winning essays will publicized at the AATH Conference in Panama City Beach, FL in February and they will be published in the AATH newsletter, which is distributed all over the humor world.

If you this sounds like a good idea, check out [www.aath.org/student\\_essay.htm](http://www.aath.org/student_essay.htm) for more information. The deadline for entering is November 1st, so get writing and good luck.

## National Knock Knock Joke Day - October 31st

Halloween is also National Knock Knock Joke Day. As a father of a 7 year old boy I know all about the knock knock joke stage. My son went through a stage where he would develop the most elaborate knock knock joke, and take so much pride in telling it. The best part is when he finishes telling it, he would let out the best, most infectious laugh I have ever heard. The kicker is that most of the time the joke are not funny, because they didn't make any sense. However, it doesn't matter to my son. He just keeps on laughing.

In longer workshops, as a culminating activity, I usually ask groups to pick one of the day's events, and write a joke a 6 year old would enjoy (usually a knock knock joke.) In almost every case, the groups will start their joke by saying, "Now, its not funny."

Well, actually that is the point.

Children will laugh at anything. It doesn't have to be funny (see any knock knock joke by a 6 year old.) The idea is, children want to laugh and will look for any opportunity to laugh, even if it isn't really funny. As for adults, well, we'll laugh when the situation is perfect. We want to make sure that something is actually funny, and in the right situation.

This is why I have participants write a 6 year old style joke at the end of workshops. No matter how bad the jokes are, we always end up laughing and we learn that laughing doesn't have to be perfect. We just have to make sure we laugh. So this Halloween, share a good knock knock joke with a friend, or maybe share a bad one.

HAVE A JOKE OR A FUNNY STORY FROM TEACHING?

SEND IT TO [FINGERPOINTS@PAPERWADIDEAS.COM](mailto:FINGERPOINTS@PAPERWADIDEAS.COM) AND I'LL SHARE IT IN AN UPCOMING ISSUE.

© 2006 PaperWad Ideas

## **These are the Days of Our Lives**

October is full of special celebrations, so get started celebrating.  
Remember, all of these are celebrated by someone, somewhere. Enjoy!

### Month

Go Hog Wild Month  
National Caramel Month  
National Construction Toy Month  
National Go On a Field Trip Month  
National Roller Skating Month  
National Toilet Tank Repair Month  
Right Brainers Rule! Month  
National Sarcastics Awareness Month

International Starman Month  
National Chili Month  
National Cookie Month  
National Pajama Month  
National Reading Group Month  
Positive Attitude Month  
Self Promotion Month

### Weeks

1-7 National Carry a Tune Week  
2-9 No Salt Week  
8-15 National Metric Week  
15-18 Teen Read Week  
15-21 National School Bus Safety Week  
23-29 The Magic of Differences Week  
25-31 International Magic Week

1-7 Squirrel Appreciation Week  
8-14 National Chestnut Week  
8-15 National School Lunch Week  
15-21 National Character Counts Week  
23-27 Celebrate Job Loss Week  
23-29 National Save Your Back Week  
25-31 Peace, Friendship and Goodwill Week

### Days

1 Fire Pup Day  
2 National Custodial Workers Day  
5 World Teachers Day  
6 National Diversity Day  
7 International Frugal Fun Day  
9 National Kick Butt Day  
11 Bring a Teddy Bear to School Day  
13 International Skeptics  
14 Be Bald and Be Free Day  
15 National Grouch Day  
19 Evaluate Your Life Day  
21 Sweetest Day  
23 TV Talk Show Host Day  
25 National One-Hit Wonder Day  
27 Frankenstein Friday  
28 National Chocolates Day  
30 National Candy Corn Day  
31 National Magic Day  
31 National Caramel Apple Day

1 International Day of Older Persons  
4 Ten Four Day  
6 Mad Hatters Day  
6 World Smile Day  
9 Leif Erickson Day  
11 General Pulaski Memorial Day  
12 Moment of Frustration Scream Day  
13 World Egg Day  
15 Dictionary Day  
17 Mulligan Day  
21 Reptile Awareness Day  
23 National Mole Day  
25 Sourest Day  
26 Mule Day  
28 Make A Difference Day  
30 Haunted Refrigerator Night  
30 Zero Tasking Day  
31 Scare a Friend Day  
31 National Knock-Knock Jokes Day