

FingerPoints

FEBRUARY 2007 EDITION

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

February, the Month of Love and.....

...blaaaaahhhhh!!!!

Yes, I know it is the shortest month of the year, but doesn't February feel like the longest? It does to me. Here is what I mean. It is half throughout the third nine weeks and my least favorite time of the year. It is too long since the holidays to remember the rest we got, and too far from spring break to see it as a goal. (And let's not talk about how many new year's resolutions we have abandoned by February.)

And then what about the weather? It has been miserable in many places. Luckily, where I live, we haven't too bad a winter, but apparently I missed that news flash about the month long solar eclipse. Maybe the news people missed the story when they were covering that investigatory piece titled *Girl Scout Cookies - The Devil's Work?*, but I know the eclipse had to happen, because I haven't seen the sun in a month.

I guess what I am trying to say, is that yes, even though February is the month of love, it can also be the month of pain. Therefore, if

there was ever a time to throw some paper, now is the time. For those of you who have attended my *Teaching Is Too Important to Take Seriously!* workshops, you know the first thing we do is write down all the reasons teaching sucks and then wad it up and throw it away. We write these down because we need a constructive way to get our frustrations out. We throw them away because 90% of the things we wrote down, we have no control over.

This is why, my valentine for you this year is a blank piece of paper. On that paper, I want you to write down everything that is bugging you and then very dramatically throw it away.

Now quit wasting time throwing paper wads, and get back to work ...

...with a smile.

Have a Good Day!

Scott Endres

The Finger of the Month - #5 Laugh at the World Around You

As I looked back at past FingerPoints, I realized it has been awhile since we talked about Finger 5 - Laugh at the World Around You, and February seems to be the perfect month talk about it. It is the middle of the year, and the time when it easy to put it on cruise control and just try to get through. Let's face it. It is hard enough to get caught up on paperwork, let alone bring in something new at this time. Well, the list below will give you some ideas. Some are old and some are new, but as the TV ad used to say, if you haven't used it yet, it's new to you.

- Make a game based on a favorite TV game show
- Use a magic wand to magically quiet a class
- Start telling a joke of the day or week, for your subject
- Get a yellow cloth and a whistle, and use them to call "fouls" in your classroom
- Start a bulletin board of funny news articles
- Start incorporating music into your classroom
- Write a test with humorous questions, using people in the school
- Give credit to students when they catch your mistakes
- Intentionally make mistakes
- Find a hemi, in other words find something that defines you



Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid

As I mentioned in the January FingerPoints, *Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid* is my theme for 2007. So many times in life, we worry about what the Don't Be Afraid... proper thing to do is. We worry about what other people will think. We worry about worrying about what other people will think. However, rarely does any of this lead to laughter. That is why I say, Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid.

Go out and do something stupid. (Notice I said stupid, not dangerous.) It will help your soul. If you are in an area that has snow, go sledding. Yes, if you look at it as an adult, sledding is stupid, but is also fun. If you live in an area like me where it is cold but no snow, celebrate Tropical Shirt Week (5-9) and Tropical Shirt Day (9th). We started this at my school two years ago as a stupid way to break up the monotony of winter. People thought we were crazy, but it caught on. At the beginning of the school year, this year, the first questions I was asked was were we going to have Tropical Shirt Week again this year. (By the way, if you live somewhere where the weather is warm enough to already be wearing a tropical shirt, try making snowballs.)

Being stupid can also help you in your classroom. How's this for a project? Get 300 sixth graders to do between 650 and 700 fraction multiplication problems over two weeks. Does that sound fun? (I won't ask if it sounds stupid, because I know it does.) But that was our task last January. Try to find a way to get our entire 6th grade to practice fraction multiplication. To do it, we went to stupid. We put together the Super Bowl of Fractions. Now this had nothing to do with football, but we played it up like it did. We put the students into teams, had them pick their football team names, and put the students through pre-season conditioning. When it came time to the games, I was dressed in a referee's uniform, with a whistle, a scoreboard clock, and a yellow flag for penalties. We even had a half time show (with no wardrobe malfunctions) and presented trophies. It was totally stupid, and it worked. We had students begging to continue multiplying fractions when the final whistle blew. I worked so well that we are doing it again this year. That's right, the Super Bowl of Fractions II.

A little stupid is good. It can be good for you and it can be good for your students. Set a goal to be intentionally stupid at least once in the month of February.

Like the Don't Be Afraid... logo?

The Don't Be Afraid... logo is now available on t-shirts. The shirt has the nose and glasses logo with Don't Be Afraid... on the front and is on a white t-shirt with black ringer collars. Don't worry, it doesn't say, ...to Be Stupid anywhere. I'll leave that up to you, to tell people what it is. Go to www.paperwadideas.com/store to order or you can pick them up at any of the conferences where I am speaking (see the list below.) All shirts are \$12 and come in M, Lg, and XLg. So don't be stupid, buy a shirt. (Sorry, I couldn't resist.)

On the Road Again...

It's time to get back out on the road and hit some conferences. If you are in the area for any of these, please stop by and say Hi!

IMLEA Conference	Indianapolis, IN	Feb 12-13
AATH Conference	Panama City Beach, FL	Feb 15-18
NCMSA Conference	Greensboro, NC	Feb 26-27

These are the Days of Our Lives

The number of holidays in February has grown since last year. Make sure to look for the new ones. Remember these are real holidays celebrated by someone, somewhere. So just celebrate!

Month

National Hot Breakfast Month	Pet Dental Health Month
Cat Health Month	Grapefruit Month
Bake for Family Fun Month	Learn Italian Month
National Cherry Pie Month	North Carolina Sweet Potato Month
Return Shopping Carts to the Supermarket Month	

Weeks

4-10 International Coaching Week
4-10 Dump Your Significant Jerk Week
5 -9 Tropical Shirt Week
5-11 Get Paid to Shop Week
6-10 Just Say No to Powerpoints Week (The powerpoint can be downloaded on website.)
6-10 National School Counseling Week
6-12 Tropical Shirt Week
8-14 Love Makes the World Go Round; But Laughter Keeps Us From Getting Dizzy Week
12-18 Jell-O Week
14-20 Random Acts of Kindness Week
17-21 Great Backyard Bird Count Week
26-3/4 National Pancake Week

Days

1 Bubble Gum Day	1 Hula in the Coola Day
1 Robinson Crusoe Day	2 Ground Hog job Shadow Day
2 Hedge Hog Day	2 Self Renewal Day
2 Wear Red Day	4 Dump Your Significant Jerk Day
4 Move Hollywood & Broadway to Lebanon PA Day	6 Pay A Compliment Day
5 Weatherperson's Day	7 National Girls & women in Sports Day
7 Wave All Your Fingers at Your Neighbors Day	9 Tropical Shirt Day
8 Laugh and Get Rich Day	11 White Shirt Day
10 Pro Sports Wives Day	13 Get a Different Name Day
12 Lost Penny Day	15 National Gum Drop Day
14 Ferris Wheel Day	17 World Human Spirit Day
17 My Way Day	19 Chocolate Mint Day
17 Who Shall I Be? Day	20 International Pancake Day
19 Spunky Old Broads Day	22 For the Love of Mike Day
20 Northern Hemisphere Hoodie Hoo Day	23 Curling is Cool Day
22 National Chili Day	28 National Tooth Fairy Day
26 For Pete's Sake Day	