

FingerPoints

MARCH 2007 EDITION

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

Welcome to March Madness!

The term March Madness is usually associated with the college basketball tournament. However, anyone who has ever taught knows about another march madness. It is the madness from the first feeling of the end of winter until spring break.

During our march madness, students go crazy, parents go crazy, administrators go crazy, cafeteria workers go crazy...well you get the idea. It is a very tough time. We know spring break is coming and if we can get to spring break, we can make it to the end. But spring break is still

SO FAR AWAY!!! I'M NOT GOING TO MAKE IT!!!

Thanks, that feels better. Anyway, don't let it get to you. To try to help, the theme this month is march madness. Remember, some people in basketball say that the best defense is a good offense. So go out have some march madness fun, before the march madness gets you.

Have a Good Day,
Scott Endres

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

Alright, this month is about march madness and it time to talk about something that gets me mad. This is something where I have tried to keep a good attitude about, but you know sometimes it just gets to me. And I know from talking to teachers around to country, you are tired of it too. What am I talking about? You probably have guessed. I'm mad at continually grumpy people.

There, that was good for me. How about you?

As we talk about at the beginning of *Teaching Is...* there are a lot of things we can't control in our lives, and sometimes it helps to get it out. In our sessions, we usually write these things on a piece of paper and then throw them away. This was my throwing grumpy people away. Thank you for being my trash can.

What are we to do with grumpy people? We all know some. We have all had people in our schools bring a positive meeting down to the depths of their grumpiness (if that is a word.) Well, as you know, we need to give these people the finger. The good finger that is. The one that says Smile, Damn It! Smile!

As you remember, Smile, Damn It! Smile! is the middle finger of the five fingers of laughter. It is the idea that smiling, laughing, and a

positive attitude can help change the negative attitudes to a positive. This is called the Law of Conservation of Smiling, which is smiling (or laughing etc.) is neither created nor destroyed, it is only transformed.

Now, don't get the idea that I think that you can change the whole world with a smile. (I feel like throwing my hat in the air now. If you don't understand that reference, ask someone older than you.) However, you can make a difference. I have seen it in my own life. When I started saying "Have a Good Day" to everyone I interacted with, I soon realized that not only did their mood change, but so did mine. It made me happier to be around happier people.

So how do we use this to change continually grumpy people? Slowly. It won't change overnight, but let's be truthful. What are the other options? Do we continue to let these people bring down the world around us, when we know a positive attitude is just as powerful as a negative one. No. We smile at everyone we can, especially students. We laugh, when we can laugh. We make positive comments in meetings that are going south. We say Have a Good Day, every chance we get, again especially to students. In other words, we take up the challenge of the middle finger and continue to Smile, Damn It! Smile! (especially with students.)



Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid

In keeping with the theme of March Madness, I have from the college basketball world, possibly the best Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid story ever. In fact, it would be the best DBA story except for one thing, Don't Be Afraid... which I won't tell you about until the end.

Many of you may have seen the pictures last month, of the Tennessee basketball coach during the Volunteer's big game at home against number one Duke. Now this may confuse some of you, because the Duke men's team hasn't been number one this year. But I am not talking about men's basketball, I'm talking about women's basketball. In February, the Tennessee women's team hosted the unanimous number one Duke women's team in a big game shown on ESPN. The Duke team was undefeated and with the Tennessee women's team winning tradition, they pulled out all the stops to try to beat the Blue Devils.

This brings me back to the Tennessee basketball coach, and I am not talking about the women's coach, but instead the men's coach. In a show of support, the Tennessee men's coach sat down front in order to cheer on the Lady Volunteers. Now, what was stupid about that? Well, he did in the style of the a normal male college student. That's right, he was shirtless, his chest painted Volunteer orange and with a large silver V, and headband in his hair. It was easily one of the funniest, and stupidest thing I have ever seen.

What Coach Pearl had done for me with this simple stupid act, was to remind me that sports are supposed to be fun. This was a big, serious game, but in the end it supposed to be about fun for the fans.

It got me thinking, how many other things in our life are supposed to be fun and we take them too seriously? Teaching? Definitely. Yes, it is hard work, but it is supposed to be fun. We have chosen to work with children, and it better be fun or we need to get out. So, in March I challenge you to take a look at your life and see if there is any place you can bring a little fun. When you do, don't be afraid to do something stupid. However, if you paint your body orange, don't send me a picture.

Oh yeah. Why isn't this the best DBA story? Duke scored the first 19 points of the game and ended up beating Tennessee easily. Oh well, all that orange paint for nothing.

This Just In... Don't Be Afraid, The Revenge

Because I was presenting at the North Carolina Middle School Conference this past Sunday through Tuesday (and thanks to all the great people who I got to talk to at the conference), all of this newsletter was written last week and originally, this was a different article. That was until Don't Be Afraid... a little basketball game late Tuesday night.



On that night, the Tennessee men's team played the #4 and defending national champion Florida Gators at home and before the game, they had the Revenge of Don't Be Afraid to Be Stupid. This time it was the women's coach's turn to not be afraid. No, she didn't come to the floor, shirtless. Instead, Hall of Fame coach Pat Summitt came to the playing floor that is named for her, dressed as a Tennessee cheerleader. She led the crowd in cheers, was the top of a cheerleader pyramid and sang a beautifully, horrendous version of the state song "Rocky Top". So Coach Pearl's "stupid" act last month moved Coach Summitt to move past her comfort zone and be "stupid" too.

And this time it worked. Tennessee led by as much as 27 and upset Florida 86-76.

These are the Days of Our Lives

It seems by the number of special days in March, everyone is feeling march madness, so celebrate, madly. Remember these are real holidays celebrated by someone, somewhere. So just celebrate!

Month

Humorists are Artists Month

National Umbrella Month

Music in Our Schools Month

Optimism Month

National Caffeine Awareness Month

International Mirth Month

National Frozen Food Month

Youth Art Month

Play the Recorder Month

Weeks

1-7	Nat. Write a Letter of Appreciation Week	1-7	Universal Human Beings Week
4-10	Celebrate Your Name Week	5-9	National School Breakfast Week
5-11	National Procrastination Week (Originally scheduled for the week of 1-7)		
11-15	World Clown Week	14-21	National Toad Hollow Week
14-21	American Chocolate Week	19-25	National Spring Fever Week
20-26	National Bubble (Blowers) Week		

Days

1	Pig Day	2	Sherlock Holmes Day
3	What If Cats and Dogs Had Opposable Thumbs Day		
3	I Want to Be Happy Day	4	March Forth-Do Something Day
4	Namesake Day	5	Fun Facts About Names Day
6	Unique Names Day	7	Learn What Your Name Means Day
8	Joe Franklin Day	9	Name tag Day
9	Panic Day	9	Middle Name Pride Day
10	Mario Day	11	Dream Day
11	Johnny Appleseed Day	12	National Workplace Napping Day
13	Good Samaritan Involvement Day	13	Nat. Open an Umbrella Indoors Day
14	International Ask a Question Day	14	Organize Your Home Office Day
14	MOTH-ER Day	14	National Children's Craft Day
14	Pi Day	15	Absolutely Incredible Kid Day
15	Brutus Day	16	Lips Appreciation Day
17	Maple Syrup Day	18	Awkward Moments Day
18	Forgive Mom and Dad Day	19	Act Happy Day
19	National Chocolate Caramel Day	20	Proposal Day
21	National Common Courtesy Day	22	As Young As You Feel Day
22	International Goof-Off Day	23	National Puppy Day
23	O.K. Day	23	World Meteorological Day
24	Nat. Chocolate Covered Raisins Day	25	Yo Yo Day
25	Pecan Day	26	Make Up Your Own Holiday Day
27	Kite Flying Day	30	Pencil Day
30	Grass Is Always Browner on the Other Side of the Fence Day		