

How to Awaken an Appreciation for the Value of Practicing Learning Skills in an Environment
of Poverty, Theft, Destruction and Violent Behavior

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Abstract

A first-year teacher thrust mid-term into a mixed-grade geometry class in a tough high school struggles to sort out what works and does not work to engage the students in meaningful learning. The students are largely from low-income urban families and demonstrate a broad range of abilities and motivation.

The purpose of this study is to describe the effectiveness of various teaching strategies and techniques in building learning skills within the context of a mixed-grade geometry class. The literature reveals that there is a broad range of differentiated instructional techniques to choose from, but the best-laid plans tend to fall by the wayside in the face of the struggle between teaching and maintaining classroom control.

The results of this study have indicated that there are profound cultural issues that need to be addressed, which fly in the face of conventional wisdom and account for poor student performance and for teacher burn-out. In the fray, differentiated instruction fell by the wayside and the teacher resorted to repeated presentations, work sheets, testing, test correction with note taking, and repeat testing, with mixed success. These techniques revealed that performance was a function of motivation, self-definition, and willingness to participate, rather than the subject matter per se. Teacher engagement and perseverance helped keep the dialogue with each student active and kept the process dynamic and nurturing. Long-term growth can only be inferred.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This is not the master's thesis I'd planned to write. I thought that I would put myself into a classroom situation within which I could apply the Differentiated Learning Techniques I had been taught and report about how wonderful they are. I planned to make my thesis part of my teaching experience, not the whole thing. Instead I found myself in an environment where all rules were off, and everything I had to do was on my own, on the fly, and in spite of the given agreements. I'm grateful to my academic advisor for letting me know that my thesis wasn't to be done in spite of this, but rather as a fulfillment of this. I don't see how I could have otherwise survived.

“Teach me how to learn. I’m not kidding!” This from a tough teen with tattoos, in an environment where copying another’s paper is considered an improvement over not bothering to work at all. As a new teacher I stepped into a microcosm of some 125 students, each with a personal plea. Impossible, I found out right away, to expect sitting still and taking notes. Many of the clever techniques I learned in class were equally absurd. The challenge: Create turned-on learners. Is this going to be Mission Impossible?

Statement of Problem

With one teacher working with over a hundred students, it is up to the students to keep up with a lock-step curriculum. The teacher is enjoined to fulfill a set of codified educational standards and to prepare these students to perform well on standardized tests. The classroom used for this study has students of a very broad range of abilities. The challenge is to engage the most poorly equipped, while not neglecting the highly motivated students who need exposure to the material at a higher level. The problem is made worse by the emotional and behavioral difficulties

present. The challenge is to turn this chaos into a functioning learning environment driven by the students' internal loci of control.

Where diversified teaching is most needed there are often other problems that keep the teacher from getting accurate information about their students' needs. The broad range of abilities in these sample groups is obscured by highly developed maladaptive coping skills, such as copying answers and parroting. Strategies need to address these issues and move the students in the direction of independent thinking and authentic work.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of differentiated instruction and discipline techniques in a high school geometry class, and to explore real-world applications of techniques of diversified education to find those that are effective and able to be easily implemented as needed. The teacher comes in with a lesson plan, alternative approaches and so on, and may find all these well-laid plans flying out the window in a barely controlled classroom. Time spent addressing discipline problems is time spent away from teaching and learning. How can such a class be transformed?

My first job as a certified teacher involved taking over four periods of geometry at a poor high school in a high crime area. Expecting these students to sit and listen to a lesson proved futile, and other good idea techniques were shown to be impossible as well. My teaching style devolved to passing out worksheets or assignments and then circulating through the classroom giving individual lessons in the midst of the chaos. My problems were exacerbated by not knowing names, and by not being seen as their "real" teacher. In the fray, I was forced to evolve individualized and differentiated teaching techniques, with greater or lesser success, and finally

to develop a routine of lecture, worksheet, test, review, re-test. This thesis is an attempt to report on this work.

Research Questions

What are effective ways of educating students to appreciate learning in an environment of poverty, theft, destruction and violent behavior? How can the techniques of differentiated instruction, discipline, and testing be effectively implemented in a classroom with a broad range of student needs and abilities?

Theoretical Rationale

Maria Montessori (1948) demonstrated that small children have a natural love of learning through exploration and if properly nurtured the child matures into an active, inquisitive and productive learner. B.F. Skinner (1953) demonstrated the power of environmental contingencies in shaping behavior through successive approximation.

The theoretical rationale of this study is based on these two premises, that learning is a natural human function that can be damaged, thwarted, suppressed or otherwise misdirected, and that through the proper application of behavior modification techniques and compassionate interaction the ability to learn can be reawakened and nourished.

Assumptions

Attempting to fit a diverse group of students into a single learning plan invites bewilderment, lack of attention, and resistance, not learning. Poorly performing students have intelligence, but their natural love of learning has been thwarted with regards to classroom work.

Background and Need

Project Re-Ed: a demonstration project for the reeducation of emotionally disturbed children.

U.S Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education (1967) was a behavioral modification-based program serving the needs of forty students with emotional disturbances in a residential program setting, Sunday through Friday, designed for short stays. The focus was on restoring confidence, enhancing learning and helping the child learn to live a normal life.

Carol Ann Tomlinson (1995) points out the difficulty of responding to the diverse students needs found in inclusive, mixed-ability classrooms. Often the children most in need of specific individual tutoring and remedial instruction are lost in overcrowded and poorly funded classrooms simply because these exist in poorly performing schools -- a cycle that is doomed to continue to spiral downward.

The task of the one teacher in such a task is to discover and respond to the needs of each individual in a class of twenty or thirty disenfranchised students. How can the techniques of differentiated instruction be implemented in such an environment, in the face of learned behaviors that are counterproductive and disruptive?

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Introduction

This chapter reviews the background information on working with diverse learners. Sections include the following: Historical Context, Differentiated Instruction, Influences of Poverty on Learning, Violence and Control, and Special Programs.

Historical Context

The 1975 Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (FindLaw, 2011) mandated that public schools make available a free appropriate public education to all eligible children with disabilities. Many of the children in high poverty, high violence neighborhoods suffer from a myriad of emotional, social, and behavioral dysfunctions which go undiagnosed and untreated. Children who would otherwise be essentially feral are forced to adapt to an educational environment that in turn is forced to adapt to them.

Review of Previous Research

Differentiated Instruction

Guild and Garger (1998) is one of the first sources to pull together information on what was a newly-flourishing topic in education, differentiated instruction. In 1999, Tomlinson compared the strategies used in two classrooms that failed to effectively meet the twin needs of high quality curriculum and maximizing the capacity of each learner. She asserted that in an effective classroom the learning goals of each lesson are clear, while the routes learners may take to get to that understanding are varied.

Since these pioneers, the topic of differentiated instruction has flourished and become a part of the National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum (NCAC) Effective Classroom Practices (2002), the National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators (1994), and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2010).

Influences of Poverty on Learning

Crosnoe (2009) takes the position that poverty, not race represents the inequity between differently performing high schools. He speculates that poor students in a school composed of largely poor students may achieve more real learning than poor students in a wealthier school. To reach this conclusion Crosnoe conducted propensity score analyses and robustness calculations on a sample of 1,119 low-income 9th to 11th graders in public high schools who had participated in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. He found that the proportion of the student body with middle- or high-income parents increased, low-income students progressed less far in math and science. Moreover, as the proportion of the student body with middle- or high-income or college-educated parents increased, low-income students experienced more psychosocial problems.

Hopkins (2005) studied middle and high school students in Tennessee and found an inverse correlation between poverty and math performance, and also found that the rural poor did better than their urban counterparts. She used 2002-2003 school year Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) mathematics scores for each school enrolling 6th, 7th, and/or 8th grade students in Tennessee, ACT scores of Tennessee high school students, school locale, and the socioeconomic status of the school.

Violence and Control

Rosenthal and Wilson (2008) studied the emotional effects of violence on 947 high school seniors from schools in Queens and Brooklyn. They cite studies that indicate that 98% of older adolescents living in the central cities of large urban areas have personally experienced violence, and that the mean level of exposure to community violence was nine episodes in three high school years. Students evidenced a wide variation in levels of stress symptoms and sense of personal control.

Using a national data set, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002, Ripski and Gregory (2009) examined three dimensions of 10th-grade school climate—unfairness, hostility, and victimization—as predictors of teacher-perceived student engagement and achievement in reading and mathematics in the same year. They found that student perceptions of victimization predicted lower individual engagement and reading and math achievement.

Special Programs

For a very few motivated students can take advantage of summer camps presented by the Contra Costa County Office of Education, in the San Francisco California Bay Area, in partnership with business community leaders. Each week-long day camp presents a set of career paths and combines tours and talks with hands-on work. I am lucky to be able to participate in three of these camps as a counselor/teacher responsible for about six of the sixty students active.

The Engineering Camp featured Design and Engineering, Power and Energy, Manufacturing Engineering, Building and Construction and other career pathways. Students visited Lawrence Livermore Labs, SunPower and USS Posco factories, and the California Carpenters Apprenticeship Training Center. Students built and raced robot cars, built electric motors and

completed wood and sheet metal construction projects. Throughout the camp emphasis was repeatedly placed on the importance of ten work-ready essential skills:

- Communication
- Information Management
- Applied Mathematics
- Technology
- Initiative/Self-Direction/Resourcefulness
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Professionalism and Ethics
- Workplace Context and Culture
- Creativity and Innovation
- Collaboration

Students were asked to grade themselves on these attributes at the beginning and at the end of the camp. The upcoming Biotech Camp is similar in structure and format, and features the topics of Biofuels and Green Energy, Forensics, Disease Detection, Stem Cell Research, and Disease Control. Each student group is responsible for creating a debate presentation on a relevant topic. My group will argue "Food, Feed, or Fuel?" The upcoming Environmental camp will spend time at the Dow Chemical wetlands restoration project, among its many rewarding activities.

During the school year, The Career Academies Support Network (2011) works with the high schools to develop career academies and other small learning communities, which combine coursework that prepares students for both college and career. Partnerships with employers and higher education give students opportunities to learn beyond the high school classroom. These programs are similar opportunities to the summer camps mentioned above, and are characterized as a small learning community with a college-prep curriculum with a career theme, partnership with employers, the community, and higher education, and featuring rigorous, relevant real world projects and problems.

According to Rich (2011), one out of four students do not complete high school in four years, while more than 90% of students who concentrate on career-oriented course do so, citing data from The Department of Education Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

Interview with an Expert: Curtis Aikens

Literacy Advocate and Celebrity Chef Curtis Aikens had taken a day to visit with the students in my geometry classes. They were fascinated to meet this successful person and to discover that while he is the author of several books, he was actually illiterate until his twenties, graduating from high school and beginning college in spite of this. Their questions ranged from "How did you cheat so well?" to "What's the best way to cook chicken?" and his answers were gentle, forthright and sincere. He brought out a side to my students that until then had been unavailable to me.

For this interview we met over brunch on July 9th, 2011. We talked for over half an hour while I taped our conversation on my I-phone. The following has been extracted from that session.

Q. How would you motivate underprivileged high school students?

A. I truly believe that every kid is different, and I don't want this to sound like a cop-out but the way I try to motivate any group that I talk to is I try to be just open and honest about me. If they can connect with me and I can have a connection with them, that's the motivation. They think "If this guy can overcome . . ." I feel that those of us, grownups, those of us with something, can share with those without. Everybody wants to achieve, whether they are low income black or privileged white guy, and they don't know your story, what you had to go through to get to where you are in life. I want them to know that I didn't have it easy. I'm sure there were things you had

to overcome as well. So to bring it back full circle, my way to motivate is to be a wide open book, as open and honest as I possibly can. That's my answer, open and honest. And I say "if I can do it, you can do it."

Right now I'm in an interesting spot in my life. I'm trying to set an example to my son, that I'm taking a huge step back in hopes of making giant leaps forward in my personal life, it's not about my business life any more, but in my personal growth. Here's a guy that's been on TV, met the president, and now he's working in a grocery store. Some people would look down on that. But this was the job I had when I was in high school, and I loved it then, so why wouldn't I love it now? That's what I want to communicate, that this is okay for me, and okay for him. And I'm proud of it, the work I'm doing. Whatever the work, if you're gratified in the work, everything else just follows. I want people to know that they can walk, not my path, but discover their own path of joy -- and love.

Q. What was your impression from your visit to my classes? What did you like, what didn't you like?

A. I did not like that they had to go to school in that building with no windows, with no natural light. That school was like a prison. When I walked into the office, they were so cold. I think we stood there for maybe three to five minutes for someone to help us. Then it was like "What are you doing here?" They were expecting trouble. How can you teach, and how can they learn in that kind of environment? That room was like a cage. That was hard for me, to see what those kids have to go through. It was almost like visiting a prison. It was hard for me, getting past that. How do you get the ideas out into that world where they need it the most? What did I enjoy? When these children started opening up and feeling comfortable enough to start asking questions and speaking out. The tough kids. When they stopped being subjects to my talk and started being

participants to my day, I loved that. When I left, I was high. It would be interesting to me to see how many of your students will miss you. I'll bet there are several who will do that. I'll bet you made a difference in a couple of those kids' lives. Once I got past the surroundings, I thought it was a great day.

Q. Do you think a job oriented, career oriented teaching system could work?

A. I told my son, if I had it to do over, I would have gotten a vocation as well as an education. It's about having more than one skill level. If I were a carpenter -- I can't drive a nail. I have to pay someone to do it. I can change a light bulb, but I can't fix a light socket -- if I'd had one of those skills to fall back on . . . Would it have motivated me to learn? There's no teacher like experience. I'm not sure it would have motivated me back then.

About a week and a half ago I realized, I've gotten what I wanted. I don't want other people's expectations and pressures. I want to tell myself, be wise enough to enjoy it. I'm having a lot more fun here at the grocery talking than I ever did at the Food Network. I have a walking and golfing meditation of gratitude. That's where I'm at. I am successful. Anything else is on top of it. Now I want to motivate others through my actions. How do I want to motivate? I want to motivate others to know they can have more, but they have to find it, then they have to learn to relax and enjoy it. I want them to respect "If that guy can do it from nothing, so can I."

Ethical Standards

This interview adheres to the ethical standards on the treatment of human subjects in research as proposed by the American Psychological Association. Additionally the proposal was reviewed by the Dominican University Institutional Review Board, approved, and assigned number 8280.

Conclusions

Statement About the Literature

There is no scarcity of material to choose from regarding the philosophy and techniques of differentiated instruction, but they all seem to assume massive time to implement and a well-disciplined student body. This is not the case where such instruction is most needed.

Chapter 3 Method

Introduction

A qualitative approach was employed to gather data. Success or failure of any given technique was evaluated daily. Changes in the effectiveness of test taking behaviors were recorded as changing grades on quizzes given. Quantitative information included results of different assignment types, and statistical information could be further analyzed, based on the students' zip codes, grades, and other information sources.

Sample and Site

A sampling of 120 students was studied over a school semester, from four mixed ninth through twelfth grade high school geometry classes. Ages ranged from 15 to 18. The school is located in a high poverty and high crime area, with greater than 85% school lunch program participation. The school moves to 100% lunches and breakfasts next fall.

Access and Permissions

These students were assigned to me by the school administration. The students at the beginning of the school year and their families as part of the enrollment process signed a set of agreements that included giving the right to be videotaped.

Data Gathering Strategies

Data gathering strategies include subjective narration, supplanted by student work such as worksheets, homework assignments, and tests.

Data Analysis Approach

Subjective narration will relate the experiences of the teacher, with some analysis of the changes in behavior and test results, as well as homework completion. Other indicators examined include breakage of calculators, presence of graffiti and messes, and student feedback.

Chapter 4 Findings

This is the diary entry for Saturday, January 29, 2011. It looks like the first entry because it is the first entry on this replacement computer, after my previous laptop got stolen out of my classroom. My bad, I thought a locked door would suffice for a few minutes. Not at this school.

So I'd better get my notes down before they get too stale. After all, I've been in charge of this class for a whole nine days now, which is a long time. Also I'll need to remember to back up my data frequently, and keep my laptop (and car keys, etc.) close at hand.

After completing my practice teaching at this high school in the math department head's Algebra II classes, and getting certified, I was invited to take over teaching geometry from a teacher who wanted to take the second semester off to care for his new baby girl. I got to observe and practice teach in his class several times before he left, and to get to know the students a little bit.

Monday was a holiday, so I took over the classroom on a Tuesday. I didn't have a chance to do any classroom setup beforehand, and the teacher had waited until the last minute to announce his departure, so the students and I were both caught flat footed. In my vast career, I of course had lots of notions about how he had been doing things wrong. But I've found that the teaching changes I've imposed stem as much from on-the-fly necessity as strategic savvy.

For instance, it proved impossible to stand in front of the class and lecture with any expectation that anyone but the few would actually listen. They had an established gestalt practice of having one or two brainiacs answer any question thrown out before anyone could be called on, allowing the others to freely gossip and text and ignore the teacher. Trying to call a name to answer before throwing out the question, the obvious ploy, wouldn't work either, because the recipient would pretend to be deaf, or forthrightly declare they didn't know and

didn't care, while the blurter supplied the answer anyway. Worksheets were freely copied from the few, and working together resulted in waiting for the answer and writing it down. Cheating on tests was the order of the day, if they could be bothered to fill them out at all.

The classroom was filthy, the floor neglected and dust everywhere, with a dingy brown blackboard, tape, staples and gang marks on the walls, with long-invisible posters, and drawers full of junk. The teacher had a huge collection of whiteboard markers that were nearly dry, and a big bag of old pencils, which seemed incongruous to me because he was quite stern about not lending pencils out.

I'm sure I'll come up with other vivid descriptors, but enough for now. I decided that I could either teach math or spend lots of time correcting behavior problems. So I decided to let the environment do the work for me as much as possible. In the seven days so far, I've made several changes in procedure and space. I swept and washed the floors and desks and shelves, rearranged the tables from rows into groups of four, letting the students choose where they want to sit, but establishing that seat once settled as their spot. The tables are numbered 1-8 and the seats 1-4.

I brought in two framed posters so far, an Escher and a Bucky Fuller map. I replaced the overhead with an Elmo arrangement and use my laptop screen-saver to project serene pictures while playing ambient music and nature sounds through good speakers, when not in use. I covered the brown chalk board with cheap white-board material, turned the classroom computer around to face the students, rather than the teacher's desk corner fort, which is much more open. I've brought in pocket calculators for everyone, and replaced the ten that disappeared the first day they were out.

Behavioral controls have changed as well. I allow gum, but no mess. I allow food and drink, likewise. Illegal texting is now okay, after the work is done. I have an arrangement with my master teacher to send kids to his room to chill with no fault. There is also an exile room the school has, but kids who end up there are in danger of getting detention. Worst cases get a referral and sent to the office. I have a side table with pencils (from my predecessor's stash) and binder paper, graph paper, the calculators, tissues and a roll of paper towels, and the students have free access to this. No more song and dance distractions about these matters is the intention. I feel that I'm teaching them self-control, and I can only do this by allowing them to control themselves. These kids respond to any hint of adversity by digging in their heels. They would rather distract the teacher with irrelevancies than attend to a lesson. They vibrate at a high level of tension, high chaos, and high noise. Many are partially deaf from I-pods and ear-buds. For this reason, I've replaced bathroom requests with a pass hanging on the wall by the door.

The pranks have lightened up, from destruction of property and theft to more friendly acts such as pressing the "panic button" which calls the office and has them come back to me on the PA system, on the way out the door. I responded to this by gluing an inch square inkpad over the button, and am rewarded by green smears on the doorframe, much to my delight. (If there is a real need I can expose the button almost instantly with a sharp blow.) (4/4/11: One day Manic girl took the inkpad off. She denied doing it. I disabled the switch from behind. Later I installed an arming switch behind the plate. I'm still working on how to get to the arming switch if needs be. Instead used the regular phone to call office if I need security. This week found the phone to be unplugged.)

After Friday's unit test, students were allowed to draw all over the new whiteboard. They also had access to my computer and Elmo and turned it into a "we're on TV" experience.

In this way there was a celebration of completion. The philosophy here is that sometimes the only way past a behavior is out the other side. So knowing they can draw on the board or play with the computer will make it less tempting, not being forbidden fruit. I hope so, anyway. Other behaviors are allowed contingent on results. Like I plan to reward righteous A's with magical invisibility regarding texting and ear buds, for the week subsequent to the test. I plan to reward growth by awarding tokens (balancing eagles, fortune telling fish, magic homework pencils, etc.) for strong increases in test score. This gives hope for those who get an F, because turning it into a D is a win. Also frequent visits around the classroom with the little fishie stamp, which counts extra points whenever given.

By handing out assignments and worksheets before giving the lesson, I am in a position to circulate and teach one table at a time and one person at a time, as they recognize the need for help. I also get to identify the hiders and the hostile. This almost worked, as I'll discover further when I score the Unit Tests later on today. I plan to make a routine with warm-up review problem, a one-problem lesson to the group, and then work for the rest of the period. I've already given away roll-taking, either to a volunteer or to passing around the roll sheet. I plan to give away dismissal to a rotating official who will ruthlessly check for neat tables and floor, chairs placed correctly and so on. This takes the heat off of me again. I've set up tutoring times and posted them. I've had a couple of requests for tutoring, and sadly these come from the kids who don't really need my help. I intend to award table points for those who, as a group, do well. I have already put out assignment sheets with ten or four different variations, so the students can share techniques instead of answers. A few cheaters will be surprised to find they get to do their next test in solitude. Did I mention that during the past Unit Test I circulated through the classroom, giving "clues" to those who spoke up? My job is to teach math rather than dole out

grades, and for some this was their first awakening to the material. I do a happy dance when a student breaks-through, and have an Easy Button from Staples for whenever a student discovers that the work is easy after all. My first one got stolen, but I replaced it immediately.

On the dark side, I have given out a few referrals for really ill mannered behavior, and made a few attempts to phone home. My mentor encourages me to do this, and also to phone home for happy news as well. I definitely want to encourage this in myself. There are a few that need to turn around, and interestingly there are a few who have turned around. One girl and one boy verbally fought me, then played hooky, and now have returned. They drop in when they are cutting other classes, and I don't blame them, just ask if it's okay and believe their answer. That can tighten up eventually, but only when it is safe. These students have proved to be quite bright, and to have an influence on the other students, which makes me optimistic that the phenomenon will be contagious. I took care of students sleeping in class by emailing the principal with a query about how to handle the problem, then reading her response aloud to each class. (Take names, notify counseling, parent conferences.)

Problems are that I need to learn everyone's names, because there is power there that I need badly, and I need to establish my database design and data entry procedures so I can post righteous grades and track all the factors needed. I need to segue into more specific lessons for each student, and to find ways to feed the brainiacs. There are students who will do the unit's work in one day and then coast until the end of the chapter, and my predecessor controlled this by doling out the work, while I'd rather let them do this, and even work ahead, if I can track it. I have two TAs, and don't know how to use them yet. I want to stay ahead of the surf, but feel like I'm drowning sometimes.

I intend to bring in my soda-straws and paperclips and let the brainiacs design 3-d models to hang. I intend to paint the dingy walls above the dingy wood paneling. I'm tempted to install egg-crate sound attenuation, like a garage studio to cut down on the shrill echo. Also have ordered a noise sensitive traffic light for the same reason, and am tempted by the thought of a bull-horn, or a wireless mike and Bluetooth into my computer. May go shopping tomorrow. But I feel these, while needed now, go in the wrong direction.

I intend to install a suggestion box. There is still much cleaning up to do. I feel short of breath sometimes in panic over all there is to do. I don't like designing lessons and tests on the fly, when I know they could be much better if I had the time. I'm learning, but there is so much! I know it's just been nine days and one unit. I know that there are only two days left in January, three weeks until President's Week break, eight weeks until the end of the quarter, eleven weeks until spring recess, 18 weeks until Memorial Day Holiday, and 20 weeks until the Last Day of School. I should post the countdown. I really need to perfect my database and put in all the student info. I think this is pretty much the essence of it. I have a nice set of photos and short clips from the kids' play day on Friday. I need to figure out how to display them. Must get busy!

This is February First. I graded the unit tests far into the night Sunday night and was pleased by the results. There are very many who didn't take the test. I had to call two parents yesterday for girls who refused to work or take the test. Students are really mixed, those who work and those who play. I need to withhold the whiteboard markers, as the right to draw on the new board after finishing work is being abused. Little princesses accuse me of not being able to control my class, and yet they do nothing to help out. I need to score the submissions from yesterday and award productivity. I want to bring in my straws and clips for model building. I

put the assignments for the unit on the board. I announced quiz correction credit, and got some back to score. Two good students got poor grades due to my late night bad grading, and I fixed them. One girl transferred in and I got an email from her previous teacher about her being a cheat. I handled her poorly and apologized to her. I go the noise stoplight today. Not sure how to apply it. I fear students will take glee in setting it off on purpose. Chose to present the chapter on areas because it is all laid out for me. I really have no control in the sense of being able to speak to the entire class and have them listen without interruption. I'm experiencing panic in my graduate work. Need to put a draft of the thesis on the website due today. Read the material for on-line class tonight, and got nothing out of it. Bookmarked same.

Oh, good, I do have before and after pictures of the classroom. Tomorrow I can bring in the traffic light and the straws and clips materials. Also chain to lock up cabinet and drawers. Need to empty out assignments box. Okay.

Besides having fun with the new whiteboard, Friday after the quiz a group headed by a turned-around rebel did a whole photo shoot with the computer. I have a picture of them in action, and I saved their photos as well. Great stuff. They presumed to do it again today, and now it's a good re-enforcer, but I need to make it contingent on getting work done first. I added the second Fuller map and the poster of "When was the last time you discovered something for the first time?" Also a quote from MLK. Had to face down an intruder today. Drop-in strangers is an odd problem. They insist they are part of the class and then just cause chaos. Asking for ID and threatening helps. This time I yelled "Security!"

Couldn't reach one student's mother, so called aunt who promised to call grandmother. Got a response back from aunt. Also met student's parole officer. Getting good feedback from other students. Thugs are working sincerely. I just need to make sure the pace is right. Big

football player came back today from absence, and I started him on Pythagorean theorem test, but dropped it. Not a win for the day. Started new section with him instead. He's one that I need as a leader. (I told him he had an A, and all he needs to do now is to keep it. Surprisingly, this turned out to be just the right thing to turn him around!)

2/1/11 Today I brought in the sound sensitive stop light and it almost worked. I was helped because lots of my students were out doing CAHSEE tests. Fifth period had to test the limits, as usual. I'm telling them that red lights correspond to extra test questions. I'll give that group one for today. Had to come down on one kid whom I respect, darn it. I hope he gets over it. Another leader I need. Had parent conference about one little princess. Good folk. I hope I get to call them with happy news in the future.

I have the papers to still dig through and get out the door. Altogether, satisfied with day. Got message on machine from the school district offering me a job. Since I've been doing it for ten days now, I guess I'll accept. Especially since it's my thesis project as well. Brought in the straws and paper clips, too. Good to talk with one of the brainiacs about tetrahedra.

2/3 Ceremony for T. today, third period. He was my student in Algebra 2, and he committed suicide. I completed the stack of papers for third and 4th periods, but have to complete 5 and 6, plus a guide to who's who in the classroom. There are a few that are on my neglected list, due for coaching on actually doing the work. Then there are the seat jumpers, who need to be stilled. The energy is not yet in control, and yesterday I did attract a grownup onlooker, who got to see me use the voice and create order in the acceptable negative way. I raised some grades based on the homework I had in my stacks. This is good. Must learn to balance work and school and eating and sleeping. Not there yet.

Tried to give them a light day yesterday, and it turned into chaos. They love the noise monitor. Love to set it off, that is, as I suspected. Need more immediate consequences.

2/5, 5 am. Some of the kids make me feel sick. They are so manipulative and unwilling to go along. I feel like I absolutely have to take control immediately and to do it by sending them off to the gulag as soon as they appear. I was losing it within myself yesterday. And sure enough, got called to the office by the assistant principal to deal with an irate parent. The kids had been playing “quarters” which involves flicking quarters at each other and a girl came home with cuts on her knuckles. “Came home bleeding!” as daddy put it. I assured them this would never happen again, tolerated the berating from the administrator about liability and classroom control, and traded phone numbers with daddy. Then the grandmother of one of my clowns showed up with him and we scheduled tutoring after school. That’s way cool. I think he is gotten to. Day 14 is past and day 15 coming up. I caught another kid stealing someone’s work from the in-basket and copying it as his own. I didn’t write him up, but I gave him a long “Don’t you see how disgusting that is?” and “You never get to find out you can do the work.” And “I can only teach you with accurate information,” and “You’re bigger than that.” At least I got to give the talk without anyone else chiming in, which has been the case. Small blessings count. Rattus Semper Rectus! I assigned that phrase to my kid who doesn’t move, to make a poster. (This student had gotten an F from the prior teacher, but I found that I could coax him into doing a problem or two instead of just sitting, and I ended up giving him a passing grade. Clearly a boy with special needs who wasn’t being served.) I need to get him into tutoring too. He’s a good calligrapher. I thought he might work on it in class, but he just sat, and I didn’t get a chance to get back to him to show him how to do the circle area problems. He handed back the paper I gave him to write on, but he kept the post-it with the words on it. I think I’ll be surprised.

Need to email counseling about him. I need to come up with lots more worksheets for them and also assignment deadlines. They are flaking on my laid-back schedule. One girl on a boy's skateboard, deliberately jumping back on after I had told her to stop. Finding blank worksheets after class. Not sure about the rearrangement of chairs into social groups. That could work for me. I need to give out "how to do it" packets for the groups to analyze and report back on.

The formal group rules need to be in place. I need my roll sheets with pictures badly. I'll grade the worksheets and compare to the attendance sheets to see who is flaking. It was a tough week with CAHSEE testing and T's birthday remembrance. Putting the formulas on the hall walls in chalk turned out to be a win. Kids noticed and commented. Hung kite string overhead for straw models and hung tetrahedron. I'll see if it gets noticed. A kid commented that I'd better guard my computer because "some sub had theirs stolen." Somebody is bragging. I thanked her for the heads-up. My printer quit yesterday so I bought a cheap Brother last evening. I did get the papers graded Thursday and back to the students with notes. The football player kept his A. It's 5:42 am right now. Crashed hard and early last night. Ordered a Scooba floor mopping robot last night for my classroom. The noise light turned out to be mixed. Too eager to set it off with banging books, and the wanderers change the settings. Pop quiz Monday with extra questions for the noisy class clearly indicated. Maybe. Still thinking about how to make it work. Tempted to put desks back into rows and start lecturing. That's so backwards, though. Taking roll call to learn names. Good move. Need to wall mount noise machine in "private" area. My computer fascinates them. Many unauthorized attempts at new computerized roll book, mainly to see the pictures. What to do with kids lying about having done the test? Give them an F, of course. Look at what has really been done. Grade accordingly. Make multiple versions of

the test. Every solution that looks like giving them more work, looks like giving myself more work. Do I have to grade everything?

2/6/11 Grading. Oookey feeling in stomach. I admit I'm experiencing fear. I'm afraid that the kids have taken control of the classroom and I won't be able to get it back. From third period I could only find four sets of the day's class work. I'll check everyone's attendance, but I fear the worst. I'll keep gathering data. I'm evolving a Maturity Scale, like: Cheats, Does Nothing, Does something, Asks for help, Gets to understanding with errors, Understands but lets others copy answers, Understands and works alone, Understands and works ahead, Understands and helps others understand as well. My plan is to complete the data gathering for Friday and week past, evaluate standings, and create a huge test to give them in class Monday. I'm thinking 40 problems on everything covered this semester. Also at least six versions of the test to eliminate copying. Also moving seats to face front, also essay on back, what is maturity in the classroom? Nobody allowed to stop until end of class. Also going to send folk away to SAUD (Science Auditorium, the gulag) for any misbehavior. They must take test with them to complete there. I'm angry, as well as fearful. This is not a good place to be coming from. I consider it a failing on my part, but they are bigger than that, and I need to regain confidence. Sucky way to do it, though.

More. I just found out that the answers aren't in the back of the book. Without answers the kids can't self correct. I'll need to work all the problems and report back to them. There must be a teacher's edition somewhere. What crap. Found it on line! Now can attach to work I'm handing back.

Monday, 2/7/11 Good morning. Very restless night. Decided. Today I'm moving the tables back into rows and assigning seats based on last name in alpha order. I'll have passes to SAUD ready to go. We need to review for quiz tomorrow, to cover everything to date. Need to create quiz. Will impose strict note-taking order. Test will be quite the creation. I really want to design the custom quiz database that gives each student a personal mix of questions. Maybe over break if I don't get into a frenzy and do it all at once. Still have one and a half classes papers to grade. Getting into giving personal corrections, but clearly impossible over time. Need new tricks.

Tuesday, 2/8/11 Yesterday went surprisingly well, with the seats theater style and name places. Griping and attempts to move the name tags around, great offer from teacher across the hall to let kids hang in his room. Worked except for fifth period. They all wanted to go. Did review for test, test today. I created my database that lets me customize each test. Debugged it just in the nick of time. Worked well 3rd period. Lots of coaching. Manic girl tore hers up and another student walked out without doing it. But others tried and asked for help. Way cool. Wednesday the 9th, Manic girl did her test, probably with help, but did ask for and get help from me on some of them. Big improvement. Manipulative girl has the knack of trying to get me to attend to her by pretending to want help, then stalling and trying to maneuver me away from facing the classroom so her friends can roam and prank and steal. Had to call a mom because her son refused to comply and refused to leave. I called security, but the bell rang before they got there. Mom says he's switching programs, which accounts for his new indifference. He was the one who helped me hang the whiteboard paper, so this is a shift. There's a burly Tongan in that class who is new, and seems to be a focus of the newly awakened pranksters. Another leader to win over.

Have been too pooped each night to grade the test papers, and I regret this because they need the positive feedback. Yesterday I couldn't get into my classroom until first bell, because I don't have a key to the doors to the hall, and my usual lean-on-ers were both busy. I had security call for a janitor, but by the time one showed up the situation was handled. That put me behind, but teacher across the hall had his TA run copies for me so I got to limp through. Today I got up at 5 after crashing at 9. I'm feeling stressed by the mounting tension in fifth period, by the increasing stack of papers, and by the work I'm not doing on my graduate school work. Additionally, I'm supposed to write a report to The Principal about some key student project I'll have to fluff, re-find the answer key on line, which I can't seem to locate, buy groceries, because of slim pickings for lunch today and none tomorrow. I'm sure there's more. Counting the days. Counting the successes and the challenges. Life on the rollercoaster is fun, I keep reminding myself. (Student told me the equivalent of "Scorpions, after all.")

Friday! Everyone wants to see their test scores and grades, and I still don't have them. Been sleeping instead. Crash at 9 and wake up at 5. Prepping for class on the fly. Girl yesterday complained that I wasn't teaching her right, so I put on a Brightstorm (www.brightstorm.com) lesson instead. This worked well with the lights down for the subsequent classes. They wanted to see the lesson more than once. Soon got that they could pay attention. Noise level down. Sixth period tranquil. Today I printed out the formulas for them to have, and found a power point presentation on the cylinder surface area. Using three CST release questions as warm-ups each day, per school policy. Works pretty well. Put on board a list, bottom to top: hurts, destroys/defaces, steals, cheats (gets/gives others answers), disrupts (talking, noise, pranks), skips, leaves, texts-tunes-hoods & hats, doing nothing, paying attention, working alone, asks for help, works to understand – errors, works to understand - fixes errors,

works ahead, helps others to understand. I haven't commented on the list, nor have I asked for feedback, it just sits there. I noticed an increase in students helping each other.

2/21/11 Monday of ski week. I crashed out all day Saturday and cleaned house all day Sunday. Now I'm picking up the threads of my graduate school work and hoping nobody will notice or care how late the assignments are. I'm still experiencing dread and overwhelm. The only way is through it. I'm doing my current reading after a cursory response to the late assignments. I don't have a clear sense of what my thesis is, nor how to go about it. I see that I'm doing an action research project on differentiated instruction with a sample of convenience. It would be great to know what each of these means.

I had to kick out two kids third period, because one of them was throwing things at me behind my back. I got after his friend first because I wasn't sure which one was doing it. Okay, because the one was doing it to impress the other. Then I yanked everyone's test papers and told the class they all got an F. Offered to escort them all to the principal's office so she could tell me I can't do that. They declined. It was the last day before break, and it was an important test, completing the section on areas. I'd worked hard to make it a personalized test as well. I strongly suspect that the one throwing things is also the one who stole my computer, based on the principle of demonization. It's worth a locker check. Still too many students in mystery about the material, even after work sheets and coaching. Plenty of opportunities to learn, and they just don't. "Can't I just multiply everything together?" Very discouraging. I'm glad I have a week off. After I catch up a bit with schoolwork, I'll grade the tests and see what was actually learned.

I need to get way ahead on the next section as well so I can feel comfortable in the classroom and not have to plan at the last minute. I really need to get comfortable with my

graduate school work as well. Hate the anxiety. Strategy this past week was daily worksheets and handouts and individual instruction, partnered work and some class demonstrations. Had a girl come into the test smelling strongly of pot. I wonder if giving a test the day before break was a mistake. But if I don't keep them working, I get chaos, even more.

2/26 in thesis class. Still haven't graded papers nor planned next lessons. I realized in the shower yesterday that I'm not asking the right questions of the kids. I need to teach and evoke "How do you" questions. How do you find the area of a triangle? That's what they don't know how to ask themselves.

2/28 Back to school. I finally scored the quizzes yesterday, about all I got done. I added individual fields for correct answers, so I can easily track the highly known skills vs. the low ones. Cylinders and cones fared the worst, but there are still students who are in mystery about the area of a rectangle.

Today I was ruthless, booting noisy kids off to science auditorium. I also called a few moms of princesses who gave me grief for daring to call them on doing nothing. I called on the spot while they were present. I got rid of the two main troublemakers at the beginning of third period without much conversation about it. Didn't do what I asked, gave me attitude, bye-bye.

Now I've let them know that I'll be grading their corrections, and they will get to re-do the corrections until they get them right, and that I'll keep on testing the skills until they show mastery. This way there is no payoff for prevaricating. I collected papers at the end of class, with warning that if I didn't get the paper back, I'd issue a new blank one tomorrow morning. I had a couple mysteriously disappear, and printed out new ones immediately. Felt good to be on top of things, even though fifth period was too noisy as usual.

Tuesday lunch. One of the three I evicted from third period yesterday was absent today, one showed up belligerent and was quickly ousted, and the third, the computer breaker, showed up very subdued and took assigned seat without protest. I assisted him with completing his test paper and he did well. Transformed. Hope it sticks. Actually was peaceful enough to give lesson on tangent of circle. Hope the rest of the day pans out as well.

Turned on the traffic light sound monitor for fifth period, recording 70 red light hits. This is just for my keeping track. I had serious words with several members of the social clusters who were attracting me by being noisy or out of seat and showing no progress in quiz corrections and homework/classwork within the groups. I did manage to present Tangent of a circle lesson briefly in each class. Helpful teacher popped in sixth period to see it quiet and busy, and I asked him to look at fifth instead, because they are the least controlled.

I've isolated and spoken with a sneaky answer-stealer and am beginning to intrude in his gang of admirers. Also engaging a social A student in helping others rather than interfering with their work. The problem is that there are too many social clusters to attend to at once. I cut key players from each cluster and gave them consequences, including one banishment. I need to be ruthless and turn around the key players ASAP.

3/4/11 Lockdown. Shooting on football field, they say. Had a couple of kids bolt from the classroom during lockdown. Good grief. After school on a Friday, and they wanted to go home. Found an empty vodka bottle in the corner of the classroom.

Still having to send kids out and give consequences. I'm going to call all the parents of fifth period this weekend. Had advice from two other teachers and the principal. Some of it even workable. Read principal's note to classes. Told period 5 about calling parents this

weekend and videotaping next week. In sixth period I got to talk about freedom as skill, and showed the videos of Ms. Obama and the other TED talk, with some resistance.

Ordered desktop privacy barriers to use during quizzes. I'll see how that works. Looking at having class design standards. Manipulative girl is changing. She expressed sincere bewilderment about the material on circles. "I just don't get it" tugs at my heart, being so far above the covert "I don't get it therefore I won't try." How can I find the time to work with her? Can I design a worksheet that walks her through the process? Can I make one for all of them?

4/11/11 I tried out walk-through worksheets with some resistance and some success. Manipulative girl wasn't there. I also found a whistle to use when the singing bowl fails. Still evicting and writing up, phoning parents. Found out that they didn't have a handle on the basic vocabulary terms like chord and tangent. Made me seem foolish to have been lecturing as if they knew. Used class work sheet to review each term. I'll do it again a few times more. Scaffolding! For pi day am setting up a problem involving circumference and diameter of the moon. The answer will be moon pi, and guess what I bought 144 of to pass out?

I posted grades and got a breakthrough in the form of the question "Why should I work when other people are getting a higher grade without doing any work and cheating instead?" I addressed that question with each class the next day. This was the first time the code of accepting cheating with no ratting out was broken. Big shift!

3/15 Pi day was brilliant. Today not so much. One referral, three evictions, and one phone call home I have yet to complete. Lots of repeating and asking "What did I just say?", working with the handouts and students doing nothing. "I'm giving the answers at this rate on purpose because it is slow enough for you to look at your answers and see what you missed, but too fast for you to write down each answer and pretend you did the work." Fifth period I quit

trying to teach and sat up front entertaining questions from those who came to me for help. I told them papers would be collected and grades for the day given out. Those not working will get an F for the day. Still some not working. One fellow, after I told him to take off his hood and lose his headphones, told me he was sitting in the back so he wouldn't disturb anyone, so why am I hassling him?" Curtis might come to speak tomorrow. This could be very good.

Curtis came Friday. Thursday I got to go to court to testify about absences by one of my female students. She was up on parole violation charges for cutting classes, and she had had me sign off on papers, which I did without really looking. Fortunately I had my attendance papers from each day at hand and did a righteous job of saying what I could verify. She was absent on Friday, so perhaps she got sent back to wherever. (Later: she got to spend the weekend in jail. Blamed me for "ratting her out.")

Curtis was awesome. He held them in the palm of his hand. Simple, plain spoken, clearly a celebrity, wearing his chef's jacket, he presented his story about being illiterate until his 20s. The kids asked questions from "how do you cook chicken" to "What can you do for me?" and he handled them all with aplomb. Kids notorious for acting out or dropping away stayed in tune. Only one girl left on a library pass, and two texters. Awesome response. He invited them to email him through his website, and I'll encourage this.

Thesis class today, rainy day. I'll be doing lots of work on it, and then this weekend I'll be designing a quiz for the class. I want to give each hour the test on a different day, and the quarter-end grades need to be posted on Friday. Lots of planning to do. I want this test to reflect what they should already know, which means I will try to make it basic enough to give them a win. I promised eagles or fishies for a quiz score one grade higher than current overall grade.

Well, I just didn't have the oomph to create the test. I took gazillion screen shots of problems and then ran out of energy before putting them into the problem bank and solving them. Instead, this past week did more review and finishing up of the work packets with them, then on Thursday put an outline of the needed concepts on the board, had them write the notes down and gave illustrations of each one and examples of problems. I made a copy of this for each of them to use on the test, and on Monday I'll show how it all fits together with the test questions. Then Friday I had a ten question simple quiz prepared with problems that had been in the homework or done in class. I have all the papers to grade this weekend, and on Monday quarter grades get to be posted. I tried to not give hints this time, but still ended up doing so.

The math department is looking at setting up tutoring program with the at risk kids. I predict that my grades will be polar, As and Fs. I have so many who fit in the F category for different reasons, absenteeism, not paying attention, needed scaffolding, special needs, attitude, and so on.

I do feel like the hold-outs are starting to get a sense of the need to get on board, and I need to fan the spark. Several come to mind. I hope I can use the tutoring plans to help them. Still had a girl ask "When's our teacher coming back?" Not until next fall. You are stuck with me. Interesting that after a quarter she still hadn't realized and was treating me like a sub. I used the cardboard forts around each work spot and had the chairs turned facing the walls. I walked around with a threatening red pen, which I didn't have to apply. One of my brainy rebels actually took the test for fun. I think he did well, using the outline. He kept his D, actually. Too bad.

It's amazing how poorly they did on this test, considering all the prep work. A couple of students treated the outline as if it were a multiple choice test, and handed it in with one of the

letters circled under each heading. I'm just wondering what to do tomorrow. Fully one fourth of the students skipped out on taking the test. Another 18/103 got F's, 0 or one out of ten. 26/103 got D's, 2-3 correct out of ten. There were just 12 C's which represented 4-5 of 10 correct. Eight got 6 or 7 correct for a B, and the last nine got A's. There was one perfect ten, one 9, and 7 eights.

That's as nice as I'm willing to be. Largely the grades are due to inattention, brought out by the decreased chances of cheating. My vision of the future involves taking each problem apart on a separate highly scaffolded page, as if it had never been presented. I don't yet know what to do with the stragglers, but I suspect it won't matter. I've thought about having each child sign a statement on each test page, "this is my work only." It galls me that many of the test questions were taken from their homework that we went over together in class.

There was power in ending third quarter and posting the grades. I got to tell them about making the predictions about who would be able to move on to algebra two and who was likely to need to repeat geometry, inviting each one to look and see. I explained that there was still hope, even if they have blown it so far. They can get a C or better for second semester if they raise their grade enough in the final quarter, and can make up for semester one over the summer.

This has opened the door to looking at study habits. Easier to ban cell phones and cross chatter. Easier to invite writing things down, thinking about problems without going south. Endorphins and the "aha!" experience. I'm more ruthless about kicking out bad attitude or poor self discipline. Especially the bad attitude.

I'm looking at rearranging the seating again. Too many party groups. I did let two go to the library just to have them out of the room. Got a note from the librarian "... are not using their library time well ... keep them in class, please." I see that dumping them off was a poor answer.

Told the kids I would give the same test again with different numbers. I think that's a good way to do closure on the quiz corrections. Plan to do that soon. Tomorrow or Friday? Feeling pressured, need to finish project for Administration (the triage mentioned above.) Need to start the trig section. There is also a proposal in the works with the math department to set up tutoring. So many need it. I need to put it all together for the final thrust. For the kids, and for the thesis. There is a school in this county with 40% HIV, according to expert person speaking about suicide to assembly of teachers.

April Fools! Here I sit in Kaiser ER waiting to have my bite wound looked at. Silly me, tried to remove TM's cell phone. She grabbed my arm in a bear hug with her hands clamped around mine, threw herself at me from her chair, landing on the floor, and glomped onto my forearm through my shirt. I won't be confiscating cell phones for a while.

Incident report. At about 10: 30 am on April 1, 2011, in classroom 218 I was supervising the students as they were taking a test. I had repeatedly requested that there be no cell phones or I-pods out during the test, and I noticed that TM had her phone out in direct violation. I attempted to remove it from her desk with my left hand, and when I picked it up she grabbed my hand in both of hers, pulled my arm into a bear-hug with such force that she propelled herself off the chair, sitting on the floor and dragging on my arm, forcing me to bend down. I couldn't release my grip on her cell phone because her hands were both clenched around my hand, and as she hugged my arm she began to bite my forearm through my long sleeve. When I relaxed my hand completely, she released me. I went into the hall to see if a security guard was near, then phoned the office. She fled.

Monday strange. Rumors abound. Hard to not say anything to anyone. Supposedly I was arrested, and the graffiti all over my white boards was all "free fish" or "don't free fish," with

some witty references to fish for dinner and such. The place was pretty trashed and there were signs they had been rummaging through the teacher's area as well. The cops told me I should have reported to them on Friday, the school insurance person said I should have reported to the designated hospital, and the union rep wondered aloud if I might want to do a rewrite of my report. I didn't mention the six drafts that an attorney friend and I had gone through over the weekend. She wanted me to send the right U rep a certified letter to match the ones I sent out, and I tried to do that on my way to work today, but the post office wasn't open. I'm tired. Lucky for me Head Math Teacher had resources for me to use for today's lesson. Oh, and I can't get the Elmo to work. Maybe a bent pin. Grrrr.

A student sixth period managed to get the Elmo to work. Magic, I guess. This past week (today is 4/9/11) was characterized by filling out forms and dodging questions about the incident. I haven't yet checked the repeat test for progress, but some students have asked me about it. I started trig and tried to sneak up on it one step at a time. Found out that I was moving quickly compared to the person next door who told me he spent a week just on tangent last year. Lots of work packets and repeat, an impromptu pop quiz in fifth period when I lost their attention completely on Friday. Playing Cosby Show episodes at end of class when the attention is acceptable. Zero tolerance for devices. Still regular banishment of some. My worst in third period actually allowed himself to be talked through a problem and gave correct answers. The admin put out a notice that all hall passes need to be issued on the blue form slips with date and time and so on, and I got a pad, used it on Thursday once, Friday once, and then it got stolen. Some kid has pass slips enough to last the year.

I know (4/13) who got the slips. Another student ratted them out to me. I haven't done anything about it. Just made a "no passes" rule to go with the "e-device means instant referral."

Had two male students show up after lunch ebullient and unable to stay in seats nor focus on work. Ended up booting them out.

Star testing was a joke for some of them. Those who didn't just leave and ditch the test Christmas-treed it. A few had to work among the irrepressible talkers. I called for assistance at one point and it never arrived. Police say biter has prior arrests for prostitution. They will prosecute as felony, and order STD testing. (Turns out they couldn't, legally.) Two students walking down hall testing each combo lock on the lockers. "Whaaattt?" is the response to my calling them on it. One girl tried to explain to me how that was okay, and gave up midway through when I kept asking "and then what?"

Students rifle teacher's desk and cabinets whenever possible as well. Water fight was predicted through grown-up eaves-dropping, and nipped in the bud, but not before I saw a few full and unopened bottles of water hurled. Different definition here, I guess. Kid got carton of milk slammed into the back of his head yesterday, good fun. Not worth reporting, especially since some kids helped clean up. Spring break starts tomorrow. Whiew!

Today is back from break day, 4/25/11. Needless to say, I didn't do any thinking about school. I didn't grade papers. 34 school days to go. With CA standards tests coming up this week, I printed out 16 questions from the geometry section and handed them out with instructions to discuss and work on them for half the period, and then we would go over them together the second half of class. So far only one student out of the nine who showed up in class today has gotten engaged in it. (One absence, I'm told is because he slugged his girlfriend for looking at another guy.) In other notes, our principal pulled off a masterful win by getting us 100% free breakfasts, packaged to serve in class first period. Now the gripes are starting to pour in from the self-serving teachers. I'm printing them out for Leadership class tomorrow night.

Yesterday I worked with one of the Sylvan tutors for three hours on beginning fractions. She is intelligent and a skilled reading teacher, especially with the little ones, but has had a block regarding math. We went from trepidation to enjoyment, using the bears and drawing pizzas on the silver board. She told me a spanking story and some others as they came up for her in the process. Very gentle work, very profound, very little to do with math itself.

Later, same day. Difficult to impose the rule of silence while one problem is explained. Had to send one or two to exile to get the others' attentions. I'm in sixth period, and am giving them a 2 minute chatter time between each explanation. Hard to get even that much attention. Spirits are high after break, and CST testing has gotten everyone chaotic. Going around stamping papers where answers are present has gotten some of them settled, at least to cribbing answers or putting down random responses.

Tuesday. One of my students from Algebra II class' mother died in a drive-by over Easter break. This girl had showed up as either manic or asleep or not at all, and I wonder about a lot of things, and hope she's getting the care she needs.

Waiting now for the taxi. I gave my car a check-up over Easter break, but on the way to evening class it did the vapor-lock hic-up stall thing and the engine light is on. Dropped keys in mechanic's mailbox but maybe they fell into the wall instead. Left message to that effect. I made up a game that if they paid good attention to the problem explanations they could have ten minutes of cartoons at the end of the hour. This worked for third and fourth periods, but then during fifth period things fell apart when I noticed a princess carving into the table with a little razor knife, while her two friends watched. Certain elements of the class were less than pleased that I wrote all three a referral. In the course of the ensuing discussion one asserted that we weren't allowed to be watching cartoons anyway, we were supposed to be learning math. I told

her to go ask the principal about it, and if this were true for the principal I'd abide. She came back with my least favorite assistant principal, and after I conferred with him in the hall, he decided that cartoons were never appropriate. So I announced that to the class. So, I guess it was a lesson for her that her words count. I'd rather have been able to use positive reinforcement.

4/27/11 "Greetings,

Please plan to have a conversation with me on Wednesday regarding a statement made by a student. Student told me that you show the class cartoon movies. This may result in disciplinary action so please feel free to bring your union rep."

Had a walk and talk with The Principal about the carved desk and the cartoons, and she pointed out her considerations which were "What if the superintendant should come by and see the kids watching cartoons in the classroom?" and "What if a kid comes home and tells a parent they watched cartoons in school?" which I got. She was coming from "What were you thinking?" and was supportive. I hope that will do for the issue. I plan to drop it and see what happens.

I promised the kids I'd show them how to make Mother's Day cards with the compass for perfect hearts. If that works, maybe we can do constructions. The reward for attention today was a minute of free talk for each question attended to. I pointed out how all my behavior controls were negative, so by the way they acted they were bringing those out, and it sucks to always be the enemy. Some got it. Oh, and one kid was throwing paper wads, so I told the really tough Tongan nearby to quit throwing things. When he protested, I apologized and said that maybe I was wrong but somebody was throwing things in a way that looked like his doing.

He reacted with an appropriate scowl and the guilty party cowered and quit. Fun strategy. A student commented after class "You almost got so-and-so beat up."

" I feel like after our unofficial talk today, you are clear about the expectations. We do not need to meet but NO movies in the class unless it is related to the specific standards you are covering. If you need support with classroom management, we have a math coach and of course I am available as well."

"Thank you. I want to express my sincere appreciation for the coaching you gave me. I felt heard, understood, and clearly corrected in a space of mutual respect. I continue to be amazed at the comp assion and professionalism you bring to your difficult job."

We had CST testing today, geometry. When my class all finished early, largely through ignoring the rules to not work ahead, and some because of Christmas treeing the second half, after the two biggest jerks succeeded in leaving in spite of the rules, and the others tired of doing "fun" pages, they wanted a movie, and, yes, I let them have one, because there was nearly an hour left before lunch. They chose Precious. I hadn't seen it. About a girl going to an alternative school. Sounds okay, and justifiable. Yikes! I'm so lucky management didn't happen by. I'd be retired by now.

But the kids were totally quiet and involved in the movie, and I let it continue because it was speaking to them in their language about their realities, or, hopefully, about someone in worse straits than they, who still prevailed. I'd show it again. I did cut it off at lunch time even though they wanted to go get their food and come back, because, as I told them, I was afraid of being busted. Led me to fantasies of starting my own

school. Ghetto storefront free drop-in school. There are many variations on "The School of Fish" that I play with.

Sitting in for the class across the hall, and one of the students brought in "Waiting for Superman" to watch. My first period and his are supposed to write a 3/4 page about the movie. Interesting to me to compare and contrast the two movies. One is heart and the other statistics.

Oh, and at lunch we had a lock down. "Trouble in the neighborhood." The kids, who usually know what's happening long before the grownups, thanks to the text-net, tell me they think somebody got shot.

"Did you know there are over a hundred ways to kill someone with a rubber band?" "Really?" "Yeah, I have relatives in prison and they know about these things."

I got honored at the awards ceremony at Dominican. Alpha Chi. I needed the acknowledgement. Cinco de Mayo today. Officer called, said girl had gotten arrested. Seems she was hiding out, or at least being difficult to locate. After the ceremony got to hang with my teacher, and encountered an acquaintance from some long ago. She works with ADD and such, and told me exactly what I did wrong and why. Just what I need, more feedback. Watched "Stand and Deliver" with the kids and thought "Boy, he had it easy!"

I'm still finding pieces of calculators among the spent ammunition I sweep off the floor, along with paper wads and pencil fragments, spent gum and small candy. I'm over being concerned about it. The one guy who was doing a calculator a day has stopped. I now accept that it is part of the culture to spoil things. I could make up reasons why, like, where all good

things are broken, take control. Kind of like the monkeys who shocked themselves rather than wait for random shocks. One could also chalk it up to hate and malice, but there is a disconnect that shows up in many ways. It isn't about the right rules, it's about the relationship to rules per se. It would turn school on its ear to use this. I don't know how, exactly. Like when I started drawing the lessons on the hall wall. Kids dug it, and I even had a kid leave the classroom to refer to the wall. It smacked of forbidden fruit, and I was told by more than one kid that that was not okay and I was going to get in trouble. I was surprised that I didn't get any negative feedback from the adults.

I also get positive feedback from the kids about the straw models. They are intrigued that I can do them with just soda straws and paperclips and staples. Perhaps this is the best lesson, and it would be neat to know that down the road some kids began to make their own. That would be a huge door into art and much more. Making and destroying. That's what I'd teach instead. Kid said "You should be an art teacher." Too bad there's no market. I wonder what art classes are being offered this summer?

Today, Friday 5/6 we're having our Cinco de Mayo rally, with short day classes. I need to complete a paper for graduate school. Also need to process papers and give out 4th quarter grades this weekend. I had a tough girl ask me yesterday if I would call home and give them good news about her progress. I did this morning and talked with her aunt. This girl really turned around and is attentive and doing the work and asking questions in class. Huge change. Another, the one I gave an A to and told him to keep it, slip-slid away into inattention and skipping and missing assignments and tests. Yesterday he asked me if he could keep his grade and I told him I'd probably have to lower it because he hasn't been putting in the attendance or effort. I knew he has been spending time in the counseling center. He told me there was some

family trouble and his uncle was in the hospital. "He got shot." We compromised with a grade lowering that would still let him play sports, with promise to make up the work and do better. Now I'm in the gym listening to La Bamba. I see that the talking and inattention is endemic. Monday, 5/9, 23 school days left. I was supposed to be getting quarter grades together to post due tonight. I did get the piles of paper sorted into five alpha-sorted piles. I'll base the grades on number of papers turned in and the results of the 4/1 quiz, I think. Still CST testing going on. Trying to get at least a high percent of students to show up for testing. Lots of my students did lots of work. Right now one girl is busy copying another student's work on Similarity assignments. I am using the strategy of posting all the book homework on the board for the whole unit, then spending class time going over the work. He'll get a good grade for putting in the work over the weekend, and she'll get some credit for caring enough to copy.

I want to make sure to note the odd phenomenon of drop-ins. It is the custom here to visit other's classes, pretending to be a new student or not, doing the class work or not, disrupting the other students and getting booted out, or not. Some teachers lock their doors, but I need the air-flow badly. I run the fan on low constantly. Anyway, back to sorting my stacks.

The notion of counting the papers and grading based on that proved to be brilliant. The students who were putting out the effort were very discernable, and some of the students who had been in the woodwork showed up and got to be acknowledged. Some of the high testers who didn't work, but rather disrupted the class, got their grades lowered for lack of performance, and it was easy to make the point today that each class' notes is an opportunity to raise the work done grade. One girl was surprised when I handed her the phone and it was her father telling her to be quieter in class. Yesterday's heckler was absent today, and I did leave a message with his father with his grade, as requested. I hadn't realized the kid was on the swim team. Coaches like to hear about

problems which threaten their athletes' participation, and so I have another channel to use to help defang this student.

Problems with spring fever, boy/girl fascinations, (one pregnant couple ...) (did I mention that the school has a nursery for infants and toddlers of students?) water and paper-wad play-war. I'm having some success now presenting more complex problems. Today was a word problem with a tree shadow and feet and inches, that I walked them through, asking each step of the way what the stoppers were. I explained that some teachers didn't assign these problems "because they think their students are stupid." I know, shame on me. I told them about science teachers assigning summaries instead of chapters, and how kids aren't prepared to read chapters in college. There was actual silence and interest. "Of course," I told them, "I happen to think you are very smart, so I'll give you the tough problems for us to work through." Destupidification could become my PhD work.

One girl who got an F really got into dissing me, and I asked her if she would repeat it so I could tape her comments. She said she'd tell the principal instead, and I invited her to do so, saying how valuable the feedback I get from the principal is. I haven't heard anything from principal about the boy I sent to her yesterday, and I suspect he never made it there.

The heckler's dad had me send him home with the missed assignments, promising they would do them over the weekend. He was okay yesterday when I gave them to him, but today he was ?drunk? and disruptive and I had to kick him out. The other students tell me he got kicked off the swim team. Bummer. There goes any clout I might have had.

Somebody has been putting either a condom, or a lubricant, or mustard depending on the occasion on my classroom doorknob. I'm just carrying a small rag these days.

A group of students came by during my prep hour and asked me for a pass to class. I sniffed the air and they looked at each other and said "He knows!" I gave them a pass to class. It's spring, after all.

Oh yeah. Heard from a probation officer. Biter was arrested, and is kept in jail until trial, pled from felony to misdemeanor. I don't have to show up at the sentencing, but I can, and it will be probation in any case. I got a form to fill out, and just said, no money damages, emotional concern about contagious disease. Recommended No contact, blood testing, and counseling.

I wrote up a referral for the belligerent boy before class, to save time. Used it. Probably was unfair to him. Tough. Now I'm in fifth period, watching them work on the worksheet I tried to teach, on translations. I gave out warnings, but didn't actually evict anyone. There is the fellow who never started, distracting two girls. One fellow is dozing, and another recently reawakened. There are five other girls openly not working, and four working together between gossip. There are two cell phones openly on display, and that's very good. Six people raised their hands when I asked "Who is actually working on the paper?" Three students just came in from a field trip, and one girl just arrived with barbecue that smells great.

There are eight more minutes to go, on Friday the 13th. Last class featured a tossed condom. Across the hall I got to sub first period and help them make galvanometers with soda straws, bottles, wire coils and magnets. Very cool project. Before that they made motors with wire and paperclips. Then, third period they had a sub who showed Flatland, and I came in to see his base ten blocks scattered over the floor. I brought everything to a halt and had them pick them up. At lunch my two pixies swept the floor for him. I'm walking in cap and gown this evening in honor of being certified. I get to wear my Alpha Chi cords. What fun. Oh, yeah. I

need to disable the switch to the PA. Someone keeps switching it off, and we missed hearing the bell for lunch today. *Rattus semper rectus.*

Tuesday evening, 5/17. Today was marked by a "visitor" who, when I asked him to leave, grabbed the basket of calculators and bolted out the door. I chased him until he dropped the basket, then a bit more and blew my whistle in faint hope of attracting security, to no avail. But I got the calculators back. Manipulative girl asked to come after school for tutoring, and made sure I called her mom. I said "about half an hour," but she wanted me to say an hour. After about ten minutes she declared "Oh, I see!" and left. I called mom back to tell her about it, and to give the girl credit, both for the tutoring, which I believe was sincere, and the con, which is her out playing with friends. Mom was good about it. I really believe now in the pattern of lesson, work pages, quiz, quiz corrections with note taking, quiz with notes. I still have to grade the results from last run, but will do it again this week.

Wednesday, short day, 16 school days to go. Gave quiz to first class with the usual gripes "We don't know how to do this!" and after I explain the test, notes, retest pattern, "So this test doesn't count?" My student prone to manic episodes took her paper to another teacher for help. Good sign. A couple didn't even set paper to pencil, even after I worked with them individually. One girl who had been absent made a strong effort to learn it all at once, and a couple declared that it was easy.

The belligerent boy did work on the homework I gave him, and only got one problem in three correct. I reported this back to his father, who said "Well, it was a lot of work!" and I replied that it was a lot of time doing no work, and that many of the errors he made were things which we had covered in class when he was not paying attention. He's going out for football in the fall, and the coach is easy to talk with, so I have another avenue to intrude into if needed.

May 19th. Short day because of open house tonight. Got asked to sub for another teacher second period, and walked into chaos. After food being tossed about I exiled two persons and four walked out, so I got on the phone for an escort to make sure they made it to SAUD. Then the lights went out and it was helter-skelter until I turned lights back on. Everyone got herded back in, with only one kid gone. They helped to clean up the mess and the principal, assistant principal and one security person showed up. One of the original perps made it to the office, and I got to report on the incident and then come back here.

Boy recounting why he missed yesterday, this time was his father's citizenship ceremony. I'm moved to misty eyes over his account and how he worked with his dad to pass the citizenship test. Way cool.

Student accused me of teaching wrong. Explained that I teach this way on purpose. Fast enough to demand listening, concepts not answers, etc.

Open house last night, a few parents saw me. Some concerns were good. One student reported another's copying others' assignments. Not sure what to do about it. She was a notorious cheat in the class she transferred out of, and came into my class because I'm an easy mark.

Today I'm kinda pooped. It's Friday, day before prom, one full week and two four-day weeks to go. Supposedly lots of girls will be absent, getting their hair done. Not sure what to do about finals, either. Oh, went to doctor's for bite follow-up. Seem to be okay, and was told probably am, but that this set of blood tests is the most important because of the time it takes for anything to grab hold. Got first of three Hep B vaccinations.

Fuller said something like "Don't try to change the system, invent a new paradigm that makes the old system obsolete" from a personal communication from a teacher directed me to an article about absenteeism, Tucker (2011). "Chronic absence is defined as missing 10% of school year. One in seven in Oakland schools are chronic absences (14%).

After a cursory review of my two geometry classes this year, 78% were chronically absent, not including the ones who have transferred or dropped out already. (Granted, the percentage changes with the addition of Algebra 2/Trig classes...I don't want to deceive with proofy stats.)

Yet, despite these types of numbers for us, you guys are doing a GREAT job.

What are our thoughts on attacking this issue next year? For me, this is the elephant in the room that needs to be recognized and dealt with. We have the infrastructure with our houses and academies...they may need to take the lead on this...

Happy Friday. :)"

I asked a student, "What would school look like if it was a place you would really like to go to?" She replied, "The Mall." I think there is a real clue there.

Following Wednesday: 11 days left. Thought: The biggest fallacy in educational theory I can isolate is that we think there is something that the students don't know, which if we could teach them, would make a profound difference in their lives. The reality is that these kids are motivated by some very profound truths that we are failing to access, which, If we knew them well would change and transform the way we approach our teaching.

Teaching vs. fighting for control of the classroom. Is the culture all about the turf? If it's nice, break it. If it's clean, scribble on it. If it's quiet, make noise. Be uninterested. Being not interested is cool. Shows sophistication. Is it against the rules now? How about now? Now? Ten more class-days. I've promised to give away the straw models to A students. I'm talking about having a pizza party the last day, but not sure how to do it. Used the packet-test-review-test method on the final subject, and still haven't graded it. The significant data is how they did on the second time around the same test. Now we are finishing reviewing an old final exam, with the usual range of attention. I'm getting better response by being silent, simply because of the threat that they are taking away from their play time.

We have a 19 question standardized "Benchmark" test from the county. I told the kids that it wasn't a good enough test to be the final, but it would count towards their final grade. I also told them we would go over the questions together before they had to actually take the test. I did this with third period today, and they paid mixed attention, and booked out before the lunch bell while I was in the midst of explaining the last problem. There were a few things they hadn't covered during the year, so the lesson was good. I'll see what they actually get right on the test. Trying to figure out how to download answer sheets. Grrrr.

Downloaded, thanks to help from teacher next door. Friday morning, test today and three-day weekend. (Sound of siren going past. That happens a lot.) Email from administration to teachers: While on passing period supervision duty this morning, I noticed several empty crates out in the upstairs hallways. Please keep all empty crates in your classrooms or have a student take them back to the cafeteria. Last week we had someone throw an empty crate off the second floor and break a car window.

NPR did a story about parole and the PCL-R test.

I wonder how my students would do on this test.

Today's student gossip was about a 15 year old of their acquaintance who would, they guessed, serve five years, after having killed his stepfather with a baseball bat for beating up his mother.

I got acknowledgement from one of the afterschool tutors for turning around that fellow who I apparently inspired by saying "Okay, you have an A. Now all you have to do is keep it." He is out of classes getting individual tutoring "for his protection." He's the one whose uncle was in the hospital after being shot.

Celebration. I did the happy dance after we finished the prep packets for the final exam, and it ended up on YouTube. What a hoot!

Without remorse I asked a known cheat to move away from the A students at test time, and she refused, so I told her to move or leave and take an F and she chose to leave. I felt relieved to be able to give her an honest bad grade. She had turned in lots of work, but it was copied answers of others, they tell me. I like it that there is some breaking the code of not snitching.

Party and pizza are out the window, along with movies and such. The word is to keep everyone busy until the last minute of class. I got a whole set of assignments from the Department Chair, which were met by the kids with loud groans and queries of "What if I don't do this?" "Helps your grade! Helps your grade!" is my mantra in response.

Noisy girl got suspended, along with one of my good students, for getting into a fight. Mixed feelings about that. The class functions better without the former, who was doing well

but disrupting constantly. But the girls will miss their final exams. There are good days based on certain students being absent.

There's no justice. Noisy girl is back from suspension, but the good student won't be back, pending expulsion. Harrumph. My cat died Saturday, so my three day weekend was pretty well shot to hell as I went through grief. Did mention this to the classes on Tuesday, with a brief kitty-pic slide show. Raised other dead pet stories and a fairly sympathetic bunch of students. Didn't affect the chronic talkers, though. Yesterday was strange. I forgot my computer, and had to cope with the school computer and my Elmo. Did okay. One student turned in a big lot of work, but he was drunk at the time. I let him go quietly. One girl put an RIP for her Uncle on the board. Turns out he was the victim in the shooting that cancelled the baseball game. Too much thanatos! Makes my cat mourning seem kinda lame. Manic girl is raving, but we just let her go. She's paying attention in class and turning in assignments. Awesome progress. There is a rash of broken calculators, like four yesterday. I warn them that they'll have to make do with what's left when they take the final. I'm not sure this isn't encouragement to break them. "Can we use our cell phones as calculators?" No,

Strange sixth period. Had two visitors hanging out, when another came by and quietly told me they were having a lockdown in the corridors, and to not give bathroom permissions and so on. I quietly shut the doors and the two boys got very nervous, and one at a time bolted from the class. I blew my whistle, and they were stopped before they got too far. I don't know what it was all about. I do know that taking roll is important because kids leave campus and commit crimes and then use "I was in school" as an alibi. Today I remembered my computer, but forgot my keys. Office says Workman's comp doesn't have a record of my injury. I promised to bring in the info tomorrow. Today, tomorrow, and then finals Monday and Tuesday. One of my

CAHSEE prep girls came in lamenting that she didn't pass the test. It astonishes me that she was surprised by this. She did nothing that looked like paying attention or studying for it while she was in class. I wonder about this sort of magical thinking. I also grind my teeth at the fact that this goes down in the stats as unsuccessful teaching.

I got feedback on the culprits. The girl getting expelled seems to have slugged the teacher who got between her and noisy girl. The boys that ran out had had orders to stay off campus sixth period. Just business as usual, it seems.

As I'm winding down my teaching experience, I'm beginning to formulate my conclusions for my Master's Thesis. One poignant outrage is the sheer folly of the Race to the Top approach. Some of the finest teachers I've encountered are those who can be here and who are getting what results they can. I would challenge teachers in "successful" culturally advantaged schools to try to come here and survive. It's like if the military persons stationed in Paris would get more pay than those in Iran, simply because there is more peace in Paris.

It's clear that I wasn't just confronting inability, but rather misplaced skills. Much energy and creativity and skill was directed to harming, destroying, defacing, stealing, cheating, demeaning, avoiding, and so on. A very live and dynamic culture exists aimed at resisting "the system" and glorifying the criminal. Makes me wonder if it's appropriate to educate certain folk. Tradition says that education elevates morality, but is that really so?

I felt safe honoring a request for my I-phone so they could access You Tube. They played a fight between two girls they knew. It's all about the exploits.

"Truth" to a scientist, is much different from "truth" to a zealot. Conversation is difficult because the word itself has different meanings. Similarly, the rules here aren't the problem, it's

the way "rule" is held. Yes, the rule is Don't Talk. It doesn't mean me, it doesn't mean today, and it's okay if everyone else is talking. Each day is new, so yesterday's rule doesn't apply.

But my assertion is that these are simply survival traits in the culture I was teaching at.

I just finished scoring and sorting the "Benchmark Assessment" from the school district. It was a hastily assembled 19 question geometry test, and I prepped my classes by going over each question in class before they took the test. They were told what was going on, and also that the test would count towards their grades and would help them prepare for the final exam. One would think that under these conditions I would see all 100%. The actual results bear credence to my hypothesis that it really doesn't matter. Those who do well will do well. The placebo effect might have some bearing. Maybe before the final I'll tell them it's a ridiculously easy test. But I predict that under those conditions as well, the results would not change.

I think these kids have defined themselves and only miraculous intrusion has any effect. The fact that I could snag a couple from the pond is wonderful, but so sad for the rest. The ones who don't need me will do well anyway. One of the brainiacs corrected me yesterday and I was delighted! I know I've made more errors in class, and lament that I haven't been caught out more often. The only errors from the brainiacs come from their not attending because they think they know already and are wrong, or were making errors of computation.

There have been some seriously trying students, and I've tried my best to feed them and encourage them and reward them. Bless them.

Beginning to look at those benchmark results. Fully 25% of my students avoided the test completely, and one girl got a forthright zero for trying to cheat off of other's papers. When I asked her to change seats she refused and left class in a huff. I didn't write her up because I was

glad to have verification of her habits. Others had told me she took papers out of the in-basket to copy. Is that better, or worse than doing nothing? I think worse, that not bothering is a step up towards authenticity.

In some ways I admire the authentic flakes who are taking a stand. The trick is some judo I don't know to get them to direct that energy towards some world-changing protest. Another great question. On the other hand, cheating means the student hasn't given up on the game entirely. Making a grade still has some meaning. Much to ponder. More important, how can this energy be used and directed. That's the real question in all cases. Even the give-uppers have an energy of resistance that can be tapped. In the face of life it takes energy to suppress.

On the other side, seven got 18 out of 19 correct, 2 - 17, 2 - 16, 7 - 15, 4 - 14, 2 - 13, 4 - 12, 5 - 11, 10 - 10, 6 - 9, 8 - 8, 7 - 7, 5 - 6, 2 - 5, 3 - 4, 2 - 3, and 1 - 2. This indicates that some learning did occur. I need to make a graph of this data.

Chapter 5 Discussion

With students resistant to any external control, procedures must be simple, direct, respectful, and very gentle on the teacher's time and energy. Having the classroom become a workplace, not a monkey house, comes when the students take on self-responsibility. This doesn't happen overnight, and it must come from within. External guidance and encouragement are needed, but the opposite of force is called for. Techniques of successive approximation and external reward must be employed on an individual basis as well as to the class as a gestalt and each pod of group loyalties. In spite of what the teacher might wish, some negative consequences seem necessary, at least at first, to ensure safety and to avoid total chaos. Successfully creating turned-on learners can happen, however, with sensitivity and patience.

On hand I have the work on graphing transformations, which was presented, tested, gone over with note taking, then the same test presented again with access to notes, and returned with the notes affixed. Again, the second test should have resulted in 100 % all around. I don't have the oomph to look at them today. But I'd really like to have all this data entered into my database soon so I can get out from under this project. I think the fun will be in the write-up.

More conclusions: It is a mistake to try to cram these students into a broken system and put band-aids on the system. It's not going to heal and return to the fifties. Those in power have always tried to make education serve the needs of society, as in good factory and office workers, but with this student body there are overwhelming personal needs that take precedence over

school subjects. This school addresses some of these needs with serious counseling, baby and child care, vocational academies and hands-on classes that can lead to real jobs and real money.

Applause to the principal for creating 100% breakfast availability and to the math chairman who tied his geometry class in with shop class so the students could see how to use the topic. Meanwhile the site supervisors patrol the halls, the police and parole officer have on-site offices, and the graffiti removal is daily, along with the fights.

I don't plan on returning to that school. If I were, some changes would be like installing security cameras in the classroom corners. I considered this for this year, but decided to tough it out for the remaining days, instead. It would be good to know things like who is breaking what and throwing what and all the other activities I only get to infer from their traces and remains.

It's not that the students lacked an internal locus of control. Rather they worked each day to maintain control over their environment through texting and listening to music and so forth, exercising self control in the form of resistance to external impositions of authority.

Certainly a culture that is more likely to land a student in prison than in a job or college needs help. But the help can't come from imposing superficial change atop the symptoms, like compelling classroom obedience to make it look like learning is happening, and using negative consequences to enforce attendance, but rather the culture needs to be transformed by being validated and fulfilled. Where being a snitch is culturally wrong and culturally dangerous, there must be some other way to reduce crime, even in the face of crime being glorified. This paper certainly raises more questions than it answers, but these are imperative questions. The Emperor has no clothes.

Overall Findings, Themes

What worked: This category depends on the desired outcome. What worked for teaching geometry was repetition and constant testing. What worked for establishing affinity was being real and allowing the students to exercise control as much as possible while reminding them constantly of the desired moral values and larger perspective.

What didn't work was to exert authority in punitive ways, although this was frequently the only way to keep the classroom from erupting into total chaos. Sometimes this didn't work.

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