

The Joy of Teaching

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Do you love to teach? I mean REALLY love to teach? Do you have such a passion for teaching that it consumes almost every waking moment and makes you feel like you are on an exciting roller coaster? Do you find it hard to fall asleep nights because you are planning some stimulating activity for tomorrow's class? Well, it may not be healthy for you, but, oh, what a ride!

I want to begin by saying that curriculum is important and every teacher must teach the necessary information with diligence and care. This I have done if the government exams are the yardstick for measuring teacher efficiency. However, I would be willing to stake my career on the fact that my students will remember my classes more for the fun times, the unique and often unexpected happenings that result in a few hilarious blips that build wonderful lifetime memories. I certainly remember them - and the students who orchestrated the event.

I clearly remember one class in which we were having a lively discussion and one young man was having difficulty finding a break in the conversation in which to voice his opinion. In a moment of frustration, he bolted out of his seat, hopped up on top of the desk, threw his arms wide and declared, "It's my turn to talk." The class was electrified, he got his point across, and we laughed about it for many weeks to come. I bet he still has fond memories of his "moment in the sun."

One morning I left my classroom and dashed to my office to retrieve some forgotten piece of instructional material. When I returned to class a couple of minutes later, my desk was backwards, and toilet papered, as was my chair and all that the students could cover in a limited space of time. They certainly must have planned for the occasion as they were all innocently in their seats when I walked in. On my birthday, they made secret arrangements for a pancake birthday cake, complete with sparkler, and then they kidnapped me at the beginning of a class that ended up in an early morning birthday party at McDonald's. Students sometimes remind me of these occasions when they come for Alumni. By the way, those students are now teachers themselves, doctors, nurses, lawyers and professional people.

The class with a penchant for toilet paper were unique in themselves. They were intensely interested in learning and attaining honours, but they took time to build joyful memories along the way. Class time was always filled with wit and wisdom. When it came time for graduation, they chose one member of the class to present each teacher with a helium-filled balloon while sitting on the stage during the ceremonies. Some may have thought this a frivolous event, but I can say that I was immensely proud to sit on that stage on the day those students graduated.

One day, when I was teaching junior high, I found my students to be so energetic that they simply could not settle down to work. I explained to them the concept of the "primal scream" and its calming effect, obtained the principal's permission and took my class to the gym, which was empty at the time. There, I allowed them to scream to their hearts content. One cannot truly scream for long, and it took only half a minute before they were screamed out, whereupon we went back to class and settled down to work for the rest of the class. Unorthodox? Probably. Did it build a memory? You betcha!

One of my more embarrassing memories was definitely an unplanned event. I often sit on a stool in my

classroom, and one day when I went to sit on it, I found myself in a most inglorious heap on the floor. To this day I don't know how it happened, but I do know that after both the class and I got over the initial shock we had a mighty fine laugh together.

What is my point here? School should be about learning to be productive citizens fitted for both Earth and Heaven, but it must also include building the kind of memories and friendships that last forever. It must be about fostering self-esteem and the ability to laugh at ourselves. It must be about encouraging the introvert to blossom and the extrovert to bloom.

There are many teachers who have wonderful stories about "marvellous moments" in their classrooms. If any of you would like to share your favourite stories, Jackie Kemperle, my fellow English teacher at Parkview Adventist Academy, and I would like to collate them into book form (preferably before I retire at the end of this year.) You can e-mail your stories to us at jkemperl@cauc.ca or [lpopik @ cauc.ca](mailto:lpopik@cauc.ca).