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The Cluttered Desk – the semi-monthly newsletter of Just Us Teachers

Volume 1 Issue 1

“I touch the future, I teach” – Christa McAuliffe

Welcome to the first ever edition of “The Cluttered Desk”, the semi-monthly newsletter of Just Us Teachers. You are receiving this newsletter because you have requested a subscription. If you have received this e-mail in error or would like to discontinue your subscription, please see the instructions at the end of this newsletter

IN THIS ISSUE

=> SPACE SHUTTLE TRAGEDY LINKS

=> FEATURE ARTICLE

=> VALENTINES LINKS – REPRODUCIBLE & WORD SEARCH

=> VALENTINES GRAPHING LESSON

If you haven't seen it yet, check out **1, 2, 3 Math Fonts** at www.justusteachers.com, the newest way to add graphics to your worksheets, flashcards and posters with no cutting and pasting!

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the friends, families and fellow citizens of the astronauts lost in the tragic events surrounding the Space Shuttle Columbia. Though the media coverage has not been as graphic as seen during the 9/11 tragedy, many of our students will still be experiencing fear, confusion and trauma. Please use these links for information on how to best help your students cope with this national tragedy.

SPACE SHUTTLE TRAGEDY LINKS

Psychology in Daily Life – Reactions and Guidelines for Children Following Trauma/Disaster
<http://helping.apa.org/daily/ptguidelines.html>

The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress – Teacher Guidelines for Crisis Response - pdf file
<http://www.aaets.org/teacherguidelines.pdf>

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychology – Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Fact Sheet 70
<http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/ptsd70.htm>

American Academy of Pediatrics - AAP Offers Advice on Communicating with Children about Disasters
<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/disastercomm.htm>

FEATURE ARTICLE

I Hate Being Absent

By Christopher Norman

Don't you hate missing a day of school? It is inevitable. The day comes when you actually get too sick to go to work, you are summoned to jury duty, or heaven help you, you have personal business to take care of. Maybe some of you relish those days. But I HATE being absent!

First of all, it seems like there is twice as much work to do to prepare for a substitute than there is on days when I know I will be there. The things that I do by instinct and habit have to be written down in tedious detail. When was the last time you thought of consulting a class roster to find out who was absent? Or had to look at your seating chart to remember that Suzy was moved (again) last week since she decided that David was just TOO cute and therefore MUCH more important than how many sides there are on a cube or how many stages there are in the water cycle.

And then there is the desk. I love my desk. It has all my stuff on it, and I know where it all is. Right there (somewhere). Nurse's slips, notes from parents, 3 book orders, 6 catalogs of products that I simply cannot live without (yet mysteriously can't afford), half a box of Graham crackers, a dozen late homework assignments and approximately 20 memos from the principal (it was a slow week). All of it exactly where I left it.

But I can't leave it like that for the substitute... it just isn't proper. It's like inviting your mother-in-law over on laundry day. So, papers have to be filed, signed, stapled, passed out, and most of all, thrown into the big garbage can. You know, the one that has the big wheels and makes a beeping sound when you back it up. The custodians hate when I am absent too.

Then there is that ever-present concern for the kids. As much as I might need a break from them, I KNOW that no one knows them like I do, and can't possibly understand why that firm tone of voice that will keep Johnny in line will have the exact opposite effect on Meagan. Or that Alex hugs the teacher 32 times a day because those are the only hugs he ever gets from an adult. Not to mention the different learning styles, personality conflicts and home-lives that all effect their ability to absorb information. How can a substitute replace me?!

That's how I feel about it. But I finally take a day off because the car has to go into the shop. For some reason, they don't like you to drive too much when they can trace you around town by the trail of oil spewing from the tailpipe. Then, while I am sitting in the waiting area of Mike's Muffler Mart, rifling through a 1989 issue of Field & Stream for what surely would be a sufficient amount of time for me to get my Masters degree, my thoughts repeatedly turn to my kids. Are they being nice to the sub? Are they learning? Did Jacob remember to take his medication? Did I leave all of the materials where they could be found (meaning, not on my desk)? Are they finishing all of their work? Is Amber keeping up with the rest of the class? Do they miss me? Surely, disaster is in progress while I sit here rereading the Top Ten List of Lures for landing the perfect big-mouth bass.

Somehow, I survive the day. My hope and prayer is that my students have also, but I know that without me, their lives were surely diminished in some way. Not that I have an over-inflated view of myself, it's just that... well, I love my kids, and like most teachers, I pour my heart, sweat and tears into them, hoping that some little piece of goodness in me will attach to them and enhance their lives in what will one day prove to be a memorable and significant way.

As I drive up to the school the next morning, I notice that something is not as I had expected. The school is still standing. How can this be? I mean, I know I am not THAT important, but a smoldering pile of rubble where the school once stood wouldn't have been TOO great of a shock. Oh well, the building may be intact, but I had better get inside and fix what surely has been broken the day before.

I walk into my room and go to the basket that holds my students work. Removing the stack, I sit down with a pen to make a list of what needs to be completed. Ten minutes later, I take my blank list to my desk (which somehow seems cleaner) and go over the notes from the sub to find out what problems might have arisen the day before. What's this? Pleasure to have

my class? JUSTIN was especially helpful? MY Justin?! The Justin who only last week was banned permanently from his bus, the cafeteria line, and all assemblies until he reaches junior high?!

The bell rings. I rise from my desk and go to my door to wait for my students to saunter down to the classroom. Down the hall I see them coming, and my heart swells with both the pride I have in them and the love I have for them. As they approach, I open my arms to receive the hugs of the closest students and ask "Did you miss me yesterday?" To which they reply "You were gone yesterday?"

I hate being absent.

VALENTINES LINKS

Use the following link for a great FREE reproducible. Use it to help your students to practice their math facts and celebrate Valentines Day!

<http://www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-4835.html>

Know of a great math reproducible you would like to share? Email us at ezine@justusteachers.com and let us know about it!

Get free Valentine's Day Word Searches at

<http://www.familyeducation.com/printables/package/0,2358,22-11946,00.html>

VALENTINES GRAPHING LESSON

This is a great Valentine's Day graphing activity using those little candy hearts that come out every year. It's fun, educational, and most of all EDIBLE! Your students will love it, and you can even take a grade! Check it out at <http://youth.net/cec/cecmath/cecmath.07.txt>

Do you have a lesson you would like to share here? Send us a link and we will show it, or send the lesson and we will publish it in its entirety. E-mail is at ezine@justusteachers.com

Enjoy this issue? Pass it on to your friends and coworkers! E-mail us and let us know your thoughts! We look forward to hearing from you!

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