

PLANNING FOR A BEST DAY

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Hi all,
the following notes (from a keynote address I did about one year ago) simply represent some of the comments I typically make when speaking. They are a bit random - so email me if you have questions. I include song titles along the way just in case that helps you remember some of the connections to kids/learning/teaching. Thanks,
Monte

Song: **Because You Teach**

I wrote this song to state the obvious....education is hard work. And, education is incredibly important. How do we remain ethical, optimistic educators who create an enjoyable and productive teaching, working and learning environment? Sometimes it is helpful to break down those vast thoughts into something more tangible – just planning for one really good day! Plan for a BEST DAY EVER.

Our beliefs are influenced by those around us (and what we read, listen to, etc.) It is helpful if we remember that we should choose to be around those who push us to do our best – and also remember that our actions and words influence those with whom we work and teach.

My mother's influence??? High Expectations for every kid – including me!

Song: **Eyes In The Back Of Her Head**

My dad provides me a constant reminder that people are more important than the paper.

Song: **My Dad Is A Superintendent**

My first opportunity to teach kindergarten kids helped me realize what an immediate influence we have in the experience of a child at school. Currently, must youngest child is ready to start kindergarten....

Song: **Letter to Andy's Teacher**

In 1989, after becoming a principal...I learned a few things about middle school level kids...and the importance of knowing the characteristics of the children with whom we work!

Song: **Hormone Blues**

As kids grow up and change, it is easy for them (or adults) to get “knocked off course” at times. Remember the analogy of the dishwasher-size rocket that knocked a large comet off course? Sometimes we need people who can help get kids (or us) back on course! To see the comet (<http://www.cnn.com/2005/TECH/space/07/04/deep.impact/>) This link might have data that is more accurate than that provided me by Martin - my son who started this conversation a few years ago....

Preparing for a best day ever – what song will start YOUR day?

98% of American’s have experienced a song “stuck” in their head. Make your song one that inspires you. This one is co-written by my sister-in-law Tia.

Song: **I Hope You Dance**

We can use a song and images from work to create a video of “here is what we look like at our best”. Or think of it this way – to get in OUR highlight video, we always look for? Create a clear image of success – balanced success.

When we paint a picture of how good things happen at school, how we communicate, how we view students – we have a guide to bring us back on track when some things (or days) don’t go so well!

Music sticks in our head, partly because the brain looks for PATTERNS and remembers better when there is emotion. The song “**MY GIRL**” is full of patterns. Use music as a smart educational tool!

The game “name that tune” reminds us of the power of music’s influence on memory. On our best days, we might ask students (of any age) to take the important concepts and try forming a song. Try singing information in class to help hold attention?

Game: **Name That Tune**

MORE MUSIC IDEAS?

*** Let the kids write the song or figure out how music fits with the topic. They can write it, find it, or simply change the words to a familiar song if they have the option. They can record it in “Garage Band”, etc.

*** Use music to establish routine. “Each day I’ll play this song, and before it’s over, you need to have ___ and ___ completed and be ready to start working...”

*** Use music as a “timer” for sports drills, minute math, recess cool down, etc. The music monitors their time, and takes you out of that “rule enforcer” role.

*** Use music to introduce issues. “As you journal today, you can choose to tell me what this songwriter is saying to us...”

*** Use a popular song (and a few applicable lyrics) and relate it to your topic. Each time the kids hear that song on the radio, they “return” to class.

*** Use a certain song to indicate it is time for them to work on their own. They don’t need to know you just need a break from them and a chance to daydream...ha.

Here is an image of a BEST DAY EVER - a note given to me (Monte) from a Kansas teacher:

New Quote:

You are never too old to have a happy childhood.

I’m 55 and play on the floor with preschoolers (to balance teaching special education middle-schoolers), turn summersaults in the grass, dance in the school halls, hug kids (not my students) because they want to laugh & love.

At age 11, I was old, serious, and cautious. At age 55, I laugh, play and am having a healthy/happy childhood.

Thanks for giving me more ideas for reaching my kids (many abused). We laugh and find ways to enjoy learning fractions, Shakespeare, phonics, and spelling.....

NEVER underestimate the impact that ANYONE can have on the day a student experiences...remember that we can ALL help keep them “on course.”

An old Cherokee is telling his grandson about a fight that is going on inside him. He said it is between 2 wolves.

One is evil: Anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false, pride, superiority and ego...

The other is good: Joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith...

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf wins?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one I feed.”

On a best day ever, we might reach out to new parents and involve them (when possible...it is tough to do!) If nothing else, we can involve parents by asking them (before there is a problem) what they would like us to know about their child. Steal my dad’s idea to have the first informal parent-teacher conference before the first day of school...or early in the year. Let them do the talking. You can pull a bit of inspiration on this topic from a song I wrote titled: **More Hands**

By the way, people have often asked me about research on “parents involved with their student’s learning”.... Current research can be found at: *A New Wave of Evidence: Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, written by Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp (Southwest Educational Development

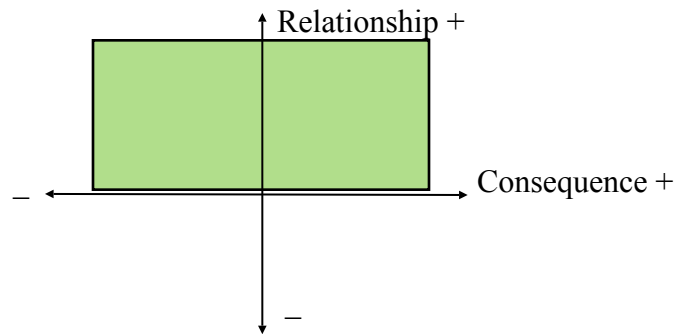
Laboratory 2002). The complete 235-page report is available online at www.sedl.org/connections.

What kids could use our attention or a comment to pull them ON course? Sometimes a student's toughest moments offer our biggest moments to have an impact – to teach!

Song: **It Wasn't My Fault**

Song: **Can We Handle It**

When students mess up, it is helpful when we separate our relationship from the consequence. Whether a consequence for a student is positive or negative, keep the relationship positive (in the “green zone”), or at least neutral. Keep expectations for behavior high.



When students perceive that we dislike (or worse, hate them), they have a good excuse to disconnect from us and school. It IS possible to hold expectations high, have meaningful consequences for negative behavior, and still express our interest in the child as a person.

I learned from Shel Silverstein to *pay attention*. We can gain insight from careful observation and listening.

Song: **ONE**

Sometimes I sing the song **SNOW DAY** just to remind myself and others that laughter is really an important tool to utilize on our “best days”.

Benefits of Laughter??? Gelotology is from the Greek "gelos" or "laughter" - the scientific study of laughter.

1. Laughter helps individuals and groups bond.
2. Laughter makes the heart beat faster, increases circulation (good oxygen intake), changes hormone and immune elements in the bloodstream, and makes certain muscles active and others relax.
3. Studies of patients who practice laughter report the easing of pain and other symptoms.
4. Research says that even PRETENDING to laugh or act happy produces chemicals in your bloodstream - healthy chemicals.
5. Laughter sets up the brain to be in an optimum state for learning.

6. Laughter is a short, intense workout.

7. Warning – belly laughter may increase the likelihood of passing gas.

If you want to go to a site that can lead you to more laughter info, start with:

http://www.holistic-online.com/Humor_Therapy/humor_therapy_benefits.htm

Laughter helps us remain open to connecting with adults and students who learn and respond very differently from ourselves.

On our best days, we might look for students and ask “tell me about...” Listen to their stories. We all have stories – we don’t all have caring adults to listen to those stories!

Song: **A Story That Needs to Be Told**

Ultimately, we create a vision of a BEST DAY EVER because it really does matter. It helps you and the students stay “on course.” Ethical, optimistic educators can have a powerful impact on those who work and learn at school. It matters to the kids and the adults. Create a vision of your best day ever. Put it down in a song, poem, book, cartoon, video, or story. Try to make it happen for one day, knowing it won’t be perfect.

Research says that about 21 days of a new routine leads to a new habit. Set routines that you would be proud to claim on your BEST DAY EVER.

Best Wishes

Monte