



*Did you know that the + sign originated as an ampersand?*

### **Drinking birds and empty jam jars...**

This week a first-year teacher asked me how I ever got a handle on managing students in my classes. Responding with 'plan well, keep them busy and build relationships one day at a time,' I was actually thinking about jam jars and drinking birds.....



Several years ago I came across something that was of little or no use but I just thought was kind of cool and so I bought one.

A drinking bird.

These glass birds are little physics experiments which seem to perpetually bob up and down aimlessly drinking water from a dish as long as their fuzzy heads stay damp. They really are pretty cool!

Often, one or two of these birds roosted in my classroom window. The windows faced the hall. Inevitably, sometime during the day or week a student would stop and just watch. They would ask me a question about where I got them or how they worked. From that simple question, a relationship would begin. I probably have several hundred drinking bird relationships.

I must admit that I really like making jam.

Remembering when, as a child, the times countertops in mom's kitchen would be filled with rows of jars. Shiny and empty, standing as good little soldiers marching to be filled with fig jam or peaches or pears or blackberries ..... whatever fruity substance that was available in the season. Other times they would be filled with green beans from grandad's garden or tomatoes that exponentially proliferated in a neighbor's garden and were NOT to be wasted. At the opposite end of the counter, bellies full and warm, the contented glass conscripts would burp happy tunes as their helmeted lids shut tight holding the vacuum-sealed contents someday destined for buttered breakfast biscuits or sandwiched lunches in busy schoolyards or family meals that bookended busy days.

The canning gene was passed to me as much in those moments as in the bloodline from Mom. While I do not can with the vigor or frequency that my upbringing might suggest, our jam and jelly cabinet is more often full than not.

At one point in my teaching career, I kept a loaf of bread, a jar of peanut butter (not now a days!), and some jam in my classroom for students who needed something extra. The greatest treasure from these canned jams are not so much in the good eating, of which I surely enjoy! The greatest treasure is in sharing the jars with people, who most often were amazed I went through the trouble when the store has them aplenty. Yet they were seemingly touched that I went through all the fuss just to give it away. Quite often they return the jars empty, but the people remain, filling my own life with much valued friendships.



That's all I got this week, folks.

Hope your jam jars are full and your drinking birds are happy ones!

Happy Maths,

*Peter*