

Note to Nerds
May 3rd 2019

The Runner

You never know when opportunity is going to present itself.

It's a beautiful spring day outside. There's not a whole lot going on in here anyway...so I make the decision...I get up from my desk and run out the door! I can feel the warm spring sun on my skin. There's a breeze. The morning is young so it's on the cool side of a southern hot. I can smell the sweetness of fresh cut grass.

Tall school swing sets stand like headless giraffes just ahead of me. I have my choice of swings!

I'm frrreee...ah!

A vice-like grip takes hold of the upper part of my arm. The force of my running spins my body around. I am eyeball to belt buckle with my elementary school principal! I look up as if bending my head towards the top of a tall building. Narrow eyes framed by huge round black rim glasses resting atop a narrow nose peer down. A soft but firm voice asks the question that is really more of a command, "Young Anderson, shouldn't you be in class?"

My eyes are downward now... I notice the top of her leather shoes at once both worn but caringly polished. A quiet voice escapes my mouth, "Yes ma'am." Not quite half a century later, I find myself in an elementary classroom this morning. I am excited to be here. A group of third-grade boys are wrestling more with themselves than with the activity that lays in front of them. To reduce the errant energy the table could not contain, I asked the most kinetic scholar to stand two arm links from the table and observe. The wrestling among the boys becomes more mathematical and less physical. They work to the verge of a reasonable answer!

It occurs to me that I am a pretty awesome teacher, as the words hit my ear ... and then my awareness ... "He just left!" " He walked out the door!"

It turns out my young kinetic scholar saw that opportunity had opened the door and he stepped through it. He had run. Kudos to my experienced resource teacher who was able to engineer a safe return for our student. She is amazing!

While these two stories have many parallels, I sense that the trajectories may be quite different. While both have their roots in a lack of interest in the classroom, one speaks to a yearning for freedom while the other begs for the attention of an adult. Or could it be the most creative expression of an 8-year-old's cry for help? I pondered this as a drove from the school.

My heart was touched today by these children. I realize the work that we do in education is more important than ever. I know we can become overwhelmed this time of year.

Coincidentally, I talked with my elementary school principal this past week. She is a remarkable woman. She asked what I was doing now and she said she was proud of me. It awakens in me a desire to do more. How powerful is that?

Teachers have the unique and special place to mold minds for sure but more importantly, they shape lives. Wow...

Happy Maths, Good People!

Peter