

Educating With Purpose

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SEZ
WHO?

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SEZ EWP

One nation under God!

Politics can be a touchy subject. And it is everywhere. It permeates our schools, our workplaces, and it's even wormed its way into most churches.

As it is defined in dictionaries, politics isn't necessarily bad: activities associated with government; interrelationships between the people, groups, or organizations in a particular area of life; social relations involving authority or power. And the synonyms can be rather encouraging: beliefs, opinions, views, philosophy.

The manner in which we interpret those definitions has made even the words themselves potentially abrasive. Which sets us up for the frustrations among individuals and political parties. In truth, there's much more behind it all than words and interpretations, but that's a different matter, and not the focus of EWP!

We are, however, concerned about the seeming lack of interest in what happens with this great country we call the United States of America and the disintegration of the very tenets upon which it was built!

At this writing, the 2008 Presidential election is just around the corner, and there is a whole new generation of voters involved in this election. Four years from now there will be another new generation of voters, and four years after that, and on and on. Each new generation is made up of the young students of today. We need to be sure we're continuing to give them what they need to prepare them to be responsible, thoughtful, educated young adults who will resist apathy and fight for our great country. Where do we start? Read the article on page 2, and see how you can apply some of the suggestions in and out of the classroom.

SEZ Dr. Thompson

Lockdown

As a senior in high school I heard Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians on an old 45 record. A song that really impressed me was "Where in the World But in America." I determined that if I ever had the chance, I was going to a live concert of this group. After graduation I had no intention of continuing formal education, because what else could they possibly teach one who had already learned everything? Working at a bakery in Minneapolis, Minnesota, I began to question if perhaps there was more I could learn that would qualify me to be of more value to society than just satisfying taste buds and expanding waist lines. It was during that year that Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians came to the city (so did Spike Jones and his Wacky Wacketeers!). My life was now complete; I had experienced it all. The concert opened with "Where in the World But in America," and the words were forever implanted in my

memory! "Where in the world but in America? Where, oh where, but in America? Where in the world but in America, can you sing true freedoms song?" The words made my teenage heart so proud to be an American and aware of the privilege I was enjoying. Since that time (almost 60 years ago), I have watched changes in education, patriotism, morality, and human relations that are both frustrating and fearful. Last Fall I attended a mandatory meeting for teachers in our school district. A capable young policeman educated us on the "lockdown procedures" for our district for the school year. Much of what he presented was practical and applicable to what currently is the climate in our society. My struggle was with the need for such preparation in "the land of the free and the home of the brave." What happened that brought us to the point where, in this great country, we live in (continued on page 3)



SEZ The News

TEACHER magazine

Published: September 17, 2008

Teaching Secrets: What Kids Wish Teachers Knew

By Laurie Wasserman

I was in our building a few weeks before school began, setting my room up for the new year. My friend and colleague was doing the same in her room, accompanied by her daughter Talia, now a high school sophomore, who enjoys helping Mom get ready for her new students.

Talia looked on as we freshened up our classrooms and began to reflect on her own middle school memories. We soon sat down for a spontaneous chat, and I asked her to talk from a student's perspective about what middle school had been like for her. With those years still fresh in her memory, Talia offered some candid insights from the other side of the teacher's desk.

Talia adored her 8th grade U.S. history teacher, who engaged each of his classes in creating a classroom constitution during the first weeks of school. They wrote laws that needed to be followed and created ways to amend them as needed. Talia talked of his dedication to making learning fun and interesting by creating hands-on learning opportunities. Then she shared some other stories—about the foreign language teacher who put so much effort into her lessons, demonstrating a deep dedication to her subject, and the memorable science teacher who set up intriguing labs and projects that

made Talia eager to come to school each day.

She also related sad stories about other teachers who often showed up late for class, or made cutting remarks about students' intelligence and abilities. She poignantly recalled how such comments hurt her fellow classmates and lingered long after the teacher's thoughtless outbursts.

As we continued our chat, I asked Talia to tell me what she wished teachers would know about their students. Here are some of her pointers:

- **"Tell your stories about when you were our age."** Talia explained that when teachers share their own middle school stories—including some of their blunders or embarrassing moments—it makes them more human. Her mother, my colleague, told us she did this in her own classroom because she realized how much it meant to her students to hear about her own mistakes as a kid.

- **"Teachers underestimate what kids can do, and what they know."** Often, Talia explained, teachers assume kids can't tell if a teacher is unprepared for class. But of course they can. Students also appreciate good teaching, exciting lessons, test review games, and activities. Years later, the kids remember which teachers lacked respect for themselves or their students. They remember the sarcastic comments, as well as the kind and caring ones.

- **"We love to see our work hung up on the board."** Talia shared how much it meant to come into a classroom and see her diligent efforts and those of

her classmates prominently displayed. It meant the teacher was proud of you and willing to take the time to show off your hard work.

- **"Read aloud to us. You're never too old to be read aloud to."** Simply put, it strengthens the bond between teacher and students. It's a gift from the teacher that students recognize.

- **"Get us out from behind our desks."** Kids this age need to move around, and they love it when you've taken the time to plan opportunities for movement into your lessons. "We need to get physical," Talia is saying. "It keeps us learning."

- **"You have to want to be around people, otherwise you make us miserable."** The kids know whether you're a "people person" and enjoy the company of kids. And sadly, they know if you aren't. Talia told us stories of some of her "hands off, impersonal teachers," as well as the warm, friendly teachers that made a difference. They will always be remembered.

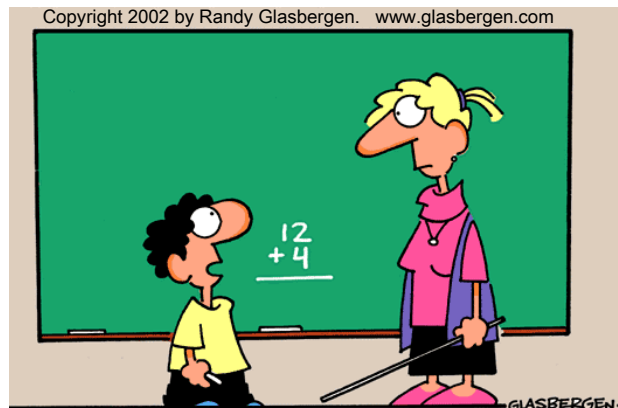
The next time you enter your empty classroom, sit in a student's seat for awhile and think back to your own middle school days, when you too were an eager but uncertain adolescent learner. It's a whole different world out there, on the other side of the teacher's desk.

Laurie Wasserman is a special needs teacher in Medford, Massachusetts. A 28-year veteran, she is National Board-certified in learning disabilities and writes frequently for Education World and other publications.

SEZ Wit and Wisdom

- I believe everyone has a right to pray to his or her God.
- I don't think being a minority makes you noble or victimized.
- I don't hate the rich. I don't pity the poor.
- I don't use the excuse "it's for the children" as a shield for unpopular opinions or actions.
- I think owning a gun doesn't make you a killer.
- I believe it's called the Boy Scouts for a reason.
- I believe that it doesn't take a village to raise a child, it takes two parents.

—George Carlin



“Do I get partial credit for simply having the courage to get out of bed and face the world again today?”

SEZ Dr. Thompson

fear that an unknown enemy stalks us even in our education facilities? Perhaps prayer and patriotism and moral instruction were not as big an enemy as we thought.

My experience as a substitute has not been with the students' concern about this so much as with those who would weaken the learning environment. The supposed dangers of a teacher presenting a philosophy that may not be acceptable to groups of people rather than teaching the students how to think and evaluate what is being presented. They can discern what prejudices may be contained in the presentation. In addition to the specific subject matter of any individual course, it has always been my objective as a teacher to help the student be a "thinker not a

mere reflector of other men's thoughts." By the time a student has reached his senior year he has been inundated with such an assortment of stimuli, both through audio

and visual means, it is a wonder he has the capacity to reason from cause to effect at all. The issue of freedom of speech and expression was at one time tempered by good usage and common courtesy. Someone convinced some who are in positions to regulate, that to in any way restrict free expression, even though it is vulgar and has little or no social redeeming value, is an infringement on our freedoms. Every freedom carries with it a sense of responsibility.

When guns were used for hunting and protection, those who used them were careful to store them safely and instruct those they were responsible for in proper handling and use. When, and how, did we morph into a society with such a cavalier attitude about the value of human life that people would kill innocent children because they were unhappy with a person or a program? "Am I my brother's keeper" was asked early in the development of man's existence, and it is apparent that we have failed in teaching successfully that, yes, we are.

I pledge allegiance to the flag

of the United States of America

And to the Republic for which it stands

One nation, under God

indivisible

With liberty and justice

for all.

SEZ You!

It's your turn!

Last chance to help EWP find a logo!

Help us out—send us your ideas.

Winning submission will receive an autographed copy of "I'm Sick and Tired and Scared to Death" (your choice of editions).

We're holding the contest open for just a little longer. Send us your ideas before December 31, via e-mail or snail mail!

Submit your comments, questions, feedback, favorite poems, stories, photos, quips, quotes, cartoons, whatever.

We also invite you to send stories and/or articles for consideration in "SEZ The News."

Submissions may be sent via e-mail or snail mail. For any submission you want returned, please provide a SASE.

SEZ Our Schedule

Watch for us in your area! If we're not there, contact us to arrange a date for your group.

2008

2009

We took a short break this Fall to get settled into our new location. But now we're ready to go full speed ahead from our new base in Nebraska. There are lots of dates available, so give us a call or send us a note to request a seminar or presentation in your town!

Spring (March-May 2009)

Summer (June-August 2009)

Fall (September-October 2009)

Winter (November 2008-February 2009)

Winter (November 2009-February 2010)

*****Book NOW!*****



POSTAGE

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