
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

The Hurt Locker 2: Teaching First Grade

Jerry Kavanagh · Tuesday, March 8th, 2022

What a day with the first grade! So many tense moments with combative six year olds over assignments and direction that threatened to detonate the room...so much intricacy in trying to remain even-handed in defusing potentially explosive confrontations and averting collateral damage and trauma to my psyche. Think of *The Hurt Locker*.

There were some still moments throughout the day. Out of the blue, Bryce asked me my age.

"I'm 39 and a half," I said.

Noticing the photo on the I.D. card hanging from my neck, he said, "You look older in that picture."

"That's my father," I told him.

Paige asked me why I had a strap affixed to my face mask.

"It's an extender," I explained. "It wraps around the back of my neck and takes some of the stress off my ears."

"You have big ears," she informed me.

"Thank you."

"Watch when I bend my ears this way," she said, squeezing the tops of her ears. "I look like an elf, right?"

I agreed. "Yes, you could be one of Santa's helpers."

"Can I go look at myself in the mirror?" She retreated to the back of the classroom.

Meanwhile, back in academia, I was struggling to maintain my tenuous hold on order. As I was pointing out something under the document camera to the children, they noticed my wedding ring.

"You're married?" asked Hailey, somewhat astonished.

"I know it's hard to believe that someone would have me, but, yes, I am," I said.

"Who are you married to?"

"Mrs. K."

That held the interrogation at bay for the moment.

Later, as Hailey was coloring, she asked, “How do you spell ‘Mister?’”

I knew what was coming. Then, “How do you spell ‘From?’”

A moment later, she handed me her artwork, personally inscribed:

“To Mr. K From Hailey 3-4-2022.”

She wasn’t finished, though. She then handed me a complementary picture:

“To Mis K.”

“That’s so thoughtful,” I said. “Thank you.”

“Can I see a picture of Mrs. K?” she asked.

It was almost time for dismissal, so I took out my phone, found a recent picture, and showed Hailey.

“She’s beautiful!”

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