

PLAYPLAYPLAY



"Humor is a sophisticated and peculiarly human form of intelligence that can't be replicated by computers and that is becoming increasingly valuable in a high-concept, high-touch world."

—Daniel Pink, *A Whole New Mind*

"Play is the central item in children's lives. It's like work is to grown-ups. They play to learn."

—Alvin Pouissant, Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

Never be afraid to play with your students, no matter how crazy your costume! (no other teacher offered to assume the crown!).

Every Friday, my principal provides the opportunity for students to tell jokes on our morning announcements (previously approved jokes, of course). Since we are an elementary school, the jokes tend to be in the nature of knock-knock jokes, but it is apparent to everyone listening that both my principal and the joke-telling students are having a good time. It definitely gets the day started in a playful mood.

Daniel Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind*, would be proud of this kind of play. Play, along with design, story, symphony, empathy, and meaning, is one of the six essential right-brained aptitudes Pink believes are required for personal success and fulfillment as society moves from a need for knowledge workers (Information Age) to creators and empathizers (Conceptual Age).

Pink gives suggestions for encouraging the aptitude of play through games, humor, and joyfulness. As teachers, we can benefit from play

both on a personal level (we certainly know the importance of a sense of humor to survive in the classroom) and by fostering it in our students.

Here are a few of Daniel Pink's suggestions for encouraging play (with a few adaptations):

Take a humor scale test. You can take James Thorson's humor scale test in just a few minutes to discover how your sense of humor may compare with others. The scores are thoughtfully explained. Visit tinyurl.com/6t7ff to take the test.

The Invention at Play website. Explore the "playful side of invention and inventive side of play" at the Smithsonian Institution's national traveling exhibit and interactive website at www.inventionatplay.org. Try games such as Cloud Dreamer, Puzzle Blocks, Tinker Ball, and Word Play. Under "Does Play Matter?" see how many of your

favorite childhood toys are depicted (three included are original versions of Mr. Potato Head, Crayola crayons, and Silly Putty).

Learn about video games. Even if you have never played a video game, find a student to teach you, or go to a store where they are sold and ask for a demonstration. Pink thinks video games are important because of the "powerful new grammar, narrative pattern, and thinking style" they teach, and because they are so popular. (According to Pink, half of all Americans over age six play computer and video games, and the video game business is larger than the motion-picture industry.)

As for me, I'm going to keep looking to my kindergartners to remind me of the value of play. And I might even follow Pink's advice and try out a video game.

Nancy Walkup

Nancy Walkup, Editor

We're Sorry! New and improved turned out frustrating and late. *SchoolArts* tried a new mailing system this fall that was supposed to get your issues to you faster and in better condition. In fact, many of you received your October and November issues much later than normal. We apologize for the frustration and confusion this caused. You'll be glad to know that we have reverted to the tried and true method. If you continue to experience problems with delivery, please call us at (800) 533-2847 x220. Thanks for your patience!

—Wyatt Wade, Publisher