

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

1 Thessalonians 5:21

This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

2 Corinthians 13:1

Teacher Times

Week Twenty-eight

Day 131

March 7, 2008

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Contracts

Don't panic! We are not asking all of you to teach sixth grade next year! Jack's letter was used as a template for all the others (isn't he a great role model for all of us?). Every time I make a blooper like this, I swear it will be the last time something goes out of my office without being proofread three times. But then deadlines, necessities and Babel Fish get in the way. In every case, you are being invited back to the same grade you are teaching now. You may decline, or make a counter proposal, of course.

The Principle of Free Association

As I told the students at morning exercises on Tuesday, they really do remarkably well at sharing a small play space very successfully. This morning (Friday) alone, I counted two different kickball games and a football game that turned into "Keep Away" in the gravel area between the sidewalk and the basketball court. Students were amazingly unbothered about returning other people's balls to them, as well as allowing base runners to transgress the playing space of other games.

Of course, you may wonder why they had two small kickball games going when they could have had less confusion with just one. Ah, that would violate the "Principle of Free Association", wouldn't it? Mr. McKinley has advised, that for the benefit of those of you who weren't at morning exercises on Tuesday, I should review the Principle of Free Association.

This began as the very simple "I don't want to play that way" rule in 2001. Said rule empowered students not to be terrorized by other students. The enablement came from intoning the words "I don't want to play that way," which, as you have no doubt noted, has the very great advantage on not appearing to be personally pejorative. Students were instructed to say it loudly enough and long enough to get a response, either in the form of repelling the offending playground demagogue, or gaining the attention of a teacher/playground monitor. Since playground monitors are often not close enough to the students to hear even very loud protests, students have generally worked out applications of this rule for themselves.

In its current form the Principle is a response to whiny students who accuse others of “not letting me in the game.” Usually this is because the whiney student is loud, obnoxious, and a bully at heart. I have decreed that, while no group can say to a whiny student “You can’t join our game!” (*that* would be discriminatory and ungenerous), any individual who believes he cannot bear to play with such a bully is free to quietly leave the game on his own and start a new game somewhere else. That is actually the reason there were two kickball games in close proximity this morning. As I said, it worked quite peacefully, whereas forcing them all into one game may have created “Argue Ball” as the default game.

Note: This edition of *Teacher Times* has only been proofread once.