



## In Order to Receive a Blessing

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I work as the Science administrator for my school district, so as preparation for state standardized testing in May I circulated a sign-up sheet for schools to have me come review Science with their 4th graders. There were enough spaces for each school to sign-up, so I shouldn't have been surprised to see that our elementary alternative school had signed-up. But I was surprised. These were students who had been expelled from school, elementary school, for behavior problems. I was also puzzled - how many students did they have? Would these students pay attention to a review when they couldn't handle school, in general? This is a review, so how much Science knowledge did they already have? I am ashamed to admit this, but these were my thoughts.

On the day before, I thought I should have an alternative review prepared just in case the students didn't respond well to the review I did at the other schools. One little boy sat down across from me and I introduced myself to him. He rolled his eyes. I asked if he had a pencil.

"Yeah."

"Do you mean, 'yes, ma'am'"

"Yeah."

"Come on, one more syllable. 'Yes ma'am.'"

"I said yeah, now dang, here go the pencil right here!" He showed me the pencil.

I took a deep breath and told myself to move on.

Good thing I brought an alternative because within minutes I needed it. There were four students, 9 and 10 years-old, around a table with me. I pulled out sheets for them, I read a Science experiment scenario and they were to sketch it. There was a line graph with questions that followed. I did not expect them to be so academically competitive. They were perfectionists with their diagrams, shading them, labeling, writing captions. They turned around in their chairs so their friends couldn't see their work. Unbelievable. I stayed beyond the time I was supposed to stay. They asked when I was coming back. I didn't know, I had no plans to, but they invited me, so I said I would speak with the Principal about coming back. The little boy who refused to say ma'am,

said, “Dang, I go back to my regular school tomorrow, so when you come back I won’t even be here.”

Staying true to my word, I spoke with the Principal about returning. I went back last week with the supplies to make bird feeders. I thought it would be a nice project for them to take home and start summer break. The look on their faces when they put their hands into a bucket of birdseed was priceless. “This is what birds eat!” “I thought they ate worms!” “Where these seeds come from?” “If you put these seeds in the ground will they like..grow?” We had a nice Science discussion while they worked. After they had made the bird feeders I thought they would want to take them home. They, instead, wanted to go hang them on the fence outside their classroom. Then it was birdwatch time as they waited for birds to come visit the feeders. “Mrs. Massey, when are you coming back?” “Can we make slime?” “If we make slime, be sure you get glow-in-the-dark glue.”

So, my third visit was Thursday, and word had spread to the 1st graders that the 4th graders were having Science fun, so I had to stop by their room, too. This was when I realized the blessing. There were two 1st grade boys, their teacher, and me seated at a table. They were each using a popsicle stick to stir glue and water in a styrofoam cup. I asked what color food-coloring they preferred. Both wanted blue. I let them each put one drop of blue into their cup then stir some more. They were in disbelief to see the glue and water mixture turn blue - after they put food coloring in it. This was not everyday stuff. They were probably quite familiar with video games, YouTube, and TV, but to see a liquid change color while they were stirring it, was a brand new experience. The next step was for me to add a teaspoon of borax solution while they were stirring the blue mixture. One child had made slime before, but the other had not. When his slime formed while he was stirring, the breath he drew in took him like 10 seconds. I didn’t know a little boy had lungs that big. This was a totally new experience for him. He knew he was making slime, but he was not expecting it to form as it did. As I think about it, these children have likely experienced more than their share of disappointments and failures, but not on Thursday! They made slime and nobody took their cup, kicked them out of the room, or redirected their behavior. This was a great time for these children.

**In order to receive a blessing, you have to be a blessing.** I could have “had something come up,” on the day they signed up for the review. If I had, I would not have been invited back a second or a third time. These children would not have learned about birds or birdseed, nor would they have had the opportunity to create something for the good of another living thing with their own hands. And Thursday, could have been an ordinary day of arguing and getting into trouble. Instead, they experienced a moment of awe. It is my prayer that they each will experience awe once again, and more abundantly, when they come to know the Lord.

AMEN - Thank you for reading!

Kim