

## Secondary Teacher, Springfield, Vermont

Thirty years ago I came out of graduate school rarin' to go in the classroom. I still am. But that's pretty much where the similarity between then and now ends. During the 1970's in pursuit of my Masters in Education, I was trained to prepare a lecture every day for every class. My job was to get up on stage... the kids' job was to sit in neat little rows and shut up. I loved it. I should have known better. I was having a lot of fun. But they weren't.

Over the years, I was provided with a regular opportunity to understand how most of those kids must have felt: it was called In-Service. Five days every year when I would become the student and somebody else would get to do my job. Five days every year staring at my watch. Why didn't I realize that this was... teaching me what the kids were going through? I guess I was thinking, "yah, this teacher is boring, but I'm really interesting." I was interesting.... to myself.

Last year I began to learn about engaging my students, and this year I'm working intensively on the PLN program. It has been nothing short of an upheaval in my career, reinventing myself after thirty years of "being interesting".

It has not been easy. Letting go of all that is familiar and comfortable; all that neat stuff I was sharing with my audience during my stage performances. It is still difficult. I still feel as though I need to mourn every day the loss of my shtick that I loved so much.

Can't I just let them know what I know? After all, I know so much about my content area that is interesting, all I want is to share it with my kids. Okay, not share it, deliver it. Well... not deliver it, perform it. Me, me, me.

Now I'm reinventing my classes. Nothing like being a green, 59-year-old rookie.

There were a couple of things I had already known. A class period of nothing but lecture is a bad idea. I knew that. So I was breaking up my class into modules a long time ago. What I was not doing was tying those modules together into one lesson: a before, during, and after as I understand it now.

Right now I have two glaring weaknesses (I have a bunch, but two which stand out to me). The first is to employ a variety of before's. Right now I'm doing writing prompts almost every day, and I think I've gotten good at it. It comes easy to me to find a question that the kids relate to and can serve as an introduction to the lesson.

But I'm not mixing it up enough- I need to use other activities- and I need to get comfortable with that.

The second is not getting to the after. I get wrapped up in the during and never seem to finish it. At this point I think what I need to do is change the during, design it to last 45 minutes or so, so

that I have the necessary time to get to the after.

I'm getting there. There are marks on my classroom floor from all the moving of desks. My class would be unrecognizable to my students of yesteryear.

My students have come a long way too. I met with quite a bit of resistance last year as I was making the transition. No longer. I walked into my class recently, picked up the previous day's lesson where I had left off, and the kids said, "Hey, where's our writing prompt?"