

Paper Plane

November 10, 2019

I made a monumental mistake this week. Actually, I made the same mistake twice. I failed to dress up. This does not mean that I wore ripped jeans and a grotty T-shirt to work, it means that I knew there were events running that kids were dressing up for and I falsely assumed that teachers would not be involved, or maybe just a few who were really enthusiastic.

The first dressing up event was Storytelling Night. This is a very popular night on the primary school calendar where teachers set up their classrooms like a giant slumber party and read stories to families who are drinking hot chocolate and eating biscuits. The kids all wear pyjamas and bring their teddy bears. I stayed after school and helped set up and then wondered where all the teachers had gone. Turns out that everyone, principal included, was also dressing in pyjamas.

“Where are your pyjamas?”
“What happened to your pyjamas?”
“Oh no! You don’t have any pyjamas on!”



I skulked around the edges of the storytelling evening, feeling conspicuous and non-conforming, avoiding the confused stares of small children and their teddy bears. I vowed that next year, I would be the most impressively pyjama-clad teacher the event had ever seen. I was even plotting to start searching for the perfect pair of over-sized, novelty slippers. Storytelling Night 2020 is going to be epic.

The next day was the Book Week Parade. I arrived at school tired, super tired — in the kind of way that only a mid-week after-school event can make you feel. Almost immediately after getting out of my car, I found Nemo — he walked right past me with his mum in tow. Then came a trio of Elsas from Frozen chasing Harry Potter and Mr Messy. It was clear the parade was being taken extremely seriously by the kids.

“Are you going to get changed now or just before the parade?”
“What?”
“Is your costume in your car or your office?”

I had managed to do it again. Twice in less than 24 hours. The entire primary school was in costume.

“What are you supposed to be?”
“A teacher.”
“What? You are a teacher every day. Where is your costume?”

Small children are capable of delivering the most disappointed but judgmental looks simultaneously. At the parade, just like at Storytelling Night, I stuck to the edges of the gym to avoid detection. Teachers walked past dressed as Cat in the Hat, Dorothy and Spot the Dog. “Who are you supposed to be?” hissed a year 1 girl dressed in a convincing Pippy Longstocking get-up as she pranced past.

“She doesn’t do dress-ups — she didn’t wear pyjamas last night either,” whispered her friend dressed as Rapunzel. I have a lot to prove in 2020.

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