

Paper plane

August 17, 2018

As someone who is secondary trained and has always worked with teenagers, suddenly finding myself working in a primary context has been a big change. One of the most obvious differences is the size of the kids. This may not seem like a big deal, but there have been a number of times this has challenged me.

Firstly, the top half of my office door is glass and the bottom half is solid. In my first week, I kept hearing knocks on the door but would turn to see nobody standing there. I just assumed it was some students messing around until I realised that quite a few kids who had been coming to see me weren't tall enough to look through the glass and I simply couldn't see them. Oops!



When walking through the playground, I've been taken by surprise by low flying missile hugs. These tend to occur when I'm deep in conversation with a colleague or student and have not noticed a small child racing towards me. Several times I've almost been bowled over, particularly if I've been struck in the back of the knees. I've noticed it doesn't seem to matter whether I've actually met that particular child or not — if you're an adult walking through the playground, you are fair game for enthusiastic leg hugs.

The speed at which primary school kids travel is noticeably different to secondary students, who tend to lug themselves from one class to the next with weary apathy. Primary kids prefer to travel everywhere in a breathless flurry. This is particularly apparent if they are on important business, such as taking lunch orders to the canteen, returning books to the library or collecting notices from the front office for their class. In direct contrast, secondary students on similar secondments seem to slow down even further to maximise their out-of-class time.

The need for speed in primary kids is also obvious in assemblies when awards are given out. When a name is called, a small person will bolt to the stage to receive their certificate, as opposed to sheepishly glancing around and loafing back to their place. When a whole class is receiving an award, there is usually intense competition among students to reach the stage first and claim the prize, despite a representative already having been nominated by their teacher. In the excitement of the announcement, all plans are thrown out the window and a surge of adrenaline takes over.

The change has been re-energising. There have been days when I've had to stop myself running from one place to the next like a Grade 2 kid whose name has been called out at assembly. If I do find myself running in the playground, I'll have to be extra careful of those low flying missile hugs!

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