

Back to school: Do we still have some fireworks?

MUSCATINE, Iowa - This is the week many Muscatine parents have been waiting a long time to get here. Summer unofficially ends and the kids head back to school on Thursday.

My favorite back-to-school quote comes from a man who had grown a bit weary of his children fighting and claiming to be bored way too many times during summer break. As the bus pulled up and his kids climbed aboard for the first day of the year, he looked calmly at his wife and asked, "Do we still have some fireworks?"

While one family's celebration can be a teacher's new challenge, getting a fresh start each year is a unique and wonderful part of being in the education field. This time of year, I love putting around in my classroom

and making lists of things I need to get done before the big first day arrives. Each fall I resolve to be more organized, more creative, and more effective.

As reality sets in, I start to wonder about my new class. What are their pastions and past frustrations? What will their parents be like? How will they all interact together? Lately I also wonder if I will have enough energy to do this all again.

PERSPECTIVE



The Good News
Amy Meyer

Due to my recent chemotherapy and radiation treatments, it's been many months since I worked full-time. To be honest, I'm kind of nervous about not having a 2 o'clock nap option anymore. Yet, in other ways I'm glad to have a "normal" schedule again.

As optimistic as I am, it's still hard not to worry about the problems of the past or the potential challenges of the future. That goes for my health as well as my students' needs. Like many people, sometimes I find myself lying in bed and wondering if it's all going to be okay. The kids seem to have more baggage each year and as a profession we seem to be consistently under a lot of scrutiny. At the same time, I seem to have a lot less control over my personal

world than I ever realized before.

But then I remember the biggest lesson I've learned about teaching and cancer so far is that sometimes it's not as important to fix the problem as it is to just make a difference to someone who has the problem. Many, many things are out of our control as teachers, as patients ... as humans. Yet there are so many things that people can do to help those with problems.

It would be nice to think that those of us who work in schools would be able to guard each child against all the ills of the world. We'd magically find ways to make sure they were loved enough at home and taught exactly the perfect curriculum at school. No one would come to

school hungry or abused, and all our lessons would be meaningful and long-lasting. We'd find all the ways to eliminate drug problems, poverty, and neglect and we'd also be able to control bad things, like cancer, ever happening again to anyone again.

Yes, it would all be nice but we all know that neither teachers nor doctors have the power to fix everything all the time.

In the end, perhaps solving the problems is much less important as caring enough to want to help with the problem. Just showing someone special attention can be the key to helping a child read or a friend heal. Coworkers carrying casseroles can bring the same kind of magic as a teacher with the right word at the right time. Whatever

the situation, it seems that the real power to help begins with the intent to care and a willingness to share a little of yourself.

Realistically, we all know that each new school year brings a variety of new challenges and old frustrations. Each day will not feel fireworks-worthy for sure. The good news is that no matter what we're up against, we can still make a difference by taking time to show concern and helping each other. Together we can make this year another good one for everyone.

Amy Meyer is a local columnist who often writes for Monday's edition. While she struggles to stay rested while undergoing treatment for breast cancer, her column may appear less frequently, but she appreciates hearing from her readers whenever they have suggestions or comments. Contact her at: amymeyer@machlink.com