



Finishing Strong

By Becky Ramsey, Public School and Christian School Representative

When students and teachers come to the fourth quarter of the school year, too often the focus is the end of school or even what is going to happen after the last bell has rung. Many discussions around the lunch tables or in the faculty lounge are about summer plans rather than on school work or the final semester strategy. However, I believe our focus must be to finish strong. Christ has told us that whatever our hands find to do, we are to do it with all our might (Ecclesiastes 9:10, NIV).

1. To finish strong, teachers must choose the best lessons for the rest of the school days. In my situation, I have lost several teaching days due to new testing procedures and snow days. I must adjust what I have taught in the past and decide what I will teach in the days to come. I must decide also what will be left undone this year. Choosing the concepts most needed by my students is often a difficult decision that should not be made lightly or selfishly. I must consider what will benefit the class in the long run and meet the most state standards. Some teachers choose lessons that are easier to prepare. However, it is important to choose lessons that will bring the best long-term results for my students. Considering their needs over my convenience is a necessity.
2. To finish strong, teachers must plan for the demands of their struggling students. By this time in the year, a student who experiences difficulties often faces the temptation to give up completely. And honestly, a teacher could be equally as tempted to do the same. When there is no support from the home, it is easy to think, "Well, if their parents don't care enough to help, why am I worrying about this problem so much?" God has allowed you to be this child's teacher. He thought you would care enough. Continuing a plan to the end of the year is important for

these fragile learners. If they see that you (as the teacher) are not giving up, maybe it will encourage them to keep going as well. It does not hurt to lay out a plan for the start of the next year as well. Next year's teacher would welcome a jumpstart on the new school year with some ideas that worked and a heads-up on some things that did not go as well in the past.

3. To finish strong, we cannot leave the academically gifted to just coast at this time of the year. Many times, teachers allow the gifted to take care of their own needs rather than challenging them to the next level. We let them be satisfied with mediocrity instead of stimulating their minds to seek for something more. We must find ways to make learning enticing for them and then have them challenge the rest of the class with their enthusiasm.
4. To finish strong, we also have to ensure that our attitude toward these last days remains positive and we are just as excited at the end of the year as when we opened that brand new box of crayons the first day of school. We might need to plan some special events and things to look forward to during those last few weeks and days. Planning fun events always helps to keep spirits headed in the right directions for both students and teachers.

When I turn out that light as I leave my room at the end of the year, I want to be able to say with the apostle Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7, NIV). Sometimes, organizing a classroom the right way is a "good fight." And way too often, I feel as if I am in the middle of a "rat race" to get everything done that an "efficient" teacher would do!

But more than anything, as one who loves the Lord and feels a calling to this position as a teacher, I want to keep the faith as I serve in my classroom. What I do in my classroom is not merely for a paycheck. What I do is to please the One who has called me to serve. If I please Him, then my parents, my students, and my administration will be satisfied with my work. I want to finish strong. My prayer will be: Help me to do so, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Becky Ramsey lives in Reynoldsburg, Ohio. She has taught in public and Christian schools. Although she retired last year, she has gone back to the school to serve in volunteer ways. Her last position before retiring was as reading and math intervention specialist. You may contact Becky at ramseyfamily2771@gmail.com.