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NEWSLETTER



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Worst End of School Year Mom Ever

by Jen Hatmaker

You know the Beginning of School Enthusiasm? When the pencils are fresh and the notebooks are new and the kids' backpacks don't look like they lined the den of a pack of filthy hyenas? Moms, remember how you packed innovative and nutritional lunches and laid clothes out the night before and labeled shelves for each child's work and school correspondence and completed homework in a timely manner?

I am exactly still like that at the end of school, except the opposite.

We are limping, *limping* across the finish line, folks. I tapped out somewhere in April and at this point, it is a miracle my kids are still even going to school. I haven't checked homework folders in three weeks, because, well, I just can't. Cannot. *Can. Not.* I can't look at the homework in the folder. Is there homework in the folder? I don't even know. Are other moms still looking in the homework folder? I don't even care.

I feel like any sort of school energy required at this point is pure oppression, like the universe is trying to destroy me. I'm so tiiiiiiiiired and I have five kids and that is just too many to educate well. I can only handle around two, so I'm going with Sydney and Caleb because they both like to read and the other three are just going to have to enroll in Life Skills Class one day and develop a trade.

Yesterday Remy brought her books to me at bedtime – an hour notable for its propensity to incite rage and trauma – and chirped, “We need to read for 20 minutes!” and a little part of my soul died.

“No, we don't have to read tonight.”

“YES WE DO!!! MRS. BURKE SAID!!! WE HAAAAVE TO!!!”

“We already read.”

“NO WE DIDN'T!!! YOU ARE FAKING ME, MOM?”

“When I talk to you during the day, that’s like reading. You have to listen to the words I am saying and then make sense of them. It’s really hard work for you. It’s called *auditory reading*. We’ve been practicing all day. I’ll write the minutes down in your log.”

My friend Glennon over at Momastery described nighttime reading like this: “*The little one wants to ‘help read’ her book. So, let’s see. It takes her about six minutes to sound out each word, and so if the book is one hundred words, well, I don’t specialize in math but I am telling you that I am stuck in that room FOREVER. It feels like I will be reading that book with Amma until I die.*”

UNTIL WE DIE. Children should not be allowed to learn to read until they are already good at it. And why do we have to do this at bedtime when I’m one click away from becoming that scary under-the-bed-mother in “Mama” (**GO TO BED OR I AM ACTUALLY GOING TO DIE AND THEN HAUNT YOU FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE AS A TERRIFYING CLOWN**). I know having an emerging reader is exciting. Because of the reading! And the literacy! But at the end of the school year, when I’ve logged approximately 688 million hours with such gripping plots like *The mother and the brother went to the store*, which takes 12 minutes to decode, then I have to look at the ceiling and sing hymns in my brain to get through it.

Then Ben tells me Tuesday that he needs a Ben Franklin costume for the Living History Museum **today**, and I’m like *what fresh hell is this??* I have no idea how I missed the correspondence on this (because I’m not checking backpacks is just a theory), but Brandon is the Costume and Project Parent and I am the Daily Grinder, which is a division of labor we agreed on to ensure our kids actually graduate one day and move out, but he is out of town on a mancation, so this is on me. **I cannot even handle signing a folder in late May; a colonial costume is cause for full, unrestrained despair.**

So Ben went to school like this today, and there is no way this will ever not be a part of his childhood. Please note my scarf hanging out the bottom of his vest, as well as the soccer socks stretched over his Adidas pants. Just whatever, man.

My shame was somewhat mitigated when I saw a kid wearing a random t-shirt and jeans with a pair of swim goggles around his neck (Michael Phelps) and another girl with a piece of paper taped to her shirt with her character’s name written in marker. I caught the eyes of their moms and was all *solidarity, you guys*.

Teachers, we need to make a deal that after April testing, we don’t have to do anything else. You don’t. I don’t. I don’t care if you watch movies in class five days a week and take four recesses a day. I mean, Caleb had to bring an About Me poster with *five school days left in the year*. In September, this might have produced something noteworthy, with pictures perhaps, even some thoughtful components to describe his winning qualities, but as we’ve used up all our bandwidth, *we yanked trash out of our*

actual trash can, glued it to a poster, and called it a day. I am not exaggerating when I tell you this is the very most we can do on May 29th. This is our best work.

The emails coming in for All Of The Things – class gift, end of year letters, luncheon signup, party supplies, awards ceremonies, pictures for the slide shows, final projects – are like a tsunami of doom. They are endless. I mean, they will never ever end. **There is no end of it.** I will never finish and turn it all in and get it to the (correct) Room Mom and get it all emailed and I am pretty sure the final week of school will never be over and this is the end for me.

Brandon:

“You don’t have to do all that, you know. Just blow it off.”

Me, staring blankly:

“Well, what a lovely thought you’re having there in your brain. How nice for you to be thinking that thought. I want to live in your imaginary world where my failure to do the School Stuff doesn’t mean our kid is the only one not wearing a purple shirt or didn’t have his pictures in the slideshow or didn’t bring in a handmade card for his teacher like every other student. I’ll just ‘blow it off’ and our kids can work it out with their therapists later.”

“Touchy.”

“*You don’t even know about all this, man.*”

So, Mom out there sending Lunchables with your kid, making her wear shoes with holes because *we’re.almost.there*, practicing “auditory reading” with your 1st grader, I got your back, sister. **We were awesome back in October; don’t you forget that. We used to care, and that counts for something.** Next year’s teachers will get a fresher version of us in August, and they won’t even know the levels of suckage we will succumb to by May. Hang in there, Mama. Just a few more days until summer, when approximately 19 minutes into our glorious respite from homework, liberated from the crush of it all, ready to party like it’s 1999, our precious children, having whooped and celebrated and “graduated” and squealed all the way home will announce:

“I’m bored.”

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