

# Upfront

Today is my second day of school. Ever. Which is an odd claim for a 56-year-old man to make, particularly in June; but, it's true, if not clear. It's my second day as a teacher, and second day in as long as I can remember that I've honored a 6 o'clock alarm-clock tone for anything other than a commercial flight.

What have I learned in two days of school? Teaching is hard. Young people are skeptical, curious, angry, frightened, hopeful, ambitious, lazy, joyful, gifted, average, peculiar, content and anxious...sometime each kid is seemingly all these things, at once. Education, when laced with inspiration, is magically powerful.

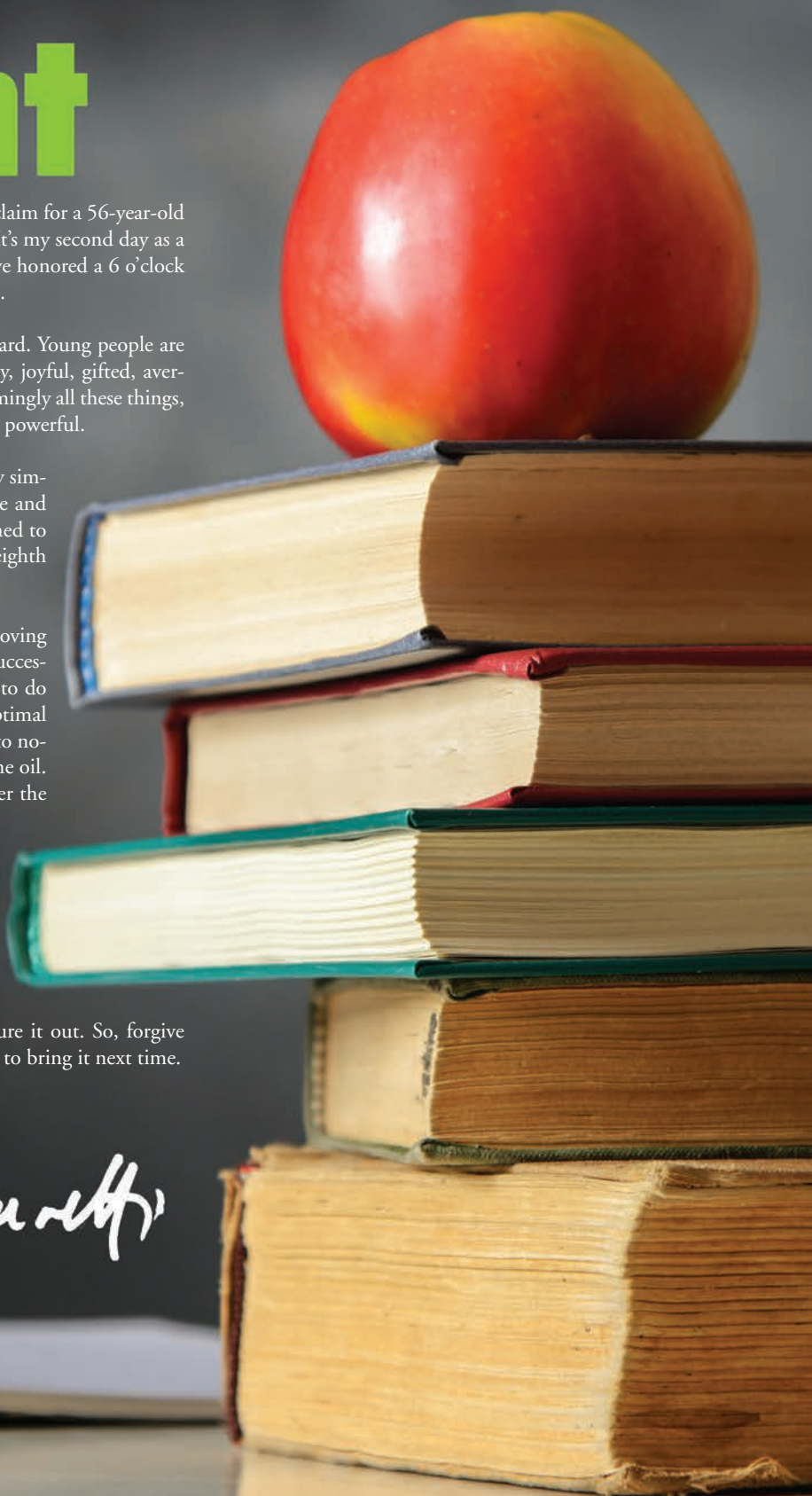
Criticizing the concept of education or its systems is overly simplistic: Any endeavor that involves tens of millions of people and their organizational overlords (in this country alone) is doomed to be as wildly imperfect as the human condition, itself, to the eighth power, give or take a zero.

"Education is broken." Yes, and no. Everything with moving parts, eventually, fails. And properly preparing mankind's successors is a process with many, many moving parts. The key is to do everything you can to maintain the machine's systems for optimal performance. Which means, metaphorically, it's not enough to notice the "check engine" light; you must – actually – change the oil. In other words, if you genuinely care about the car, get under the hood, or don't expect a smooth ride.

"If you can't do; teach." Dismissively naïve. There are great "doers" and great "teachers," but where the twain meets: Arguably, that's where the greatest of either group lives.

What else have I learned (in two long-but-short days)? That I can't possibly find the time to adequately prepare AND write this column. At least not this time. But I'll figure it out. So, forgive me this once: The teacher (me) ate my homework. I promise to bring it next time.

*Scott A. Lawrence*



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