

Better than recess: The gift of an unexpected rainstorm

An email popped up on my computer. The mother who was scheduled to help with playground duty had to cancel, and the school needed volunteers. Every time I had volunteered for the job before, it had snowed or rained and I didn't get to go.

But this was different. It was a perfect day. The sun was shining, it wasn't too hot or humid, and I could go during my lunch hour.

Besides, I'd get to surprise Leo and give him a hug during the middle of the day.

When I reached the school, I signed in and headed to the sunny playground.



It was fun. The children ran and played and chased each other in a friendly, civilized way I don't recall from my own recess days. The first group headed inside, and the second group came out. The kindergarteners would come at the very end, so I had to wait to see my boy.

It was only then that I noticed a large gray cloud overhead.

"I felt a raindrop," one student called out.

As the rain started to pick up, a teacher blew a whistle to call the students inside. Then the heavens opened up, and a downpour began.

I stood there looking at the sky that had been blue just minutes earlier and realized this meant I wouldn't see Leo on the playground.

So I headed into the room where he eats lunch. His classmates spotted me and started yelling his name. Being the mother of a kindergartener is like being a celebrity—only so much better.

I found him and gave him a hug. He gave me an enormous smile.

"Scoot over," I said. "Let me sit down for a minute."



He moved over on the cafeteria bench, and I joined him and his friends. We talked about yogurt

smoothies and how General Grievous uses his light sabers.

They showed off their math skills (“I know what 50 plus 50 is!”) and tried to challenge me with word puzzles (“OK, now put together ‘tree’ and ‘house’”).

We discussed who has brothers and sisters and everyone’s ages and who’s been to whose house and how everyone got to invent an insect that morning. Someone’s was green and glowed and another one had spots and a stinger.

Leo leaned in with a mischievous grin and whispered, “Mama, I ate one of the Kit-Kat bars for snack this morning.” I tried to act appalled because that’s probably what mothers are supposed to do—well, the mothers who dare to pack something so lacking in nutrition in their child’s lunchbox.

We talked and laughed and I wondered how many years you get to show up in your son’s class and find that every child wants to talk to you. And Leo sat there beaming because his mother was the only parent there. And his marvelous teacher just let me stay.



After 10 or 15 minutes, I decided I should go. We hugged again, I chatted with his teacher, and I headed back to my office.

That unexpected rainstorm might have spoiled my plans to volunteer on the playground, but it gave me something even better, something I wouldn’t even have thought to wish for—a few precious minutes with my son during one of his last days in kindergarten.

I could be wrong, but I’m guessing I had a better time than if I had actually had the chance to watch him playing kickball on a sunny blacktop.

Thank you, God, for brightening my day with a little rain.