

Snow, snow, snow, birthday spaghetti, an anniversary gift, and more (7 Quick Takes)

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It snowed yesterday! I had seen that snow and sleet were in the forecast, but so often storms don't amount to much—especially in mid-November. Well, this storm was big enough to give our boys a day off from school and some fantastic outside fun. They sledded and shoveled and started building a snowman before giving up on it. They came in cold and drenched and happy.

There's nothing like the first snow day of the school year.

~2~

Our older son turned 11 on Saturday, and we celebrated in style. We're not even finished celebrating, in fact, because we're having a birthday sleepover for two of his friends on Friday night.

We had thought about having all his friends to the same play date, but they attend two different schools. So, after much analysis and conversation, we decided to pick two separate dates. I love how much thought and planning he put into each play date to make it work best for his guests. And it spreads out the birthday fun a little, which is always good for everyone except maybe....

~3~

...his little brother, who normally doesn't have any trouble sharing at all. But birthdays are a tough one. Every year I watch him struggle with the loooooong wait for his own birthday, which comes a whole month and a day after his brother's.



Usually we just help him ride it out, but this year it seemed to be a particularly rough day. And, although I think birthdays should be nothing but amazing, I do know they can bring up some sadder emotions too. And it might not help when the birthday boy gets a Playstation 4. So I took him to a batting cage and he hit baseballs for a while.

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For his birthday eve, we took Leo out to the restaurant of his choice, P.F. Chang's. Then on his birthday we invited ourselves to my parents' house. I told my mother that the birthday boy's only request was noodles.

So she made her delicious homemade spaghetti sauce and turkey meatballs. Yum.

"I can't wait for dinner at Grandma's," Leo told me earlier in the day. "She makes the best spaghetti."

At dinnertime, he asked for a huge plate of spaghetti noodles and ate them with parmesan cheese and pepper—Grandpa-style, as we know it. He didn't touch the sauce or the meatballs. And he was happy as can be.

Apparently I need to pay more attention to how my mother boils her spaghetti.

~5~

This week was American Education Week, which meant our school was open every day for parents of different classes to visit. Then the last day was Grandparents and Special Friends Day. I really wanted to slip into the classroom to visit each of our sons, and I managed to do it—though never for very long and always with a half-eye on my phone since it was the middle of the workday.

When I went to visit Daniel's room, I arrived and the students were performing read-aloud stories together.

"You just missed mine," he whispered to me. And my heart fell.

Then his aide stopped by to tell me. And then his teacher.

"He was amazing! I'm so sorry you missed it! You should have seen how well he did."

Big. Long. Sigh.

So I'm not winning Mother of the Year this week. But the kids are happy healthy and apparently doing well in school—especially when I'm not there. And I'm grateful for all of that.

~6~

Some days are so busy that I can't eat lunch, and I am not as good about packing lunch as I should be, especially on days when I'm not sure I'll be in one place to eat. The other day I went to our office building's vending machine and bought some chicken salad. I only know it was chicken salad because it said so. It didn't resemble it in any other way.

But I was hungry enough that I ate it. And I can't say I wouldn't eat it again.



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A highlight of my week was that my colleagues surprised me with a party to celebrate my 10 years of working for Loyola University Maryland. They wrote a poem for me together, made me a card, designed a special Loyola flyswatter to add to my collection, and decorated the office for me. It was so special, and I was very, very touched.

I'm grateful for the work I do and the people I get to do it with. The days are full and there are never enough hours to do it all, but I'm thankful to be part of such a great team of compassionate colleagues and working for an institution with such a strong mission.

Read more quick takes at Kelly's blog, This Ain't the Lyceum, and have a wonderful weekend!