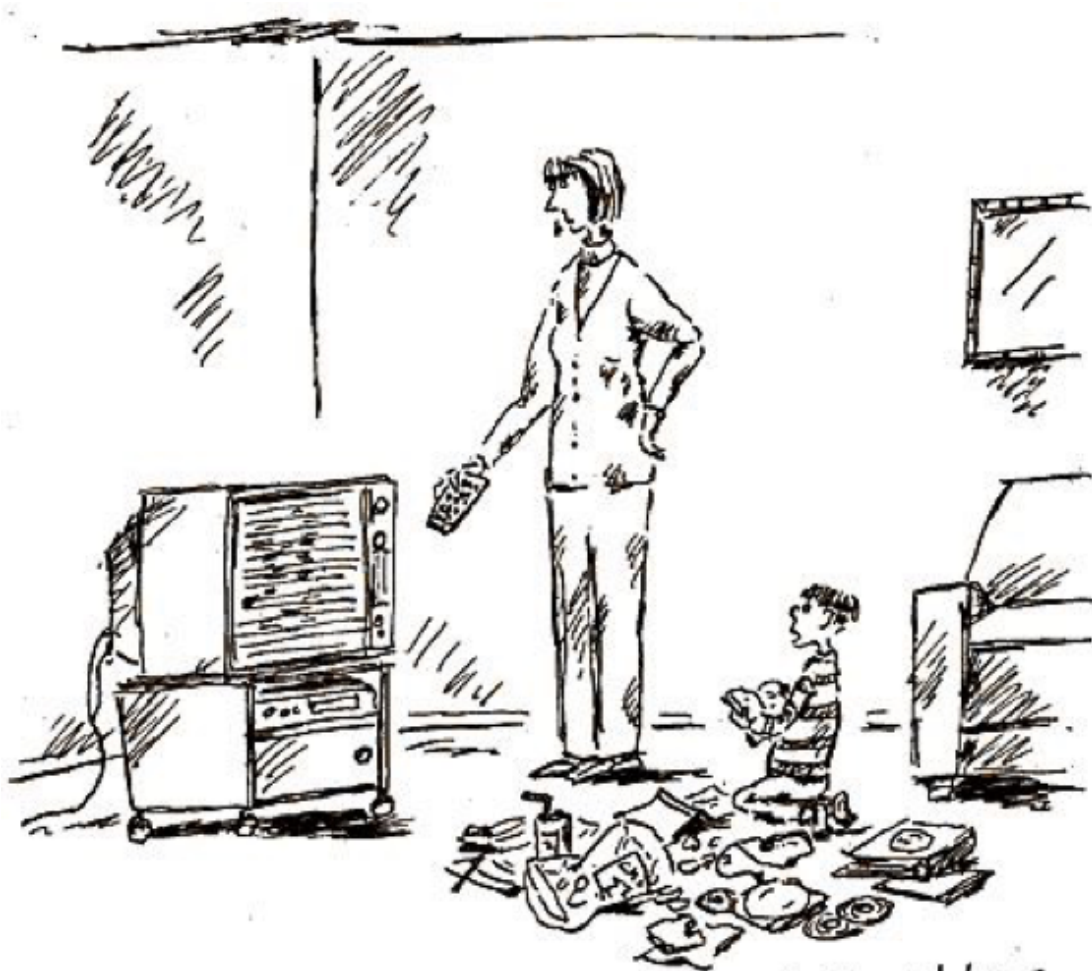


## Learning to Laugh; Laughing to Learn

*Bob Mankoff*

*Cartoon & humor Editor of Esquire*



*"Have some respect for my learning style."*

When most people think of learning, they don't think of laughter.

Traditional teachers didn't put much humor into their teaching, and often they even suppressed humor when it occurred.

But gets suppressed here is more than just a laugh. Along with it go engagement, imagination, emotional intelligence, and the ability to come up with novel ideas.

Traditionally schools have emphasized **convergent** thinking—getting **the** single correct answer to any question, and not making any mistakes

That's why we took so many multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank tests.

# GRIT + IMAGINATION:

An Educator's Summit | In Honor of Jack Templeton



Why does a fireman wear red suspenders?

- A. The red goes well with the blue uniform.
- B. They can be used to repair a leaky hose.
- C. To hold up his pants.

Imagination and creative thinking aren't convergent thinking but **divergent** thinking. In this mode, there isn't a single correct answer, and no answer is a mistake.

# GRIT + IMAGINATION:

An Educator's Summit | In Honor of Jack Templeton



*"Maybe it's not a wrong answer—  
maybe it's just a different answer."*

And nothing exemplifies divergent thinking better than humor which involves seeing something from multiple perspectives.

## SOME BENEFITS OF HUMOR IN THE CLASSROOM

- Fosters an open atmosphere
- Gets and holds attention
- Promotes retention
- Promotes critical thinking
- Promotes mental flexibility
  - divergent thinking
  - tolerance for ambiguity
  - tolerance for novelty and diversity
  - risk-taking
  - creative thinking

## TIPS

There are no formulas to guarantee success every time you use humor in teaching, but here are some guidelines that can improve your chances.

### USING HUMOR IN THE CLASSROOM

- Use humor that your students understand and can relate to
- Use humor that you're comfortable with and can also relate to
- Integrate the humor into the teaching. Make it relevant to the topic
- Anchor your humor in the concrete world of familiar things.
- Skip the jokes—tell funny stories instead.
- Personalize your funny stories.
- Maximize surprise.
- Keep it short.
- Avoid sarcasm.
- Use New Yorker cartoons. I can get you a good deal on that.
- Don't worry. Be funny.