

# Foreword

In the late 1980s, Avner Ziv, a clinical psychologist teaching at the University of Tel Aviv, conducted a couple of seminal studies concerning humour and teaching and learning. In one case Ziv, who studied under Jean Piaget and earned his PhD at the Sorbonne in Paris, constructed an experiment with students in a fourteen-week class on statistics. The students were randomly chosen to take the same class from the same instructor in a humorous or a non-humorous section. (Who knew you could find humour in statistics?) For those students in the humorous section, the instructor incorporated several jokes or cartoons into each lecture, often using humour as a mnemonic device. At the end of the class, the students' final exam scores were analysed. The students in the humorous section scored, on average, ten percentage points higher than the students in the non-humorous section.<sup>1</sup>

So, teachers, take note. If you want to maximise student learning, lighten up. Administrators, if you want to enhance communication with teachers and other staff, lighten up. And that's what this little book is about—lightening up, having a laugh.

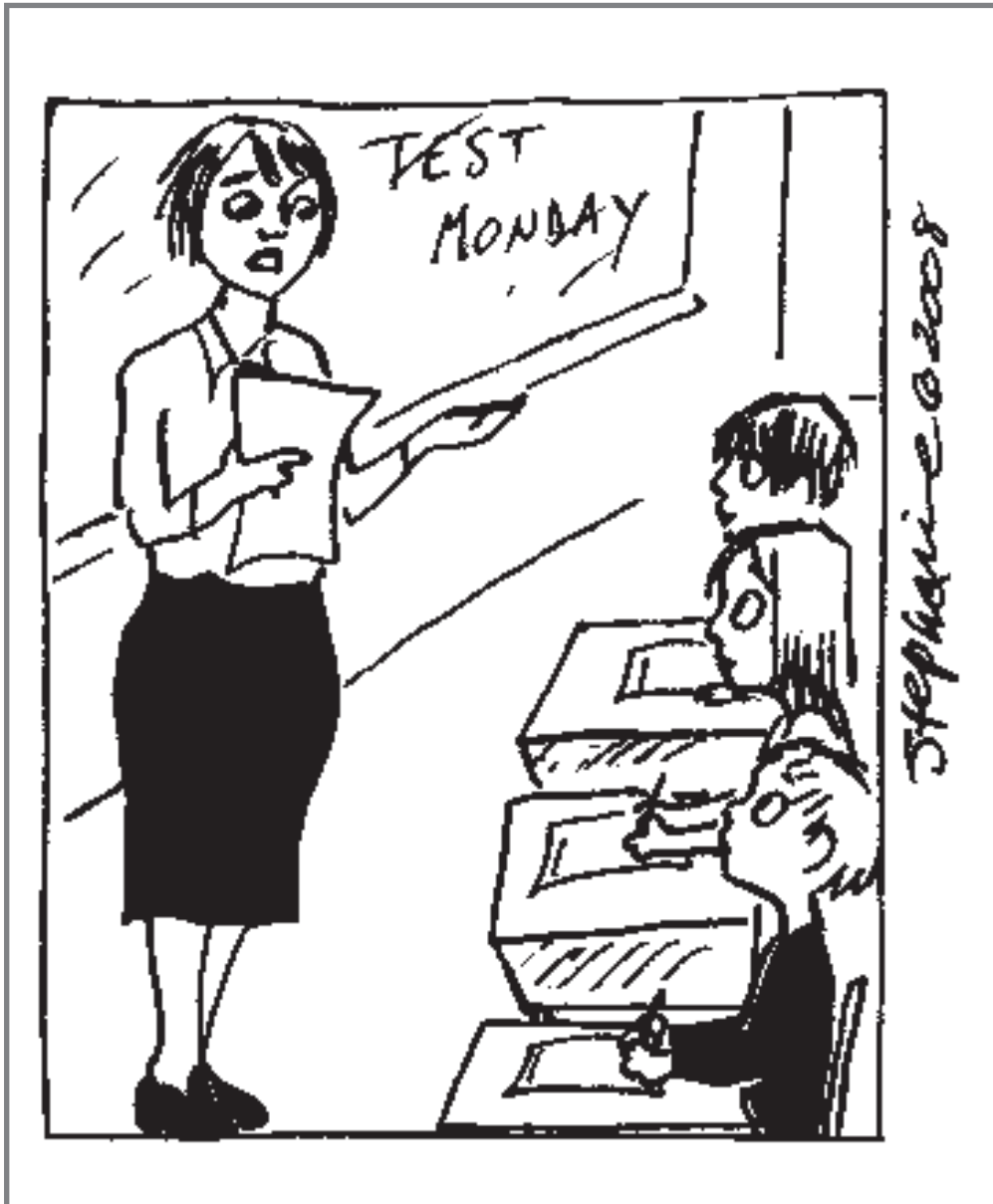
Researchers in various fields have repeatedly proven that humour is just plain good for you. Medical researchers, for example, have long known that a hearty laugh can reduce stress, lower your blood pressure, elevate your mood, boost your immune system, improve how your brain functions, and protect your heart. Humour can reduce anxiety and help you cope with the vicissitudes of life. Laughter, the scientists have shown us, decreases stress hormones and increases infection-fighting antibodies. Besides, it just feels good to laugh.

A half-century ago legendary editor Stanley M. Elam transformed a simple fraternity magazine into the influential education journal that the *Phi Delta Kappan* is today. Since that time readers also have found laughter tucked among the scholarly articles in the cartoons that have traditionally salted the journal's pages. Ninety per cent of readers thumb the pages of each issue to read the cartoons first, before they settle into the articles. Okay, unlike Ziv's numbers, that's a made-up statistic. The real figure is probably closer to 99 per cent. The *Kappan* is to the world of education journals what *The New Yorker* is to the universe of general magazines.

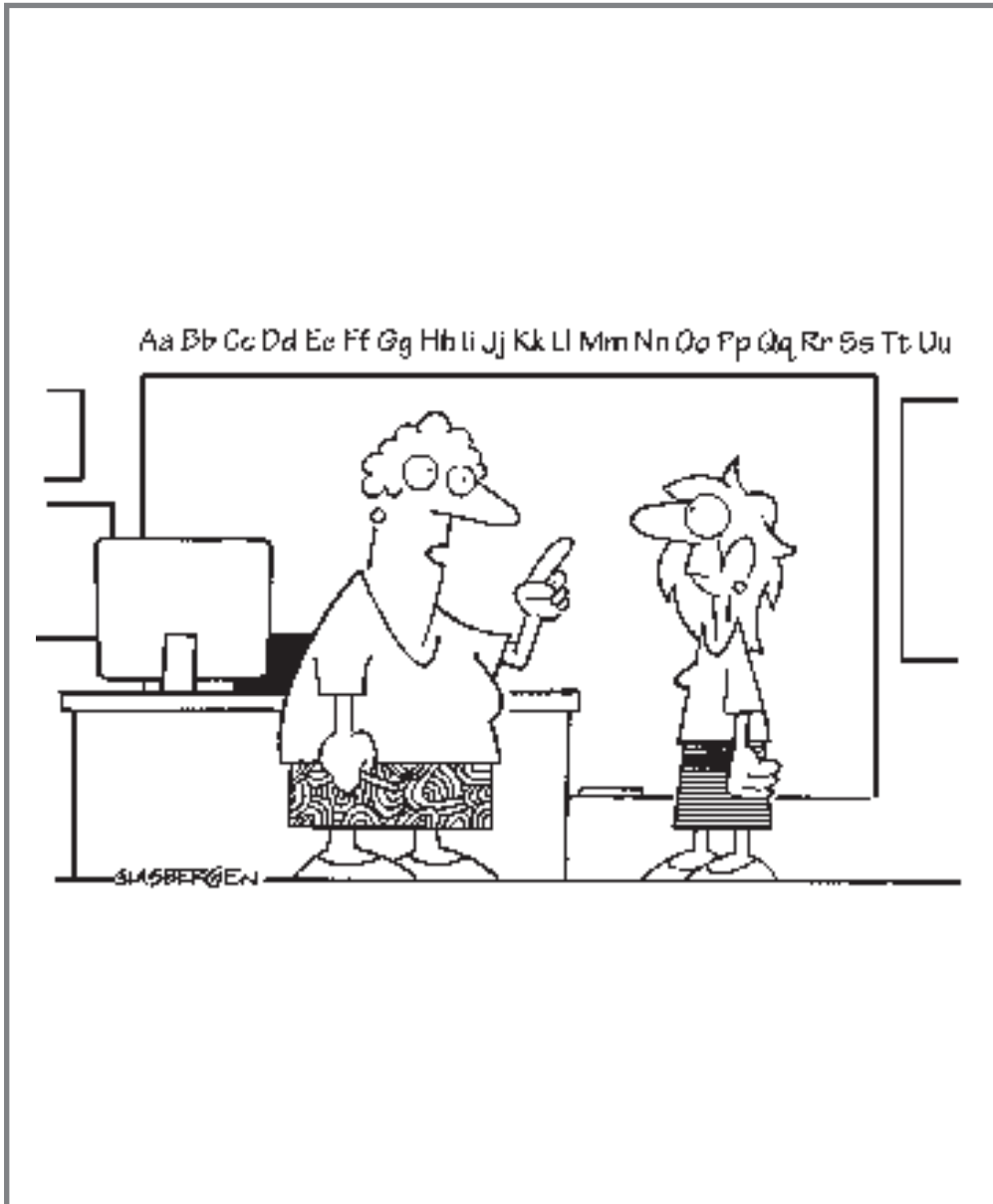
In this volume, as in previous *Kappan* cartoon collections, the editors have gathered the best of the best from the many cartoons that have appeared in the journal over the years. These cartoons are bound to bring a knowing smile, a wry grin, or a full-out belly laugh. Along with the fun, they may also inspire thoughts about how to incorporate humour into teaching, administration and parenting. To help you do so, a rotating selection of cartoons is available at **[go.solution-tree.com/cartoons](http://go.solution-tree.com/cartoons)** and **[pdkintl.org/kappan](http://pdkintl.org/kappan)** for electronic download. We encourage you to visit regularly and download those cartoons for use in meetings to help break the ice, keep spirits high and motivate you through the serious work of education. —*Donovan Walling*

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<sup>1</sup>See Ziv, Avner. "Teaching and Learning With Humor: Experiment and Replication," *Journal of Experimental Education*, Vol. 57, 1988. For a more recent examination of the field, see Rod A. Martin's book, *The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach* (Academic Press, 2007).



"I'm forced to teach to the test. Let's hope you can all look forward to careers as test-takers!"



"As a student teacher, the first thing you must learn is how to make your kids behave for you. My own successful disciplinary formula is based on understanding, firmness, determination, and all the bribery I can afford."

# 3. Teach the Subject, Not the Child

It's only fair to let the traditionalists have their say. School is about *content*—the three Rs and a few other letters of the alphabet. After all, we've come a long way since schoolteachers were expected to “sweep the floor daily, scrub the floor with soap and water once a week, and start a fire in the stove by 7.00 a.m. so that the classroom will be warm by 8.00,” as was the case in 1915. Honestly, it was common for teachers' contracts to contain such provisions.

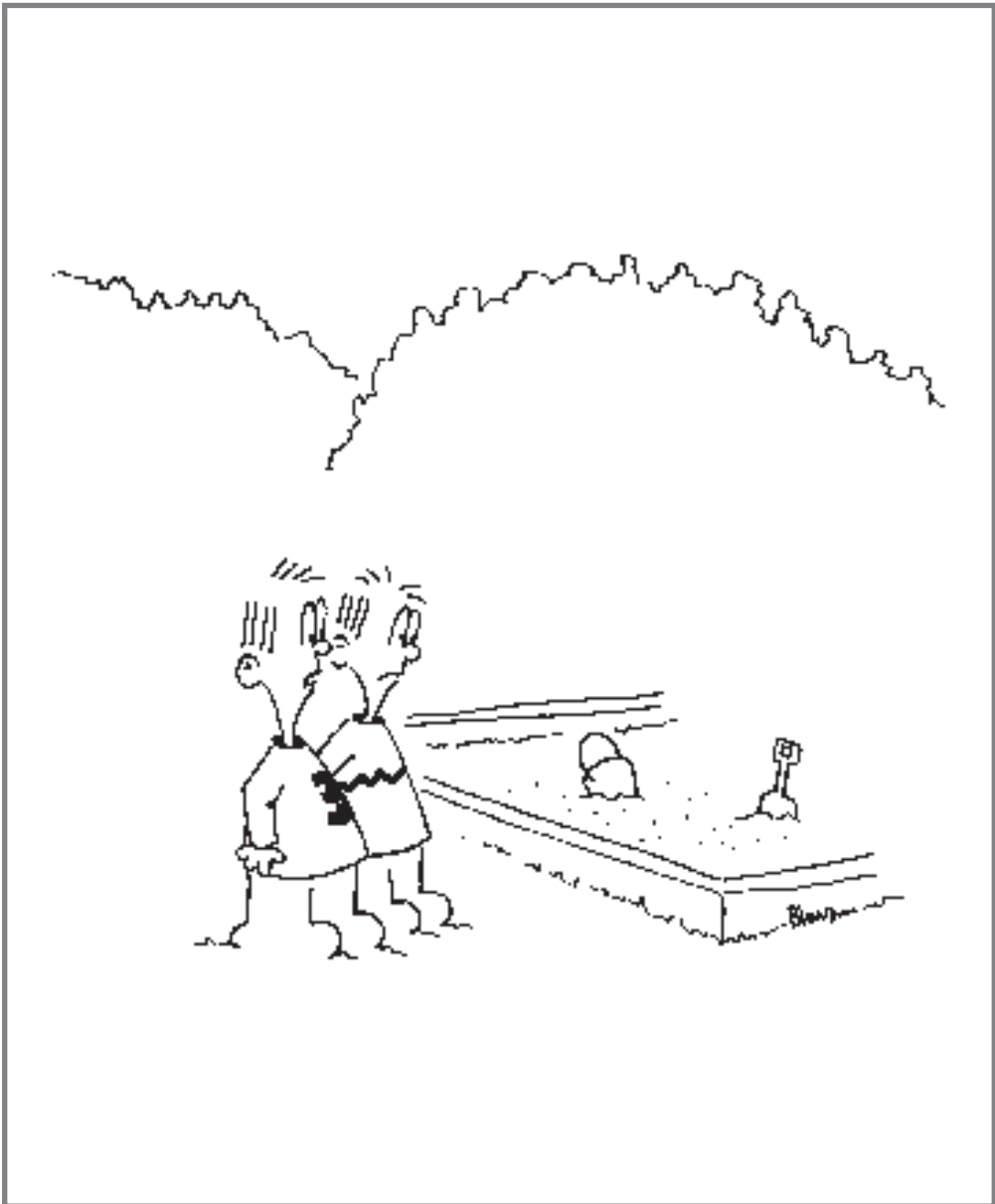
Over the years, schools have become more complicated, more regimented. Welcome to the timetable, for example. Our school cartoons in this chapter touch some familiar bases:

- First Period: Art
- Second Period: Maths
- Third Period: Science
- Fourth Period: English
- Fifth Period: History and Geography
- Sixth Period: Research and Study Skills

The only subject missing is computer science, but then, kids learn that in their cradle these days. Take the year one student whose teacher said, “Billy, spell *cat*.” The eager youngster responded, “C- A-T, enter.”

Speaking of spelling, there also was the knowing year three boy who advised his younger sibling, “Don't learn to spell *cat*. If you do, the words just keep getting harder.”

But whether students handprint their homework on the old ruled paper with the dotted line in the centre or type it into a computer, they and their teachers are still subject to all the quirks of the learning process, as the cartoons in this chapter show.



"I guess it's some kind of primitive PlayStation."