Bustin' loose . . .

My son's first-grade class (that's him in the upper right in the red-striped shirt) celebrated the arrival this week of a dozen or more chicks. The kids had watched and waited while the eggs incubated. The kids arrived this last Tuesday morning to the cheeping of four hours-old chicks. And shortly after class started, a fifth arrived. Their teacher pulled the egg out of the incubator and placed it on the floor under the lamp, and the kids got to watch a new life burst from its egg.

Those of us who've seen an egg hatch (especially those of us who can remember the first time we saw it) can attest to the wonderment of it all. But what is equally wondrous is the absolutely rapt attention the kids paid to what was going on. And it wasn't just my son's class; the whole school knew that this was happening. Kids from other first-grade classes paraded through to see the chicks. A fourth-grade class went through. The school secretary knew what was going on! This mystery, this absolutely amazing thing of emergent new life.

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Stretching wings. Trying to stand on wobbly legs. Good golly, miss Molly! That's something!

Several adults (including myself) were less interested in the hatching, and more curious about the ultimate fate of the chicks.* Oh, we practical ones! We almost missed the moment of wonder, of awe. We almost missed the looks on the kids' faces, their excitement. We almost missed sharing joy, being all caught up in being "adult" and "practical".

"Practicalities" seem to the order of the day now, for what an intense time of year this is! Students scrambling to finish papers and study for exams. There are textbooks to be sold back. Res hall rooms to be packed up. All-nighters! Non-stop Red Bulls or coffee. Faculty are reading papers, writing exams, giving grades (NO FUN!). Administrators are preparing for Trustee's meetings and planning/arranging for two commencement ceremonies. It is intense and stressful. Attending to the necessities are all we should be doing.

But that means it is REALLY time to step away. Go for a walk, a run, a ride. Take a nap -- a real one, not the kind that comes in the library with your head on a book, drooling. Breathe. Meditate. Sing. Dance. Take a look at one of the many flowers that beautify the campus. Take a close look (there's no exam or lab report required). Look at the veining in the petals and leaves. Look at the colors and how they fade from one shade to another. Or, look at the feathers on the mallard ducks in the Humanities Garden; marvel at the incandescence of the greens and blue/purples. Forget the biology books: HOW does THAT happen?

Bust loose of the practical. Give yourself over to awe and wonder for a while. Regardless of your age, become a first-grader again and marvel at our world. And, then, return refreshed.

Blessings,

Gary

* For those "adults" among you who are also curious about the chicks' fate, they'll be returned to the farm from which the eggs were acquired. There they'll have room to grow and roam about, and most likely continue the process of "creating" new eggs!