

SCHOOL LIGHT LINES



Volume 46 ■ 2025-2026 ■ Number 1

© umbra_media / Unsplash

The Effective Teacher...

The Teacher's Mind | Angela Freed

The state of a teacher's mind can make or break his teaching. Because of this, effective educators take notice of their mind's posture. They choose to direct their thoughts into healthy patterns.

What thought patterns keep a teacher in a healthy mental posture?

Love. When we love God and our neighbor, Jesus said we encapsulate all the commandments. What the heart loves, the mind values. An effective teacher chooses thought patterns of love.

Examples:

- I will value the image of God in this student, parent, or staff member.
- I will treat this person with respect

and honor, whether they themselves are acting honorably in this moment or not.

- I can't like everyone all the time, but I can love them by always treating them respectfully.

Responsibility. Teachers share the responsibility to educate with parents and other school staff. This makes it easy for us to blame-shift and job-shift. An effective teacher chooses thought patterns of responsibility.

Examples:

- Though this child is fractious, wild, or stinky, I will give him a good education. I can do this whether I have his parents' support or not.

- I can have a well-ordered student group, whether my co-teachers' classrooms are chaotic or not. My students' behavior does not depend on other staff members.
- I am the adult in the room. Children and their foibles don't need to intimidate me. They need me to call the shots and mete out the consequences, even when they pitch a fit.

Work. Education is a demanding job, but a teacher's dedication does not need to deplete his energy. Dedication means establishing a pace that conserves energy for the long run. An effective teacher chooses wise thought patterns about work.



Why Play?
Exploring play and its importance for children.

Page 3



L is for Lethargy?
A teacher finds a way to make her students responsive.

Page 8



A Slow Learner
When you wonder if you're making a difference.

Page 11

Men Teachers Relating Respectfully With Girl Students	5
Give a Hoot—About Owls	6
Pedagogical Meanderings	10
Ask Another	12



© wilpund / Getty Images

Examples:

- I will spend time on what saves time: developing classroom routines, effective teaching sessions, and efficient scoring. I will conserve time on what consumes time: bulletin boards, decor, and fun days.
- I am called to be my students' academic guide. I am not called to parent, pastor, or counsel them.
- Nurturing my soul is as necessary as expending my soul. To keep my spirit alive and fed, I will invest in non-scholastic activities: reading, singing, and hobbies. I will limit energy-draining events: late evening meetings, stress-filled gatherings, and unhealthy friendships.

Emotions. The students' success is our goal. How they make us feel on our way to that goal is, in the end, irrelevant. An effective teacher chooses thought patterns that modulate his emotions.

Examples:

- I expect my students to get upset now and then. I will breathe deeply and move calmly, as if I've been forecasting this explosion.
- My emotions aren't tethered to the students' emotions. They may fluctuate; I can stay steady.
- I will find ways to support or correct a frustrated student without interrupting the classroom's flow. The school day does not need to stop to accommodate one student's upset.
- The point of rules is not to make the teacher happy. So when a student breaks a rule, I will focus on correcting his behavior and explaining what I expect from him. How his

disobedience made me feel will not be part of our conversation.

Joy. A happy classroom is a high-achieving classroom where sparkles of joy are noticed, savored, and shared. An effective teacher chooses thought patterns of joy.

Examples:

- I will celebrate the possibilities for good in this day. I will refuse to fixate on the possibilities for evil.
- I will notice and speak of the gifts in this day—big and small: good-morning greetings, health and energy, recovered relationships.
- I will believe in the goodwill of people's hearts, even if their actions seem thoughtless or harmful.
- I will joy in hard work—the discoveries, the accomplishments, the successes. I will demonstrate to my students that joy is not an antidote to hard work; it is the way you tackle work.

Notice your thoughts. Direct your thoughts. Your effectiveness will expand.

Angela found her own years of schooling difficult, so a lifework of education was not her dream. It still shocks her that she has taught for thirteen years—eleven in traditional classrooms and two in ESL environments—in addition to working for two curriculum publishers, including Christian Light. She currently lives and teaches in northern Utah. When she is not teaching or writing or editing, she enjoys exploring Utah's canyons and deserts with her friends.

THE POWER OF



Why Play? | Jonas Sauder

Children play. Jesus once referred to children playing in the marketplace: “We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept” (Luke 7:32). He notes several timeless forms of play among children: imitating, role-playing, and group activity. Children enjoy playing house, farm, carpenter, school, or even funeral (hence Jesus’ reference to mourning and weeping).

The satisfaction of play emerges from the activity itself rather than its product. The fun of putting a puzzle together is in putting a puzzle together. When the last piece is in place, we take it apart in preparation for the fun of putting it together again.

Play stops when it’s no longer interesting or fun. Work, in contrast to play, is pursued for an end: cooking to make a meal, weeding to clean up the garden, splitting wood to provide fuel for the winter. Although mature adults often enjoy their work, they pursue it whether or not they enjoy it because they must work for survival.

In some ways, play can be considered work. Play is the serious work of childhood; it’s how children learn about their world. By interacting with their surroundings through spontaneous play, children learn how the world works.

Babies grasp anything within reach. Their play world expands when they crawl. They will push, pull, and shake

anything they have access to. They begin manipulating things, turning pages of books, stacking blocks, pushing buttons, and moving things around. Eventually, they become creative, putting puzzles together, drawing, and coloring. Their play activities develop and broaden as they grow older, but the urge to play continues throughout childhood.

Why do children play? They play because they are children. However, from our adult vantage point, we can clearly identify the importance of play in growing toward maturity. Note that children don’t plan to “accomplish some purpose” through their play. They play because it’s fun. Yet while they pursue their God-given interests in the world around them through play, they are developing in numerous ways. Play does serve important purposes, including the following:

1. Children **interact with their world** through play. They learn how things work. Balls bounce. Dogs growl if you grab their tails; cats purr if you pet them. Echoes answer your shouts. Blocks fall over if you stack them too high. Swings go high if you pump them hard enough. Glue is sticky. Two colors of paint mixed together change color. If you fall and skin your knee, it hurts. Mud puddle water splashes if you stomp in it. You can ride really fast downhill on a bike. If you go too fast around a curve, you’ll fall over. Birds build nests in the spring. Some birds eat worms; others eat seeds.

Friends don't like if you take their toys or break their things. And all these things continue to happen, day after day. We can count on it—that's the way the world works.

2. Children **develop their senses** through play. They are busy with their hands, feeling, pulling, holding, squeezing, throwing, and yanking. They enjoy sounds of singing, shouting, imitating, drumming, and whistling. They enjoy noticing details, playing I Spy, and looking at pictures. They learn the taste, smell, and feel of things.
3. Children **role-play the adult world**. They imitate adult actions, words, tasks, and occupations. They take on the role of nurse, teacher, cook, mommy, carpenter, policeman, fireman, truck driver, doctor, or farmer. Some roles require the participation of others: teachers need pupils; nurses need patients. Children readily sort themselves into groups to fill the needed roles.

However, a child playing alone is well capable of creating imaginary playmates. Playing the role of teacher, he may direct a whole class of imaginary students, complete with names and attendant behaviors. Wise adults will appreciate their children's imaginative role-playing behavior, even providing them with a few toys or suggestions to stimulate their explorations. Imitating the adult world is an important part of growing up.

4. Most kinds of play provide opportunity to **develop skills**. Walking a balance beam, squeezing through tight spaces, and standing atop a pole develop agility and balance. Pitching, catching, bouncing, and hitting balls develop hand-eye coordination along with the awareness of where one's body is in space relative to moving objects. Running games develop strength and the ability to control one's movements quickly.

Some skills are more internal, such as daring to take risks. There's something inherently inviting and challenging about jumping over mud puddles, climbing a tree, approaching a strange dog, or putting your head under water.

5. Many kinds of play teach children to **interact with each other**. Young children enjoy "parallel play." Using their dolls or trucks to "do their own thing" is more fun in the presence of friends. They enjoy sharing toys and getting ideas from each other about what crops to farm or what food to bake, but they each have their own space.

As they grow older, children learn to enjoy play activities that require genuine interaction. They work together to build one house, put a puzzle together, or play a board game. Or they may play house interactively after agreeing who will be parents, the maid, the children, the dog, and so on.

6. **Working alongside an adult** provides one of the richest opportunities for children to learn. The toddler dons an apron and stands on a stool beside Mommy to dry a few dishes. Or he wears a carpenter's belt and hammers scraps of wood as Daddy works on a project in the garage. As they grow older, children become genuine helpers, although their first efforts might actually slow the progress of the adult work. The experience they gain is well worth the attention given by the adults around them.

Wise parents and teachers will encourage children's spontaneous, playful interaction with the real world. They will limit children's access to any form of screen time, which lures them from the real world into a fake virtual world.

Jonas Sauder invested forty years in Christian school teaching and administration. He works part-time in curriculum development and service projects for Christian Light, and teaches summer term classes in pedagogy at Faith Builders. He and his wife Rebecca live near Lancaster, Pennsylvania. They have five children, four daughters-in-law, and nineteen grandchildren. Jonas enjoys teaching, gardening, and poetry.



© Floortje / Getty Images



Men Teachers Relating Respectfully With Girl Students | Nathaniel Yoder

“Good morning, Brother Jim!” eighth-grader Sarah greeted her teacher on Monday morning.

Without taking his eyes off the math lesson he was preparing, Brother Jim mumbled, “Good morning.”

Still the same. I get the feeling that he would rather I wouldn't be here. I wonder what's wrong with me. Discouraged, Sarah slipped her books into her desk as a shiver ran up her spine.

Teenage girls are trying to understand appropriate interaction with men and boys. Some days they seem to lack reserve, and other days they will appear stuck-up. Some days they may act like little girls with no thought of themselves, and other days they may be painfully self-conscious.

What are some pointers for a male teacher who wants to connect with the young ladies in his charge?

- Be kind, but with reserved friendliness. Rather than trying to help them with their personal struggles, direct them to someone who can help them such as parents, your female co-teacher, or an older, faithful woman.
- Treat them as young ladies, not little girls. Relate with them as with your sisters, but with more space and plenty of respect.
- Use propriety and stick to the subject when addressing private issues. (Consider having a co-teacher or parent present if the issue is of a sensitive nature. —editor)
- Respect their person. Don't hover over their desks to the point where they can feel your breath.
- Don't force secrets out of whispering girls. Secrets can be difficult to know how to handle and guide. When asked about whispering, trustworthy students will usually tell

you if the secret is something good. If you feel it should be checked out further, get a female co-teacher involved. As a man, using force will tear down respect and trust.

- Give girl students responsibility; this does amazing things. Assign them to do certain cleaning jobs, to help with checking, or to change the bulletin board. (Young ladies are often delighted to design a bulletin board.) Tell them how much you appreciate what they do for you.

You, the teacher and man in the classroom, have the responsibility to lead out in your relationships with your girl students. Be a stable adult in their lives and a role model of integrity.

Every relationship is unique, but certain principles apply in every situation. The points above are not exhaustive. What works in one case might not work as well in the next or might need some adapting for your situation. Find what works for you and your students. God bless your efforts.

Note: A special thank you to the seasoned teachers who shared ideas that gave form to this article.

Nathaniel lives with his family of seven siblings and parents in Maryville, Missouri, where he taught school for two years. He enjoys the outdoors—observing nature and doing photography. The inspiration for this article came from reading LightLines 2024-2025, #2 issue, Connecting with the Girls Women, by Jody Rhodes.

Outdoor Classroom

Give a Hoot—About Owls | Ken Kauffman

Give a hoot is an old idiom that means “to care about something or anything.” If used in the negative, as in, “He didn’t give a hoot,” it means he didn’t concern himself about something at all. In other words, he didn’t care or wasn’t interested.

As a youngster I remember hearing and using the term and wondering about it. It seemed like it should have something to do with owls—but does it?

Maybe. In some instances, the sound of an owl hooting is associated with the idea of being watchful and alert. “Not worth a hoot” means that the thing referred to was not worth paying attention to.

Is the study of owls worth a hoot? In this article we will focus on getting to know six owls common to North America.

Wise as an Owl

Owls are frequently considered to be a symbol of wisdom. Here is an early (c. 1875) rendering of a nursery rhyme about owls.

There was an owl liv’d in an oak
The more he heard, the less he spoke
The less he spoke, the more he heard.
Oh, if men were all like that wise bird.

In ancient Greek and Roman mythology, owls depicted wisdom, knowledge, and prophecy. In Native American traditions, owls were seen as guardians of sacred knowledge. Was it because of their unique ability to see in the dark and their acute sense of hearing? Was it because they can fly so noiselessly? Or maybe because they’re so rarely seen due to their nocturnal nature. Perhaps it’s because there is a sense of mystery and secrecy about them. Maybe it’s all of the above.

“Owl” Tell You About Owls

North America is home to around

nineteen species of owls. Following are a few of the most common ones.

1. The Hoot Owl. Any owl that hoots. (Actually, no owl has this name. I used to think there was such an owl.)

2. Northern Saw-Whet Owl. I was surprised to find that this cute nocturnal owl is one of the most populous owls in North America. Its sound reminds me of the beeping sound in my car when I don’t have my seat belt fastened yet. However, many liken its call to the sound of a knife being sharpened on a whetstone.

3. Barn Owl. The barn owl’s pale coloring and distinctive facial features make it stand apart from other owls. Its call is a loud, scary shriek with some hiss included. They like to live in man-made structures, hence their name.

4. Great Horned Owl. The great horned owl is the second most common owl in North America. It is also the largest of the owls. They often take down other large raptors as prey. Their



© Helen Davies / Getty Images

© pchoui / Getty Image

© Jens Lambert Photography / Getty Images

large talons can apply up to twenty-eight pounds of pressure, making escape from their grip highly unlikely. Their call is the more common hoot.

5. Long-Eared Owl. Rarely seen because of its shyness and because of a relatively low population, not much is known about this mysterious owl. They prefer hunting over open land and make their homes in dense shrubbery. The feathers that make their long “ears” are their most distinctive feature.

6. Eastern Screech Owl. When my wife was a young girl, she and some friends were sleeping outside near the woods. Suddenly they heard the distinct sound of a screaming woman. Assuming their brothers were pranking them, they decided to be brave and stay out, letting their brothers know in the morning that they

were not scared by their trick. The brothers were baffled, and then the girls were also. Finally, they concluded they had heard a screech owl.

Their “screech” is more accurately a tremulous, descending wail. From a distance and with a little imagination, it could sound like a woman’s scream. Screech owls, with their mottled brown and gray feathers, blend very well into trees, making them masters of disguise. So, good luck on seeing one.

7. Barred Owl. Barred owls belong to the largest population of owls in North America. They commonly live in the same locales as the great horned owl, which is their most dangerous predator. Young barred owls are capable of “walking” up tree trunks to avoid predators. Their sound is easily recognized as an owl, but it doesn’t take much imagination to hear a hound dog barking in short sharp barks. “Hoo, hoo, too-HOO; hoo, hoo, too-HOO, ooo.”

Owls are interesting creatures with many fascinating features. What was God thinking when He made owls? He certainly gave a hoot about them! I hope you do too!

Ken is the husband of one, a father of six, a grandfather of twelve, services manager at Christian Light, and the editor of LightLines. He enjoys watching and listening to birds.

Sources:

<https://enviroliteracy.org>,
<https://wildlifeinformer.com>



L is for Lethargy? | Mary Dueck

Summer vacation is over. With heart beating high, I step into my new primary classroom.

"Here we come, new school term." I grin in anticipation. "Cheers to heartiness and enthusiasm!"

I've never been shy. Shy people tell me to count my blessings, but they don't know what it feels like to go home from public gatherings feeling like the proverbial fool who is soon known by his much talking.

But when it comes to teaching, I cannot imagine being anything but enthusiastic, loud, and effective.

I'm in for a surprise this time.

A boy walks into the classroom.

"Good morning!" I greet him.

He walks over to a new poster on the wall and reads it without responding to my greeting. *Hmm . . .*

The day progresses. I give instructions. *A is for Action*, but we're not having many As.

"Please take out your songbooks," I tell them after lunch. "Let's sing a few songs before we have a story."

A minute passes. Several students have their songbooks out.

"Does anyone have a selection?"

S is for Silence. I glance around the classroom.

F is for Fuse, and mine is threatening to blow. *I can think of at least five songs I'd like to sing*. In the mildest voice I can muster, I repeat, "Does anyone have a selection?"

One young girl raises her hand.

I clap my hands vigorously. "Look," I say, as heads raise in surprise. "She has a song!"

Confusion shows on their faces. Why is this weird new teacher excited about a song selection?

If *T is for Transformation*, T is what we'll want to see this year—a lot of T.

"Let's see all your hands in the air," I suggest for a starter.

Up go twelve hands. "Pretty, pretty. An orchard of trees!" That brings a smile to almost every face. "Noah, which number?"

His hand is in the air. But only because I asked for it, not because he can think of a single song he would like to sing.

We wait for two minutes while he pages through that book.

Out of 161 songs, his favorite is not to be found. *Hmm . . . P is for Prompt*. There doesn't seem to be any P in this classroom.

Finally. "God Be With You Till We Meet Again." This is not my idea of a fitting song for the first afternoon in the school term. But *C is for Choice*. This is Noah's. And since it took him so long to reach it, far be it from me to protest.

"Students." It is the second week of the term, and I want to see improvement. "We're going to start a Promptness Program."

"What is a Promptness Program?" comes the evident question.

I grin. "Like a Christmas program, only faster." Not sure if they can tell I'm teasing.

"I'm not really pleased with the responses I'm getting," I admit frankly. "I would like to see hands shooting up when I ask a question. And when I say a name, I want prompt answers. We waste at least one hour every day waiting on each other. Waiting until everyone has had a drink. Waiting until everyone gets to their seats. Waiting until everyone rises to their feet. Waiting until everyone gets out their songbooks. Waiting until someone raises their hand. Waiting until they have found a song to sing. Waiting until everyone is at the chalkboard. Waiting until everyone has found a perfect piece of chalk. Waiting until everyone is finished in the restroom. Waiting until everyone finds their glove and bat and ball. Waiting until everyone is on the playground, ready for a game. Waiting until the batter has decided which bat he is going to use this time."

B is for Blue-in-the-face, and that's what I am by this time. But if *E is for Eyes*, theirs are wide open by the time I wind up that paragraph.

"Who is willing to help?" I ask with a bright smile.

Twelve hands up. We're all in. "Thanks," I tell them. "You warm my heart."

We start. "Please stand." Half a minute passes before we're all standing. "Be seated."

I shake my head. "Not fast enough. Stand, please."

Jump! They are starting to get the idea! Most of them.

I smile. "You're improving," I tell them. "That was some real response!"

Little Mr. Noah does not seem to figure out what I'm trying

© Freder / Getty Images

to
teach
them. It
looks like a fun
monotony breaker to
him. *V is for Variety*, and this new
teacher is definitely offering some.

Halfway through the class, I call out,
“Please stand.”

Fifty/fifty. Half of them jump up, grinning. The
other half dawdle until I reprimand. “I want action.
When I say, ‘Please stand,’ I want twelve students
to be standing before fifteen seconds have passed.
Sit down. You may resume your work.”

No sooner are they seated, smiling and
sheepishly shaking their heads, than the swift
command rings out. “Please stand.”

Eleven students jump to their feet. Noah glances around in
bewilderment. Slowly he gets to his feet.

“Noah, stay standing for a minute. The rest may be seated
and resume their work.”

Exactly sixty seconds later, I tell Noah he may also be
seated. He is grateful. Sitting never felt so good.

The day advances. At the oddest moments, whether
literally in the middle of a song or when a math problem feels
long, I have them rise and sit, come to the chalkboard, and
go back to their seats, walk around the classroom, recite the
alphabet, or shake their neighbor’s hand.

The children are not sure if I’m a teacher or a clown. But
whatever the case, we’re having a great time.

Noah trudges into the school compound the next day.
The children who came earlier have started a game already.
Noah walks past them, mouth slightly ajar, amused grin on his
face as the laughter of the playing children reaches his ears.
He gradually slows down and finally comes to a standstill,
backpack still dangling from his shoulders, totally oblivious of
time and location, a picture of absolute lethargy.

“Would you like to join the game?” I break into his reverie.
His rapt expression drops like a spaceship veering out of orbit.

“Oh, yes!” He laughs and is about to gallop away when my
voice stops him. “Were you planning to take your backpack

along?”

He looks at me
in surprise. “Oh, no!”
With a sheepish grin, he
takes it off and hands it to me.

G is for Groan. I resist the urge. We’ve just started the
Promptness Program. I must be patient. This may take awhile.

Already the students have told their parents about our
new venture in school. The children laugh as they tell about
their parents’ responses. (This may sound like a bit of a mix
between a lunatic asylum and a military training base, but I
figure if they want to know what is going on, they can come
and ask me. Or figure it out at home with the information they
can collect.)

A month passes. The Promptness Program is doing its thing. *R*
is for Results, and I am happy.

“Students.” When I start a class with that word, I now have
twenty-four eyes fixed on my face with immediate attention.
“I want you to know that I am really pleased with you. Do you
remember how long we took to get a drink or organize a game
when school began? You’ve come a long way, and you make
me seriously happy.”

The delight on their faces tells me they are pretty happy
themselves.

I grin and offer, “Does anyone in this classroom want a hug?”

N is for Noah. Little Mr. Slowpoke jumps to his feet and beats the traffic as twelve students scramble to my desk to get the first hug.

L is also for Love. Lots and lots of love.

Mary taught grades ranging from one to nine in Belize for eleven years. She believed “teaching is the hardest job you’ll ever love” until she tried parenting. She lives in Boley, Oklahoma, with her husband Justin and their four lovely, lively children.

Pedagogical Meanderings



An Anabaptist Resource for Teaching and Learning

On *The Dock for Learning*, conservative Anabaptist teachers, board members, and principals can find resources and advice gleaned from the experience of others. Named after pioneer Mennonite teacher Christopher Dock, the website provides a forum, blogs, video series, and hundreds of documents and recordings, all available without charge. What do you have to share? Join us at thedockforlearning.org.

Teens are reading less. Is this a surprise to anyone?

A recent Associated Press story cited data showing only 14 percent of thirteen-year-olds read every day for fun. That’s down from over 25 percent of students that age who reported reading daily for pleasure in 2012.

Screen time and the pandemic are blamed for students’ lowered interest in great literature. Teachers are adapting by assigning excerpts of larger works, recommending audio books, and swapping classics for more contemporary fiction.

One mother offered her daughter \$100 to finish a young adult romance book. But the majority of teens who responded to questions about her offer said they should develop a love for reading for its own sake, not for money.

College professors are finding that students have shorter attention spans and are “woefully unprepared” for college-level reading. Professors are resorting to assigning shorter books and adding brief quizzes to ensure that students are keeping up.

—the74million.org 9/27/24

Write for LightLines!

We’d love to print your story of classroom life, especially stories that inspire or that taught you something. Share your memorable experiences, aha! moments, how you related to a difficult student, or a lesson you learned (perhaps the hard way). Stories we publish will receive compensation. Submission information is on the back page.

Special assignment this term: Tell your fellow teachers about a Scripture, poem, song, or quote that has been meaningful to you in your teaching. We’ll collect them and publish them as a kind of teachers’ scrapbook of inspiration in future issues of *LightLines*. If you can, write a story about it and send it in! If more than 250 words, we’ll pay you if we publish it!

Register. Early.

By now, you or your school should have received a brochure and several emails about Christian Light’s fall workshops. A notice of the workshop dates and locations is also included with this issue of *LightLines*. The things we’d like to emphasize here are to register and to register early! It will be a great help to the host community.

A Slow Learner

Meghan Brubaker

What I do doesn't matter
So you'll never convince me that
The words I say and the things I do are important
Every new day of challenges can remind me that
I'm not making progress
It's a lie to think
I am making a difference in my students' lives
You see
I am trying my best
But
Change comes so slowly
I can't control the time table
It is freeing that
Now I finally recognize the truth
If I don't see results, they must not be there
And
I should just give up
I used to believe
I am not doing this alone
But
God doesn't step in and magically fix everything
The Helper isn't helping
You can't convince me
I am being used for a purpose bigger than myself
It took me so long to understand this
I guess I'm a slow learner
(Now read up from the bottom.)

First published on the dockforlearning.org.
Reprinted with permission.



Ask Another is a question-answer space for teachers. Teachers are invited to pose questions on school-related subjects, offer responses to questions, or reply to responses. (LightLines will occasionally assign questions to experienced teachers for their qualified response.) Send questions or responses by email to lightlines@christianlight.org or by mail to LightLines Editor, P.O. Box 1212, Harrisonburg, VA 22803. (Try to limit responses to fewer than 400 words.)

Question: I have understood that the Jewish way of teaching young boys was to have the students ask questions. The child Jesus was in the temple both “hearing them and asking them questions.” I would like ideas on how to teach my students, including adolescents, to ask questions. How can you start them well in first grade? —Teacher from OH

(Many of the following responses are from employees at Christian Light.)

Before reading the morning Bible story, the teacher assigned two students to think of three questions about the story. After the story was read, the assigned students asked their questions, and the others answered them.

—Hans, teacher from Canada

Skills take not only practice but also preparation. For older students, they could be prompted to come prepared to classes with one question to ask and one comment about an outstanding section of the text.

—Edith

We were told multiple times that there are no stupid questions. (That did get tested.) Answer questions sincerely—“because” is not an answer!—and don’t make the asker feel stupid. If it’s a good question, tell them so.

—Micah

When they ask a question, be thoughtful in answering. Maybe ask them another question to help them discover a good answer on their own. Children are naturally inquisitive about the things that are important to them. Teachers can squelch that natural inquisitiveness by being dismissive, too busy for discussion, belittling the questioner, or making them fearful of getting something wrong.

—Carol

A teacher (or any authority figure) looks a lot more inviting when the child feels safe and understood. Kind facial expressions and true patience mean the world to a child. If the child senses frustration in the teacher, they are less likely to ask questions. This is even more so for children with autism, ADHD, problems at home, etc. As far as adolescents go, if you express interest in their hobbies and

life, they will more likely ask the questions you want them to ask in school. Also, if you make a mistake, apologize to your students. Trust and respect for you will deepen, and they will feel even more free to ask questions.

—Lydia

Trust is foundational to students feeling free to ask questions. Building trust should be the main goal of a teacher.

—Joe

Next Question: I have a significant number of students, even older ones, who hold their pencils incorrectly. Is it worth trying to correct this? Even if it is slower at first, in the long run would it be better? But for the older students too? Any thoughts?

—Submitted

Please respond by September 25, 2025. We’ll print responses to questions in a future issue of LightLines. Please respond with answers or new questions to lightlines@christianlight.org, fax to 540-433-8896, or mail them to LightLines, P.O. Box 1212, Harrisonburg, VA 22803.

LightLines is published four times each year by Christian Light, P.O. Box 1212, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22803-1212. (540) 434-0768. Ken Kauffman, editor.

Two copies of LightLines are sent free to schools who are active Christian Light curriculum customers. Other schools and individuals may request a free subscription. To request a subscription, or to change mailing addresses or quantities received, call (800) 776-0478 or email subscribe.lightlines@christianlight.org. LightLines is also available by email. Please indicate your preference when subscribing.

Copyright © 2025 Christian Light Publications Inc. For permission to reproduce any material in this publication, contact us at the above address. Comments and materials being submitted for publication can be mailed to LightLines editor, P.O. Box 1212, Harrisonburg, VA, 22803-1212, faxed to (540) 433-8896, or emailed to lightlines@christianlight.org.