

# SCHOOL LIGHT LINES



© Christian Light

Volume 46 ■ 2025-2026 ■ Number 2

The Effective Teacher . . .

## The Teacher's Eyes | Angela Freed

"I will teach thee . . . with mine eye."

Eyes, God says, are teaching instruments. Children know this. They learned eye language long before spoken language. By the time they reach the classroom, they have become experts at interpreting eyes. And they become more astute every year.

How do teachers utilize this innate skill?

**Effective teachers look at God's eyes first.** They absorb God's values. Then their eye language transmits strong and healthy messages to their students.

Examples:

- I am committed to good conduct both in myself and in my students.

- I am confident in my position of leadership and in my students' ability to follow well.
- I am cheerful because I am glad to be with my students, and I am pleased to be teaching them.

### Effective teachers choose physical positions that enable clear vision.

They put themselves where they can see their students and where their students can see them.

Examples:

- Mr. Teacher constantly circulates through his classroom, noticing everyone. He varies his routes, north to south, east to west, clockwise, and counterclockwise. He is systematic

but unpredictable. Mr. Teacher engages the students enroute. "That's a beautifully neat sentence." "Read those directions again."

- Mr. Teacher travels everywhere in the room. He can appear at any place any time, even while explaining square roots to students afar off.
- Mr. Teacher faces the majority when he parks. If he speaks to a student in the front row, he turns to face her instead of standing beside her with his back to the room. If he stops to read a paper, he faces the class and checks on everyone between sentences.
- Mr. Teacher is seen looking. He often lifts his chin, turns his head, and scans the room to ensure all is well. He does not glance out of the corner of his

Continued on page 5



### Christian Education Brings Hope

A story shows the impact of Christian education in Egypt.

Page 2



### Unusual Bird Nests

Be amazed at these unusual and artistic bird nests.

Page 6



### Pedagogical Meanderings

Math skills, baby development, AI, and more!

Page 10

### The Power of Play:

Fruitful Play	8
The Teacher	11
Ask Another	12



© Plain Compassion Crisis Response

## Christian Education Brings Hope | David Miller

*Ismail, the young boy in this account, is a composite character who embodies stories that were told to Christian Light personnel who interacted with the Sudanese refugees in Egypt.*

**April 15, 2023 - Khartoum, Sudan.** The sun beat down as I headed home on the dusty street with my friends. A puff of wind played with my sweat-soaked shirt; otherwise, the air was still, like the stillness before a thunderstorm—but not in the dry season in Sudan.

As I turned onto my street, the storm broke. I heard terrified wailing and shrieks and met Ammi (mother) racing toward me. “Come inside, Ismail. The war has begun.”

I was only seven years old, but I knew how much General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the government army, hated General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the leader of the rebel forces. My childhood was filled with talk about treaties and transitions or coups and corruption.

Ammi held us close. “Boys, we must

leave. Fighting started near the capitol building this morning.”

*The capitol building—that’s where my Abu (dad) is stationed with the rebel forces!*

Ammi was still talking. “Aunt Farah is coming to pick us up with her car. We’re going to the Egyptian border tonight. Ismail, I need you to help me pack food and clothes—only the essentials.” My mind was reeling. *My friends, my home, my school . . .* “Don’t worry, Ismail. We’ll be back in a few days after the fighting is finished.”

*Only a few days, thank God. I hope Abu is safe.*

### Two weeks later

The Egyptians won’t let us cross the border. They don’t like that so many are trying to enter Egypt. Ammi says it’s not safe in our camp with thousands of others. Ammi or Aunt Farah must stay awake at night to watch us and our things. As the days turn into weeks, our food and money run low.

We have no news from Abu. I

overheard Ammi and Aunt Farah talking, using words like, “genocide, rape, starvation, malnutrition,” and “utter destruction.” Apparently, there’s not much left of our beloved Khartoum.

One night while on my mat, I heard a new word: “smuggler.” The sinister word slides off my tongue as I fall sleep. I’m awoken in the middle of the night by Ammi shaking me. “Hurry, we must get ready. We must cross the border in an hour.”

Aunt Farah herds Fahim and me to a group of people by a small truck. A sharp-eyed man tells us to get into the back of the truck, but it’s more like climbing a mountain of people already packed in. The sharp-eyed man climbs into the cab.

The truck lurches and picks up speed, straining under its load. I stand on the edge of the bed, while Aunt Farah holds me tight. Ammi holds Fahim at the back against the tailgate. I wonder about Abu. *Where is he? Is he safe?* We’re leaving Aunt Farah’s car and the stuff we can’t carry.

It's very dark, and we are going very fast. We must be quiet. We can't shine any lights. We must cross the border before the Egyptians spot us. Sand stings my eyes, so I close them and soon drift off.

I'm jerked awake by the sharp roar of the engine and a collective gasp from our fellow passengers. Behind us are headlights. The truck speeds up to a ridiculous pace, careening wildly. Suddenly, the truck lurched violently as we hit a hole, then loud screams. Ammi and others are crying. *Fahim is gone! We must turn back to get him and the other child that flew off!* We scream at the driver to stop, but he only speeds up into the desert. That's how we enter Egypt—Ammi, Aunt Farah, and me.

We live in a tiny room on the tenth floor of a building in Cairo. Many other Sudanese refugees are here too. Our food is gone. The smugglers took all our money. Every day, Aunt Farah and Ammi come back to our room more tired and discouraged. Some days we have enough money to buy some rice, but other days . . . We can only thank God that we're still alive.

*How long can we survive like this? We still have no news from Abu. It is hard to sleep when I haven't eaten for two days.*

### Six months later

Last evening, Aunt Farah had news about a job—for me. The Makani Café was hiring but wouldn't employ Sudanese women. There was no guarantee they would hire me, an eight-year-old, but it was worth trying. Aunt Farah is too old to make enough money for us to have three meals per week, and Ammi's sweeping job doesn't really pay.

Today was a good day. Aunt Farah

took me to the café and pleaded with the manager to give me the job. I guess he liked me or else didn't want to pay a man to do the job. He hired me on the spot. I will be washing dishes and sweeping the floor. The people seem nice enough, but we don't know what they will do if they discover that I'm Sudanese.

Ammi also had good news. Today she learned about Hope4MENA. The organization is starting a learning center near our apartment. Ammi wants me to attend when they start in two months. I don't know how to read, and I think it will all be in English. Ammi seemed excited, but I'm scared.

### Two months later

I have been working every day except Friday since I got my job. I start at 6:00 p.m. and work until 4:00 a.m. I earn 800 EGP (~\$16.50) per week. I don't like the work and want to stop, but Ammi says I can't, or we will starve. She also wants me to go to the learning center. How I can learn when I am so tired?

### Two days later

I just came home from my first day at the center. I think I will like it. The

teachers, also refugees from Sudan, are kind. There are twenty-five students in a very small room. We sit on the floor and look at the small whiteboard Teacher Malaki uses. We are in a small building in the city with no place to play outside. There is a park across the street, but it is only for Egyptians; Teacher Malaki said we don't want to make them angry. We just play in our room.

### Three weeks later

I have made lots of friends at school and can say the English alphabet. I like to pray the Lord's Prayer every morning, and I have started teaching it to Ammi and Aunt Farah. I get some food, only a little, every day when I go to school. I am very tired and fall asleep in almost every class. My teachers don't like it. They have talked to Ammi about it, but Ammi said that I must keep working at Makani Café because we need food.

I don't like the walk home from the center. The Egyptian neighborhood boys are mean. When I left school last Thursday, they were waiting for me at the gate. I tried to run past them, but one of them grabbed my bag and dumped it on the ground. While I was picking up my pencil and notebook, he kicked me. I

Students lining up at the Hope4MENA learning center in Cairo



started running again, but they followed me and threw rocks at me. I have a gash on my head and a large bruise on my back. I ran and ran, but they kept chasing me. I thought I was heading home, but when they stopped following me after about an hour, I didn't know where I was. My head hurt. I was tired. There was blood on my arm and back. I didn't have food, and I was lost.

For two whole days, I asked for help. People ignored me, thinking I was a beggar. I wondered if I would ever see my teachers again. On the third day, I met a kind Egyptian man who was sweeping the street. He asked if he

could post my information on Facebook to see if anyone was looking for me. I really missed my teachers, so I told him my name and my teacher's name. Sure enough, someone from the learning center soon messaged that they were looking for me and would pick me up that afternoon. I was so excited to see Teacher Malaki come on the bus to take me home to Ammi and Aunt Farah.

*It feels like my real home is with the teachers at the learning center. They are so kind.*

### **A year later**

I'm still working at the café and going to the learning center. I love my teachers

and classmates more than ever. I am learning to read in English in American books, and I'm very excited to learn more about Jesus.

*Someday, I hope to go back to Sudan and help rebuild it after the war.*

*David taught school for eight terms in two different schools, most recently at Pilgrim Christian School in Stuarts Draft, Virginia, where he lives. Recently he came on board at Christian Light as an international representative. He is also working on curriculum development projects.*

Prior to the civil war, Sudan had one million refugees living in its borders, due to conflict in surrounding countries. Presently, two years after the beginning of the civil war, there are over thirteen million displaced Sudanese. Women and children are the most impacted by the war. UNICEF, the United Nation's agency for children, estimates that about 17 million school-age Sudanese children (90 percent of the Sudanese children in that age range) do not have access to schooling. Unfortunately, the Egyptian government does not provide education or other assistance to Sudanese refugees.

Hope4MENA is a nonprofit organization that works with Sudanese refugees in Egypt. While this organization has a far-reaching vision, they have a specific focus on education. Hope4MENA has started four centers in Cairo with over 850 students currently attending. Some of these centers have a morning shift and an afternoon shift. These centers are focused on teaching English and providing a basic education in Sudanese refugee communities.

Christian Light, in conjunction with Christian Aid Ministries, is partnering with Hope4MENA to provide curriculum and training for teachers of these Sudanese refugees. Hope4MENA would like to soon enroll 500 more children into additional centers and need to train at least 30 more teachers

very soon. A team of trainers from Christian Light recently returned from a second summer training session.

The resilience and hope of these teachers in the face of overwhelming difficulty is incredible. Their hope, and ours, is to raise a generation of Sudanese children who follow Jesus, and who will someday return to their war-torn country to create a new Sudan. When asked what message should be shared with America, a teacher, with tears in her eyes, replied, "Tell them that lives and families are being changed." Truly, the Gospel is transformative. Let's join them in this work! ■

## Want to help?

- Pray
- To contribute financially toward the cost of this work in Egypt, send a donation to *Christian Light*, P.O. Box 1212, *Harrisonburg*, VA 22803. Earmark it "Sudanese Refugee Education."
- Scan the QR code to donate digitally

SCAN TO  
DONATE



Continued from page 1

eyes, showing that he is suspicious of his class.

- If Mr. Teacher sees a misdemeanor, he catches the offending student's eye with a calm gaze. He maintains steady eye contact, because furtive eye movement indicates anxiety. The tension of Mr. Teacher's gaze builds till the student, typically, breaks off eye contact and gets back in line.

**Effective teachers train students' eyes to see.** Students must be trained to use their eyes well.

Examples:

- Mr. Teacher requires students to track him when he is speaking. He uses nonverbal signals (two fingers pointing to his eyes) and quick prompts ("Track me"). He practices

this skill with them: "Can you keep your eyes on me if I go over here? What about if I go to this side of the room?" He watches for heads swiveling as he moves about, and he congratulates them for their sharp eyes.

- If Mr. Teacher loses someone while he is lecturing, he stops midsentence. This unexpected pause often refocuses the distracted. If it does not, he comments, "Oops, I lost someone's eyes." If the student still does not cue in, he says a name, "Justin, I need everyone tracking." If Justin still does not look up, Mr. Teacher says, "Justin, I need everyone to track me, including you. You can practice now, or you can practice later at recess."
- Mr. Teacher asks for compliance that he can see.
  - He requests students to do observable things.
    - "Hands folded. Eyes on me," is easier to gauge than, "Pay attention."
    - "Feet in front of you. Pencil to paper," is less debatable than, "Turn around."
  - He expects to see full compliance and watches till he gets it.
    - Folded but waving hands get his steady gaze until they settle onto the desktop.
    - Toes pointed toward the aisle get the same gaze until they point forward.
    - Pencils hovering mid-air get a quiet stare until they begin writing.

Learn from God's eyes.

Teach students with your eyes.

Your effectiveness will expand. 📖

**Sources:** Tools For Teaching, Fred Jones. Frederic H. Jones & Associates, Inc. Santa Cruz, CA;  
Teach Like a Champion, Doug Lemov. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. San Francisco, CA.



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.



Baya weaver nest

© Mukunthan Thevarasa / Getty Images



© AFR / Getty Images

Sociable weaver nest

Outdoor Classroom | Ken Kauffman

# Unusual Bird Nests

Enjoy learning about these unique and unusual bird nests on four different continents. Marvel at God’s creativity and these birds’ amazing abilities.

## 1. Sociable Weavers

Sociable weavers are one of the best-known of the “unusual nest builders” because of their huge elaborate group nesting sites in the Kalahari Desert region in South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia. Their nests are built with twigs, grass, and straw. Over one hundred sociable weavers can occupy a single nest at a given time, and some nests have remained occupied for over one hundred years! Some sociable weavers’ nests weigh several tons (especially after rain soaks the nest) and have caused their supporting trees to fall!

## 2. Maleos

The maleo is a little-known bird that is only found in one place in the entire world, the Sulawesi Island in Indonesia. It incubates its eggs by burying them! Sulawesi’s volcanic

ground is heated by geothermal energy, providing all the heat necessary for incubating the eggs. The newly hatched birdies often must dig themselves out of the sand, and they can fly as soon as they hatch! There are only around ten thousand of these remarkable birds left due to the islanders’ taste for maleo eggs. The eggs are around five times the size of a domestic chicken egg and are packed with protein.

## 3. Satin Bowerbirds

Male satin bowerbirds of Australia build elaborate and fantastical nesting sites to attract potential mates. Not only is the structure itself impressive, but it is often decorated with accessories to catch the female’s eye. The satin bowerbird favors blue trinkets. The older a bird is, the more blue objects he decorates his bower with. Blue berries, blue ballpoint pens, blue flowers, and blue pieces of plastic have all turned up at the entrance to the bowerbird’s bower.

#### 4. Baya Weavers

Sometimes touted as the “king of nest-building birds,” the male baya weaver uses his impressive nest-building skills not only to create a home but also to attract a mate. Females then inspect each male’s nest, deciding which they find most pleasing. The nests are sock-shaped and are crafted by weaving long strips of paddy leaves, rough grasses, and palm fronds. It can take as many as five hundred trips back and forth for the male to collect all the materials necessary for building the nest. Baya weaver birds are found across the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia.



© gorgar64 / Getty Images

Satin bowerbird bower

#### 5. Bushtit

Bushtits build unusual sack-like nests, comprised largely of spiderwebs and moss, that may dangle as much as a foot from their anchor point. These small birds are found throughout western North America and sometimes work on building their nests for a month or more. One of the adults will sometimes sit inside during construction, dragging the nest downward with the weight of its body. Insulating material such as feathers, fur, and plant matter are used in the interior, and the exterior is often camouflaged with bits of plants. 🌿

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:

[www.featuredcreature.com/10-totally-unusual-bird-nests-around-world](http://www.featuredcreature.com/10-totally-unusual-bird-nests-around-world)  
Wikipedia



© ChezBriand / Getty Images

Bushtit at its nest



© Ronny Adloff/Buol / Getty Images

Maleo on a beach

# THE POWER OF



## Fruitful Play | Jonas Sauder

Normal children play. Play is critically important for their development. Through play, they develop their skills and learn how the world works. Wise adults notice the types of play children under their supervision pursue. They encourage their children to engage in a variety of play to reap the fruits of each type. Although they cannot “command” children to play, they can introduce them to types of play they may not discover on their own. Some specific examples of fruitful play include:

1. **Memory games.** Children enjoy finding pairs of identical cards. They can also remember increasingly longer lists of objects and recite them, as required in playing a game such as “I’m going on a trip, and I’m taking a duffel bag, a pair of shoes, a comb, a hat, and . . .” The first type of game develops their visual/spatial memory skills, the second their auditory memory skills.
2. **Sorting games.** Objects can be sorted by shape, size, color, and so on. This develops the ability to discriminate by one specific quality and to create categories. Beads, buttons, or marbles can be sorted into an egg carton. Colored beads can be strung according to given patterns.
3. **Puzzles.** Identifying small parts of a larger picture and manipulating the pieces to fit the puzzle develops both visual and fine motor skills. Fine motor skills require close eye-hand coordination, which is needed for writing with a pencil and cutting with scissors.
4. **Building.** Constructing with stacking blocks, stick-together blocks, toy logs, or other sets of construction toys provides opportunity to imagine and build things or to build by following a given pattern.
5. **Tracing, coloring, and drawing.** These develop eye-hand coordination and promote creativity, on paper or sidewalk.
6. **Follow directions.** The traditional *Simon Says* game develops the disciplines of focused attention, following directions, and quick response.
7. **Outdoor play.** The outdoors offers children some of their richest play experiences as they notice nature (tree bark, bugs, bird nests), play in a sandbox, play house, hunt imaginary animals, romp, run, climb, and explore while taking risks.
8. **Gross (large) muscle movement play.** Movement games require children to bounce, throw, and catch balls, to jump rope, to hop and skip, to throw plastic discs, to roll hoops, or to swing. All these activities are fun ways to develop spatial awareness, coordination, and strength.
9. **Fine (small) muscle movement play.** Many simple activities develop eye-hand coordination as children tie knots, string patterns of beads, sew scraps for the fun of it, or trace, cut, and glue shapes or pictures.
10. **Board games.** Young children enjoy simple games that involve rolling dice to move player pieces around the board. Eventually, they can play old standbys such as checkers, Scrabble, or chess. Playing board games

exposes children to great variety while introducing them to following rules, cooperating with others, and accepting the reality of winning or losing.

11. **Imaginary play.** Most children spontaneously use their imagination as they play with dolls, toy trucks, farm equipment, and cookware. They name their dolls, talk to them, teach them, scold them, rock them, and put them to sleep. They cook meals, operate restaurants and stores, plant crops, fight fires, and chase wild animals. They cooperate: one becomes “the horse” to be harnessed with a rope while the other is “the farmer.” Sometimes they talk with imaginary friends from day to day. This is a kind of play you can’t really initiate or teach. But you can encourage it by accepting the fresh-made pizza from their kitchen or buying something from their store. Imagining what could be is an important skill for children to develop; real life involves total engagement in a task (such as cooking or weeding) to eventually achieve results (a meal or a clean garden).

Many of the games listed already can be played in one or more *modes*, as noted below. Each should be encouraged for its own benefits.

**Spontaneous play** is a blessing for children. As they explore their world through play, their curiosity is stimulated. This, in turn, motivates them to pursue even more playful activities that help them mature.

All children need time for spontaneous play, and they should be able to “go play” on their own, without the assistance or constant direction of adults. Spontaneous play originates out of the child’s own heart; it is self-initiated.

Children who complain of being “bored” need to learn to initiate play. Perhaps they would benefit from a suggestion to

go play \_\_\_\_\_. But if they are never “weaned” from having an adult involved in their play, they can develop an unhealthy dependence that limits their ability to independently explore the world around them.

**Directed play** includes an adult or older child. This person also enters into the play, joining the spirit of the game while providing some direction. He helps choose the game, interprets directions, mediates disagreements and difficulties, and models how to play well. Directed play is a form of disciplined fun that helps develop character through following directions, interacting with others, and developing skills.

**Individual play** is solitary. The child builds with blocks, plays with a doll, or goes hunting all by himself. Individual play focuses the child’s attention directly on the world around him without the distraction of other people. It serves to develop his ability to actively pursue interests on his own without others’ participation.

**Group play** draws children out of themselves as they interact with others. They experience and learn from others, through others, and with others as they explore their world together. They learn to give and take, lead and follow, share and cooperate. Group play provides interaction that helps children develop social skills.

Many are the fruits of real play. Though many worthwhile games have been digitized, it must be noted that screen play should be avoided due to its hypnotizing effect, which works against most of the purposes of play enumerated above. ■

*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.*

© Christian Light



# Pedagogical Mea



## Phonics lawsuit dismissed

A lawsuit against three literacy experts, whose early reading curricula was criticized for not emphasizing daily phonics instruction, has been dismissed by the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts. Judge Richard Stearns said “the court is not convinced” that the plaintiffs’ claims of educational malpractice would hold up in court.

The legal challenge was filed last year against Lucy Calkins, Irene Fountas, and Gay Su Pinnell. Also named in the lawsuit are Greenwood Publishing Group, Heinemann Publishing, HMH Education Co., and Columbia University’s Teachers College.

<https://www.k12dive.com/news/lawsuit-lucy-calkins-dismissed-literacy-science-of-reading>

## Babies desire to find out

When you see a baby gazing on the world, you might imagine a little sponge passively soaking up information, but what’s actually happening is sophisticated computational wizardry that outpaces any known machine. “No computer, no matter how sophisticated, can do what a baby can do in listening to language input and deriving the words, grammar and the sound contrasts that create language,” says language expert Patricia Kuhl, co-director of the Institute for Brain and Learning Sciences at the University of Washington.

The article we’re citing states that after babies understand that they can summon important people with “mama,” “dada,” and “baba,” they soon move on to two key words in human development: “What’s that?” Babies occupy a world of wonder,

and their senses are bombarded with new information at every turn. From their first moments, human infants are driven by the desire to *find out*. Babies are exploring their world in ways that are exquisitely intelligent, sensitive, and scientific.

<https://www.the74million.org/zero2eight/breakthrough-research-shows-the-complexity-and-brilliance-of-babies-brains>

## Math skills lacking

According to a new Gallup poll, four in ten U.S. adults wish they had learned more math skills in middle or high school. An overwhelming majority, 95 percent, said the subject is very or somewhat important for work — and 96 percent said the same with regard to their personal lives.

Financial math, including personal finance, budgeting, and accounting, ranked highest among the most desired skills. (Christian Light will soon be releasing a new Personal Finance course.)

A related Gallup poll found that half of school leaders say finding a good math teacher is tough.

<https://www.the74million.org/article/new-gallup-poll-american-adults-wish-they-had-more-math-skills>

## Perhaps you didn’t know

Did you know that schools receive a 10 percent discount on purchases of books (non-curriculum) from Christian Light? Heretofore we have not adequately advertised this perk.

# nderings

## How artificial is AI?

A study of 2,232 U.S. public school teachers found that 60 percent of them used AI (artificial intelligence) last school term. Respondents feel like they saved an average of six hours of work per week.

<https://www.the74million.org/article/survey-60-of-teachers-used-ai-this-year-and-saved-up-to-6-hours-of-work-a-week>

## Growing number of places restrict phones in schools

A teacher in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, described dramatic changes in his classroom after the state began enforcing a new law banning phones during school hours for the 2025–2026 school year. “Today, all of my students, 100% of them, took notes in my class, did their assignment, asked for help when they got stuck, and turned it in, and then when they were done, they talked to each other,” said eleventh-grade history teacher Jonathan Buchwalter. He called the shift “magic,” after years of feeling “helpless” trying to police phones individually. Supporters of the ban argue that phone-free schools help students focus and improve their mental health, citing data from the National Center for Education Statistics that shows phones often harm academic performance and attention spans. Alabama joins thirty-two other states with similar measures. Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, South Korea passed a nationwide ban on smart devices in classrooms, set to take effect in March 2026. Lawmakers there said the step was necessary to protect learning and reduce conflict. However, critics contend that it infringes on students’ rights and limits their ability to adapt to the digital world. [LE](#)

USA Today | Independent | France24



## The Teacher | Leslie Pinckney Hill

1880 – 1960

Lord, who am I to teach the way  
To little children day by day,  
So prone myself to go astray?

I teach them KNOWLEDGE, but I know  
How faint they flicker and how low  
The candles of my knowledge glow.

I teach them POWER to will and do,  
But only now to learn anew  
My own great weakness through and through.

I teach them LOVE for all mankind  
And all God’s creatures, but I find  
My love comes lagging far behind.

Lord, if their guide I still must be,  
Oh let the little children see  
The teacher leaning hard on Thee. [LE](#)

Leslie Pinckney Hill (May 14, 1880 – February 15, 1960) was a black American educator, writer, and community leader. He was born in Lynchburg, Virginia, the son of a former slave. He attended the local elementary schools until his family moved to East Orange, New Jersey, where he attended high school. Excelling at his studies, he skipped his junior year, and was accepted to Harvard University his senior year. Entering Harvard in 1899, he supplemented his scholarship by working as a waiter, eventually receiving a master's degree in education. He died from a stroke in Philadelphia in 1960.



**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](mailto: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.)

What are some practical ways to encourage true friendship among students and avoid cliques?

—Question from LightLines, 2024-2025, #4

A clique is a self-centered substitute for friendship. Usually superficial and self-serving, cliques often indicate personal immaturity and insecurity. Cliques are unhealthy and insidious and are disruptive to wholesome school life and good class spirit.

A general marker of a clique is exclusivity; a group of “friends” who make it clear that not everyone can join the group. A few are “in”; everyone else is “out.” Here are some additional indicators of cliquishness.

- Failing to interact with a wide group of students. Being absorbed with a select few.
- Trying to be “cool”; rejecting those whom they perceive as “not cool.”
- Talking instead of playing at recess.
- Whispering, note-passing, eye signaling.
- Huddles.
- Hurt feelings, especially with some that are not included.

**Reader response:**

1. Put it on the table, especially with older students: “We expect you to be friends with everyone and will be observing your interactions with each other.” Cliques violate both the teaching and example of Jesus; they breed discontent, resentment, and disrespect; they contribute to a secretive and unfriendly atmosphere in school.
2. Forbid huddles and expect open conversations. Warn promptly and follow up with discipline if necessary.
3. Have as little unsupervised time as possible. Students should arrive no earlier than fifteen minutes before school and leave no later than fifteen minutes after dismissal. All breaks should be supervised and full of physical activity.
4. Our school has a policy of no conversations in restrooms, nor talking in the hallways during school

time. This greatly reduces the opportunities for huddles.

5. Assign/number off/rotate turns for teams, cleaning jobs, and other student activities.
6. A structured, scheduled classroom is a major preventer of cliques, which breed in chaos.

Allen Troyer, Principal,  
Zion Christian School, Millersburg, OH

**Next Question:** What advice do you have for teachers teaching siblings or for teachers teaching their own children? (We especially solicit responses from former students who had either a sibling or a parent as a teacher.)

Please respond by December 15, 2025. We'll print responses to questions in a future issue of LightLines. Please respond with answers or new questions by email to [lightlines@christianlight.org](mailto:lightlines@christianlight.org), by fax to 540-433-8896, or by mail 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](mailto: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](mailto:lightlines@christianlight.org).