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## The Teacher's Ears | Angela Freed

Effective teachers hear not only with their ears—they hear with their hearts. What kind of hearing is that?

### Heart-hearing is focused.

In the whirl and twirl of the classroom, effective teachers discipline their minds and ears to focus on the student who is talking. Heart-hearing means quieting the clamor of the mind (*As soon as she's done talking, I must catch Nelson's eye as I cruise over to see what Amy is drawing*). It is absorbing what the student is saying by keeping steady eye contact and letting facial expressions mirror a response. It is replying with good follow-up comments and questions.

"I made a hunting song on Saturday."

"A songwriter! That's something I didn't know about you."

"Well, I made it from a song you already know."

"Really? Which one?"

"It goes, 'Lift your joyful voices high.' Except I made it say, 'Lift your joyful shotguns high.'"

"That would fit hunting better. What other words did you write?"

"I kept 'Ringing clear through earth and sky' the same, but then I changed it to, 'Let the little pellets fly. Pheasants die.'"

"Very creative. Will you sing it the next time you hunt?"

"Just in my mind, or I'll scare the pheasants."

### Heart-hearing is perceptive.

Usually, the things children say reveal the barest glimpses into their inner life. An effective teacher learns to read hidden messages, to ask questions, and to notice the tiny indicators in the answers as to what is really going on.

Nelson sighs heavily as he begins his test. His teacher pauses, looks at him, and asks, "Everything okay?"

"It's such a long test."

"You did an excellent job on one the same size yesterday."

"Yes, but I wasn't so tired then."

"You're tired now?"

"Well, my head hurts."

"Just your head?"

"My throat hurts too. Can I get my coat? I'm freezing."

### Heart-hearing is reflective.

Heart-hearing doesn't stop when the students stop talking. In the quiet of after-school-hours, effective teachers reflect over what they overheard that day.

"He can run in the hall, and it's fine. But whenever I do, the teacher makes me go back and walk." *I need to watch*



### Evoked the Fifth Amendment

A teacher learns to extend due process to her students.



### Masters of Disguise

Learn about camouflage and the creatures that use it.

Ask Another	4	The Power of Play: Playful Instruction	9
Index	5		
Pedagogical Meanderings	8	End of Term Checklist	11

myself and check if I'm enforcing my rules consistently.

"I hate staying overnight at my grandpa's house because my uncle does such bad things to me whenever we're alone." I better ask the principal what I should do about this one.

"I wish I was a baby again. Then I could just play when I get home. I wouldn't have to do all this work." I should find out how much homework this child has.

Effective teachers also reflect back to the students what they have heard them say.

"I don't like math."

"You don't like the good grades you get?"

"I like my grades; I just don't like *doing* math."

"What part of *doing* it don't you

like—the adding, the subtracting, the clocks, the money?"

"Well, I like all those. But I can't hurry when I do it. As soon as I hurry, I get stuff wrong."

"So, you like math, but you want to hurry and get things right at the same time."

### **Heart-hearing is discerning.**

Not every moment is a hearing moment. Time is a limited commodity, and sometimes effective teachers tell their students, "I enjoy hearing your thoughts, but we have only twenty minutes left, and you need to do your assignment yet." Or, "Tell me that story at lunchtime."

Additionally, teachers sometimes have that sixth sense of what students want to say. If a teacher can tell by the

style of handwaving or by the student's expression that what she's going to say is not profitable, it is well within his jurisdiction to shake his head and motion the student back to work.

When your heart learns to hear along with your ears, 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.*

From *LightLines*, May 2001

## **Evoke the Fifth Amendment** | Lucy A. Martin

I hadn't been hired yet, but when the third-grade teacher retired, I assumed the school board would slip me into that position. When at my interview the board chairman said, "We have a position for you in Grade 9. Will you take that position?" My mouth turned dry.

When I said, "Yes," I walked out of that room with weighted shoulders.

The news spread quickly. After the shock waves settled, the advice flowed in. One piece took firm root in my mind.

"You'll have Vincent. Watch him! He's a corker. Sit on him!"

I read books about classroom management, how to

handle the class clown, the classic bully, and the confirmed mischief-maker. On every page I saw Vincent.

I listened to veteran teachers and added every crumb of counsel they offered to the rising rampart of defense against the invincible Vincent.

All through the August heat, up and down the long rows of lima beans, I set up imaginary scenarios. Always, Vincent performed front stage. Meanwhile, I was preparing. Sit on him? I would stomp on the very first sprout of vice from Vincent.

"Ninth graders have heads of their own, you know," the



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principal warned at my orientation session.

I nodded my own head, and that night I bowed my head and once again prayed for wisdom to meet the Vincents that might await me.

But as the first day neared, the maelstrom of immediate preparations swamped all Vincent worries. When Day One finally arrived, I was so dizzied by the whirl of English and algebra classes and so absorbed with learning the cause and cure of hyperventilation, that I totally forgot to look for Vincent.

At the end of the first five days, I was a bit lightheaded and breathless. Only then did I remember Vincent. Vincent! There were Allen and Ryan who bounced into my classroom daily with the eighth-grade algebra students. All the notes I had taken in preparation for Vincent would come in handy for them, but Vincent?

Each day he entered the ninth-grade homeroom in admirable decorum, dark cowlicks newly plastered down, agate eyes glinting, his south-of-the-border voice drawling out grammar answers. What had happened to the whirling vortex of Vincent who had appeared on everyone's storm watch? Was the eye of the storm deceiving me? Had summer matured him? Had parental instructions on how to obey tender-eyed teachers tamed him? Was God answering my prayers? Of that, I was certain.

Oh, Vincent wasn't picture-perfect. Neither were his

classmates, and neither was their teacher as she floundered through the shoals and shallows of a first year.

One moment which stands out in bold relief in my memory is the morning Vincent placed in my hands a neatly typed copy of "In His Keeping."

"Sang it in family worship this morning," he explained, "and I thought it had a lot of feminine rhymes in it like we've been studying."

"Say, this *does* have a lot of feminine rhymes in it," I agreed. I was delighted.

His face lit up at my pleasure. But I doubt he grasped the full source of my delight and wonder. Before me stood the antagonist of every script my imagination had conjured during the previous summer—a villain turned hero.

"Day advances, labor bringing," I read.

"Care, her mantle 'round me flinging,

"Yet midst all my soul keeps singing,

"I am in His care."

"Thank you, Vincent. This is an excellent example of feminine rhymes. I'll read it in English class today."

As I laid the paper on my desk, a sense of God's keeping washed over me. I pictured God sending His angel to shut the mouths of the lions that might have devoured a first-year teacher. Yet the lions in my vision were not students. They were the false fears that had prowled through my imagination, snarled around my shaking knees.

Of all that first year taught me, this lesson ranks near the top. *Never allow today's lions of fear to tear up tomorrow.* Don't trust doomsayers' weather reports. Waste no time worrying about students who look or sound threatening.

Never allow today's lions of fear  
to tear up tomorrow.

In the following years, I gradually learned a three-stage approach to such threats, real or imagined—pray, trust God, and evoke the fifth amendment to the Constitution. To restate the amendment in very simple terms, every person is considered innocent until he is proven guilty. When I followed this three-pronged strategy, I reaped a threefold benefit.

First, I have often found that the stormy Vincents I saw on the horizon were only mirages, and I spared myself hours of needless agony over nonexistent trouble.

Secondly, by refusing to worry about the storms on the horizon, I have avoided a mindset that would have churned up its own thunderheads. When we expect trouble, students generally live up to our expectations.

Thirdly, for the storms which have actually arrived—and some have—I have at least enjoyed calm before the storms which enabled me to face their fury sensibly and with more sane responses. Not all Vincents have turned tame before my eyes. Real as rain have been some of the rowdier temperaments that joined my class. But hand-wringing fails while hand-folding without wrath or doubting equips for any task.

If some Vincent is veering toward you in the coming school term, don't drown your summer in dread. Pray for him. Trust God and evoke the fifth amendment.

*This year is Lucy's 36th term of teaching eighth graders at Paradise Mennonite School in Hagerstown, Maryland. In addition to eighth-grade subjects, she enjoys teaching high school home economics and art classes.*

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**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.)

**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.)

**Answer:** I really enjoyed Dad as my teacher. These are some things that my dad followed:

1. Treat your child as one of the students. For example, information that you have not shared with the class should not be shared with your child at home. It could be something as simple as when the next fun thing is or where you are going on the school field trip. This will keep everyone on the same level.
2. Do not ask your child for advice on how to handle a classmate.

Continued on last page

# Index

Volume 46, 2025 -2026 school term

Issue	pg. #		pg. #
<b>The Effective Teacher: Angela Freed</b>		Poem: The Teacher   Leslie Pinckney Hill	11
#1	The Teacher’s Mind	1	
#2	The Teacher’s Eyes	1	#3 Communicate Graciously  Lucy A. Martin 2
#3	The Teacher’s Tongue	1	“Whatever...”   Karen Birt 5
#4	The Teacher’s Ears	1	The Bouquet   Judith Lehman 11
<b>Outdoor Classroom: Ken Kauffman</b>		#4 Evoke the Fifth Amendment   Lucy A. Martin 2	
#1	Give a Hoot About Owls	6	End of term Checklist/Tips for Ordering  LL staff 11
#2	Unusual Bird Nests	6	
#3	Australia’s Mice Plagues	6	All Pedagogical Meanderings
#4	Masters of Disguise	6	All Ask Another
<b>The Power of Play: Jonas Sauder</b>		<b>Inserts</b>	
#1	Why Play?	8	#1 Christian Light Curriculum Development Update/ Fall Workshop Notice
#2	Fruitful Play	8	
#3	Supervising Play	9	#2 ParentLines: Fruitful Play
#4	Playful Instruction	9	
<b>Other</b>		#3 ParentLines: Sit Still and Be Quiet Please! / Poem: Let Me Guide a Little Child	
#1	Men Teachers Relating Respectfully With Girl Students   Nathaniel Yoder	5	
	L is for Lethargy?   Mary Dueck	8	#4 Teacher Training Report and Outlook/What’s New at Christian Light
	A Slow Learner   Meghan Brubaker	11	
#2	Christian Education Brings Hope   David L. Miller	2	

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## Outdoor Classroom

### Masters of Disguise | Ken Kauffman

Now you see them; now you don't. Did you ever get the uncanny feeling that something that you don't see, sees you? Or have you ever stared at a certain something, and then suddenly it was there? The following masters of disguise have fooled predators, successfully hunted prey, and surprised many humans.

#### Tawny Frogmouth

A native of Australia, this nocturnal, short-flight bird gets top prizes for being nearly undiscoverable. They are so named because some of their sub-species have a reddish-brown coloring rather than a grayish one, so they are considered "tawny." Their wide, hook-tipped beaks are used to catch bugs and actually do look rather frog-mouthed.

#### Mimic Octopus

The mimic octopus, although smaller than two feet, including its tentacles, is quite accomplished in the realm of disguise. It can change its shape, color, and behavior to imitate other sea creatures. Found in the shallow waters of Indonesia, this octopus frequently takes on the appearance of sea snakes, but it can also masquerade as up to seventeen other marine creatures. Its talent for mimicry helps it evade predators and to confuse potential threats as well as to ambush prey.

#### Stick Caterpillar

The stick caterpillar is an expert at disguise, resembling a twig so well that predators are often fooled. Found in forests around the world, its thin

elongated body almost perfectly imitates a broken twig. This mimicry is vital for its protection, as it spends most of its life motionless to avoid detection. The stick caterpillar's camouflage allows it to survive in a world of threats, showing that sometimes, the best defense is simply blending in. Unsurprisingly, stick caterpillars are the larval form of the peppered moth, which are themselves masters of disguise.

#### Wrap-Around Spider

The photo tells you all you really need to know. The wrap-around spider, endemic to Australia and other parts of Oceania, has a concave belly that allows it to flatten around the curve of a tree branch to avoid being spotted by



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© ifish / Getty Images



© Andrew Haysom / Getty Images

hungry birds. During the day, the wrap-around spider will sit happily, hugging its tree branch, undisturbed, but once the sun sets, it rapidly constructs an orb-shaped web to catch its prey. At dawn, it destroys its web and returns to its “I’m just part of the tree” act.

### **Pygmy Seahorse**

Reaching only a couple of centimeters from nose tip to tail, the pygmy seahorse is the world’s smallest seahorse. But their tiny size is not their only distinguishing feature. They grow calcified bumps on their bodies to match the coral that surrounds them in the reefs of southeast Asia. Their size and amazing ability to camouflage seamlessly into their tropical

coral reef habitat means they are seldom detected. If they drift to a different colored coral, their color will change to blend in once more.

Teacher, be sure to tell your students that there’s a lot more to learn about these amazing and specially designed creatures. In addition to the ones mentioned, they might also study decorator crabs, snowy ptarmigans, arctic hares, leaf insects, stonefish, walking sticks, eastern screech owls, dead leaf mantises, and many birds.

*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 studying and sharing about the Creator and His creatures.*

32 Tawny Frogmouth Facts: Cute and Camouflaged (Podargus strigoides) | JustBirding  
9 creatures that are masters of disguise | BBC Earth  
14 Animals That Are Masters of Disguise - Animeld  
Wikipedia  
www.sciencing.com



Alamy / James Peake

# Pedagogical Meanderings

## Quebec Schools Require Formal Language to Promote Respect (1/5/26)

Under new civility rules, Quebec students are now required to use formal language when addressing teachers and other school staff. In English-language schools, students must use titles such as Mr. or Ms., whereas in French-language schools, they must use the formal *vous* rather than the informal *tu*. According to the government, the rule is meant to reinforce respect by clearly defining the relationship between students and educators. Supporters, including parent groups, school administrators, and language experts, say formal language helps establish boundaries, reminds students of classroom hierarchy, and teaches social skills that apply later in life. [CBC](#)

## Pushed Through. Changing Standards?

One in four young adults across the United States is functionally illiterate—yet more than half have earned high school diplomas, according to recently released data. The number of 16- to 24-year-olds reading at the lowest literacy levels increased from 16% in 2017 to 25% in 2023, according to the National Center for Education Statistics in partnership with other agencies.

This means that 5 million young adults, equivalent to the population of Alabama, could understand the basic meaning of short texts (restaurant menus, etc.) but could not analyze long reading materials, according to an analysis by the American Institute of Research.

But even more troubling was their finding that while the percentage of young adults with high school diplomas increased from 50 percent to 55 percent between 2017 and 2023, that group also saw the largest decrease in scores on tests measuring literacy skills.

Experts blame different things, but it seems obvious that students are being

pushed through their school years without acquiring the needed literacy skills. There also seems to be a changing standard of what level of literacy is needed *now that technology can provide information without people having to think and read discerningly*. (Editor emphasis)

<https://www.the74million.org/article/many-young-adults-barely-literate-yet-earned-a-high-school-diploma/>

## What's New

Associated with this mailing is an insert: "What's New at Christian Light." This information could be helpful in ordering curriculum for next fall. (Also remember that schools receive a 5 percent discount for ordering before June 30.)

## Teacher Training Course

On the other side of the "What's New" paper is a summary of Christian Light's Teacher Training sessions in 2025 and an advance notice of the training courses planned for 2026. This course is unique in the Anabaptist school landscape in that it is just that, a course. It is useful and instructive for teachers using any curriculum, not only Christian Light's.

## Antsy

*Here's something that will astound your students. Additionally, it will give you a chance to teach the difference between mass and weight.*

There are about 20 quadrillion ants on the planet. That's 20 thousand million million or in numerical form 20,000,000,000,000,000 (20 with 15 zeroes). This means that ants exceed the mass of all the world's birds and wild animals combined and are equal to about one-fifth of the total weight of earth's humans.

[theconversation.com](https://theconversation.com)

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# THE POWER OF



## Playful Instruction | Jonas Sauder

Is classroom learning play, or is it work? Play provides pleasure in the activity itself, while work is pursued for its end result. We put puzzles together because the activity itself is pleasurable, but we mow the lawn to control the grass. As previous articles of this series have noted, play is the serious “work” of childhood: it’s how children explore and learn how to interact with their world.

The major purpose of formal education is for children to learn about their world, which includes developing the skills needed to continue learning on their own: observing, thinking, reading, writing, and calculating. Formal education does have a definite goal; that’s why we talk about doing *schoolwork*, which sometimes includes *homework*. But many factors that stimulate play can also motivate students to learn in the classroom. Skillful teachers can engage their students in *playful work*. Following are some suggestions on how to make the spirit of play an effective part of classroom teaching.

- **Curiosity.** What’s under this rock? How can I use a grass blade to make a loud noise? Can I make this stone skip across the water instead of sinking? Questions like these drive children to discover things about their world.

Presenting new lessons as questions for discovery can capture students’ attention and motivate them to follow explanations, read lessons, carry out research, or conduct experiments to find the answers.

- ▶ Does water expand when it freezes? If so, is the expansion strong enough to break a water-filled jar? What about a steel water bottle? Is there *any* type of closed container strong enough to withstand the pressure of freezing water from splitting it open? Let’s find out.
- ▶ Do all rectangular shapes with the same perimeter have the same area? What’s the length and width of the largest rectangular garden you can make with 100’ of fencing? The smallest?
- ▶ The *-ough* in *bough* and *through* do not have the same sound. What words can you think of that make other sounds with *-ough*? How many different sounds in total?
- ▶ If you could place the highest mountain peak in the world into the deepest ocean, would it stick out of the water? If not, how deep would the water be over the peak?
- **Competition.** Children enjoy friendly racing, climbing the highest, or completing the most work.  
Eagerness to compete can motivate many classroom tasks. Competition can be fun and invigorating, but it can discourage slower children unless they also have opportunities to achieve success. One variant on competition is competing with yourself at some task, such as a math speed drill.

- ▶ When given flash card drills, students can try to collect the most flash cards by saying the answer first. Or the first person to say the answer can stand in the front of the line.
- ▶ The first person to find the correct word in a dictionary or a given Bible verse stands up.
- ▶ Small groups can compete with each other. Many review activities in preparation for tests use some form of group competition.
- ▶ Individuals can compete with themselves by trying to best yesterday's time in a speed drill.

▪ **Imagination and creativity.** The interest and energy that goes into playing in a sandbox or playing house can be harnessed for many types of school learning experiences.

- ▶ Students can build models or replicas: an Indian village, a bamboo house, the Israelites' tabernacle, or a topographical map.
- ▶ Art classes thrive on imaginative creation: sculpting things from play dough, chalk drawing, toothpick sculpture, mixing colors, or arranging displays of things found in a scavenger hunt.
- ▶ Children can make up new tunes, write additional verses to existing songs, or write their own songs on themes from nature, the weather, or daily activities.

- ▶ Envision a new business you could start up by becoming an entrepreneur. What niche market can you imagine? What would you need to start it up (money, equipment, space), how would you advertise it, and how would it work?

▪ **Role-play the adult world.**

Childhood play often mimics adult activities: playing nurse, teacher, auctioneer, storekeeper or farmer. Questions, problems, and projects that

involve real-life applications are inherently interesting to schoolchildren.

- ▶ Choose a recipe for cookies and double all the ingredients. Or make small batches, leaving a different ingredient out of each batch to discover how it affects the results.
- ▶ Imagine you are a farmer. Figure the profit you could make from purchasing a dozen young piglets and fattening them for market. Determine all costs: starting cost, utility costs, feed costs, veterinarian costs, and so on.

Or do the same for a truck crop, such as raising an acre of strawberries.

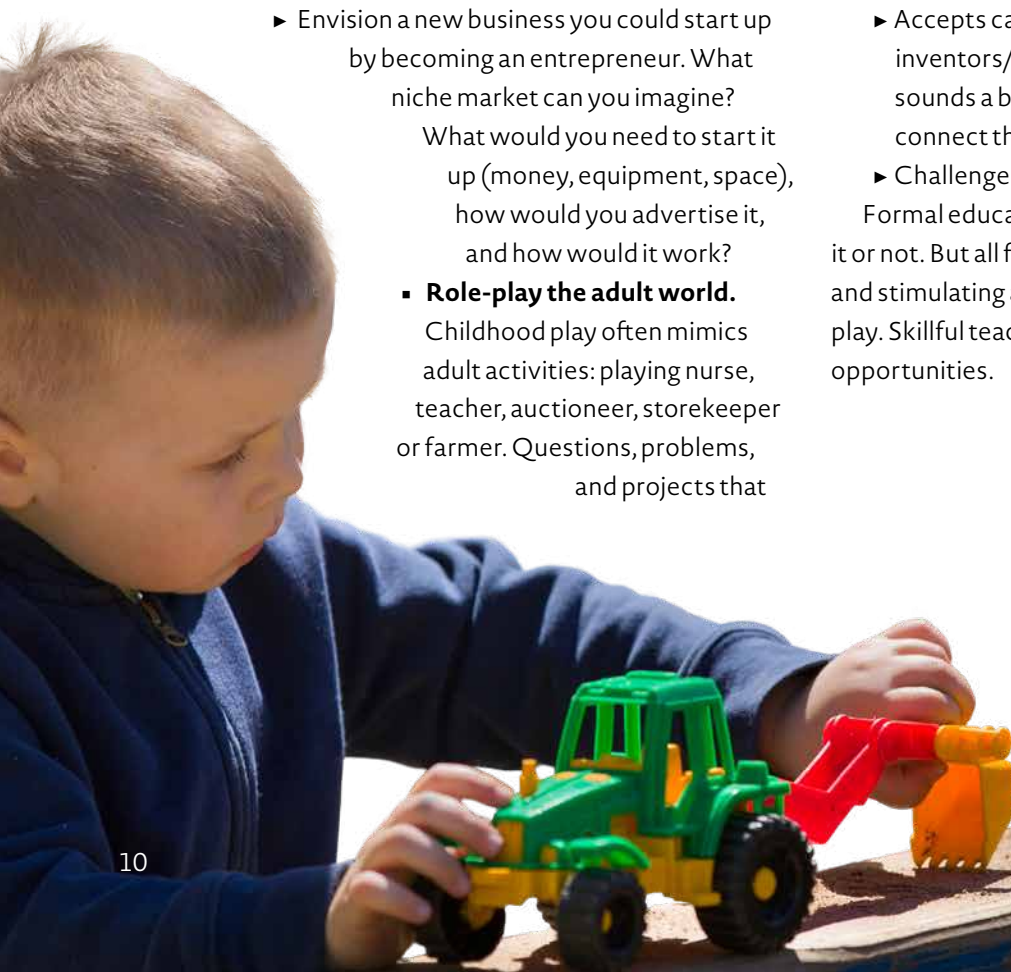
- ▶ Bring empty cans, boxes, and packages to school and set up a store. Price the items. Make play money and have someone act as cashier. The students can purchase things, pay for them, and learn to make change.

▪ **Construct a Contraption.** Have the students plan and build a contraption that . . .

- ▶ Bursts a balloon as the final act of two or three trigger events. Trigger events could include a ball rolling down an incline, a candle burning through a string, water dripping from a bottle to fill a counterweight, and so on.
- ▶ Accepts cards with matching facts (states/capitals, inventors/inventions, explorers/destinations) and sounds a buzzer or lights up when a wire is used to connect the correct answers.
- ▶ Challenges eye-hand coordination in some way.

Formal education does require work, whether we enjoy it or not. But all fields of learning offer fascinating questions and stimulating activities that can harness the power of play. Skillful teachers learn to take advantage of these opportunities.

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





## End of Term Checklist

- Update student permanent records—grade averages, attendance records, achievement test results, etc.
- Take inventory of classroom supplies and report needs to appropriate personnel.
- Order supplies and curriculum early. Give ample time to check orders and correct errors before school starts.
- Clean and organize your classroom, including the contents of desks, cabinets, and closets. Put textbooks and supplementary materials in their proper place.
- Add notes in your teacher notebook or planner that will assist you (or the next teacher) next term.
- Write reminders to yourself. Interesting how much you can forget if you're gone a couple months.
- Have your room and materials ready enough that another teacher doesn't have to start entirely from scratch.
- Allot sufficient time during the summer to study and prepare materials and possibly work through some courses in advance.
- Enroll new staff (or current staff that need a boost) in summer teacher events such as Christian Light's teacher training course and other regional institutes and teacher development events.
- Peruse Christian Light's *Classroom Manual* or *Handbook for Creative Teaching* (Rod and Staff) or other books like *The First Days of School* (Wong and Wong) for ideas and inspirations.

- Pray for your personal development and preparation and for your students during the summer.

### Tips for Ordering Christian Light Materials

- Order early. School orders placed between April 1 and June 30 receive a 5% discount if the subtotal is \$1,000 or more. If payment accompanies the order, you may deduct an additional 2%.
- Order extras. An extra store of LightUnits often comes in handy and alleviates crises.
- Be informed. Look through the Christian Light catalog. Order all necessary Teacher's Guides, supplementary materials, and new editions that you will need.
- Consider restocking your library. School accounts receive a 10% discount on books that Christian Light publishes.
- Order online at [www.christianlight.org](http://www.christianlight.org), or by email, mail, fax, or phone. For large curriculum orders, use a digital or written order to speed the process and to help with accuracy. **Be sure to log in to your school account when ordering online so correct discounts are applied.**
- If your shipping address is set up with a loading dock and forklift to receive pallets, please indicate that orders can come by truck by checking the box on your order form.
- Provide a shipping address where someone will be present to receive the order.





# Ask Another (continued from page 4)

- Join in on the games. I know you might feel slightly old, but I enjoyed playing with my dad.
- Overall, enjoy spending the days with your child because it is a unique situation and can be a lot of fun.

—Alabama

**Answer:** I had ten students ranging from 2nd to 12th grades. Of those ten students, four of them were my siblings and five of them were my first cousins. I was a little scared about how things would go, but we had a GREAT year! I went on to teach a total of fourteen years at this school where my youngest brother is now principal. I feel very honored to have graduated all my siblings!

Here are a few things that I feel were beneficial in the outcome being positive.

- All the parents were totally supportive.
- I was known as Miss W\_\_\_\_\_ at school to all the students, related or not.
- My parents “drew a line” between school and home. I was sister at home, not teacher.
- I didn’t help with homework at home.
- My sisters and I no longer shared a bedroom.

[From the younger brother]

My dad did a very good job setting the authority structure straight before my sister started teaching. “She’s your sister at home but has full authority as teacher at school.” She did well in assuming responsibility and authority. She first

started teaching me in 3rd grade and by 7th or 8th I told her that she couldn’t quit till I graduated. (It was years after I graduated that she quit.)

In my friend’s situation, it seemed as though his teacher dad tended to hold the bar in academics and behavior higher for his son than for the other students. This didn’t turn out so well.

—Pennsylvania

**Answer:** There are two ditches that teacher-parents face—favoritism and being extra strict. I advocate for a slightly higher degree of strictness for one’s own children because perception can sometimes be as important as reality.

A few tips:

- Separate the classroom from the supper table.
- Keep your teacher manuals, etc. away from your children.
- Be aware that tensions from the classroom tend to spill into the home, and vice versa.

—From a talk by a teacher in Ohio

**Next Question:** How should I respond to a third-grade student that doesn’t respect authority? (I suspect he was “gentle parented.”) Note: If you’d rather respond with observations on how “gentle parenting” manifests in the classroom, and how to deal with it, please feel free.

Please reply by May 15, 2026. Answers will be printed 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.

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