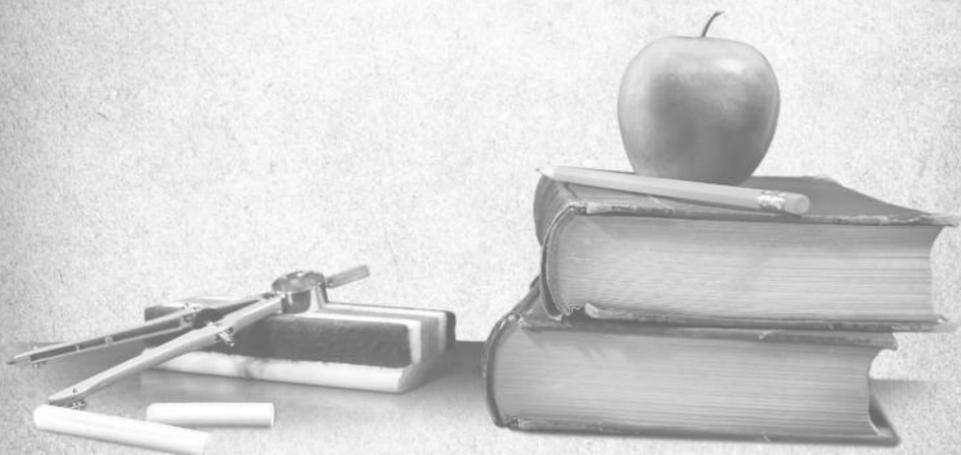
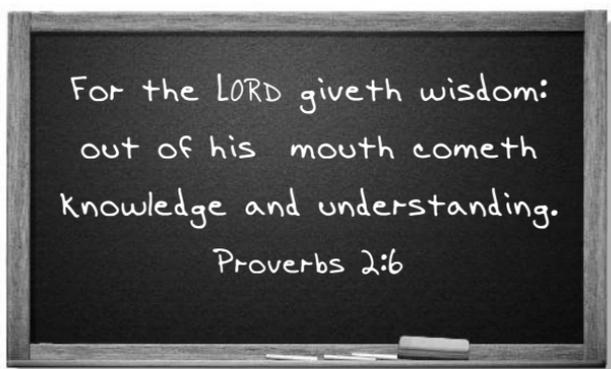


*Lessons
Learned*



Earning Your Students' Respect

- Give respect.
- Be honest; be real.
- Be consistent.
- Set behavior guidelines early, and be sure to follow through.
- Do a reality check on your expectations.
- Discipline privately (with few exceptions).
- Practice positive humor, not sarcasm.
- Listen with complete attention.
- Give more than lip-service love.



Aaron Shares His Heart

Rebecca P. Yoder

The personalities, needs, and gifts found in my fifth- and sixth-grade classroom were as varied as the colors represented in my students' crayon boxes! I remember one student who wore the bright fuchsia of spontaneity and vibrancy. She never lacked for words to speak and made everyone chuckle with her humorous, expressive comments.

I also recall the young lad whose personality resembled sky blue. Justin was easygoing, eager to please, and very likeable in general.

Emily was like the pastel pinks, yellows, and lavenders. Her gentle, quiet diligence and neat, careful work were refreshing in the midst of a busy day.

Teacher Talk

Then there was Aaron. His personality was the color of a midnight sky, dark and full of mystery. Let me assure you that Aaron was not a rebellious troublemaker. However, it was very difficult to discern what was going on behind those observant eyes. Aaron was very perceptive of what was taking place around him, but unlike the girl dressed in fuchsia, he would not open up and share his heart. It was Aaron who taught me an important lesson in understanding my students and their needs.

Toward the end of the school year I had the students write about an incident or subject of study that especially stood out to them in the past year. I was eager to see their perspectives and felt that they could be rather revealing. I was right; I thoroughly enjoyed reading the essays they handed in. But it was Aaron's paper that captured my attention and remains in my memory.

Though most schoolwork was difficult for Aaron, he loved to draw. This was the subject he chose for his writing assignment. First Aaron shared that he liked when we had *challenging* art projects (which told me that there were not enough of them, in his opinion). He went on to say that he remembered the day when I had announced that I was going to display their latest art projects on the wall. This announcement had raised protests from my fuchsia-clad student, who ardently claimed that her art was not good at all! The same sentiment spread quickly to a few other students. For various reasons, I chose not to display the work.

Aaron wrote specifically about the girls' fussing and my decision not to display the projects. I clearly sensed Aaron's keen disappointment at not having his artwork displayed. Art was one of the few subjects he excelled in. In and between those lines I read what he had not verbalized earlier. By oiling the squeakiest wheel, I had bypassed a student's need for affirmation!

This incident taught me the value of listening to what a child may not express verbally. It helped me see how important it is to know my students and to be alert to the deeper issues and needs in their lives.

I believe the key to gaining the necessary wisdom for understanding our students is a heartfelt, God-given love for them. Let's remember to pray daily for loving hearts that will hear what our students may not be saying, though longing to express.