



## The Second Mile . . . With Dyslexia | Mary Dueck

**H**e looked at me with wide sorrowful eyes, as he said it: “This is the worst day of my life.” I reflected back over the past term. His academic balance was way off. That was all I knew about him when he had stepped into my classroom at the beginning of the term. His records showed that math and language arts were unconquerable giants. I resolved, before that first day of school, to be the best teacher this third-grade boy ever had. Green as I was as a first-time teacher, I had no idea how many times that resolve would fizzle out before this fateful last day of the school term.

He couldn’t spell. Not a word. Not his name. That explained why language arts suffered. Desperately I rummaged through bookcases until I found an antique *Learning to Read* Teacher’s Guide.

My third-grade class was amused at what I told them were fun, kindergarten-sized, extra-activity spelling classes. I had all twelve students do those spelling words. I couldn’t bear to have them poke fun at this helpless boy who could not spell *dad*.

I reviewed the rules as we plowed daily through that old *Learning to Read* Teacher’s Guide. To make it all seem innocent fun, I had them take turns telling me the rules and doing “silly drills of rules they had learned in first grade.”

My little fellow was catching the spelling spirit. He enjoyed

these activities because they were his size. But when I checked his “Sam and Pam at the dam,” my spirits sank. *Sam* was *mas* and *Pam* was *map*.

“Oh, God,” I pled. “I can’t teach this hard little head. What shall I do?”

*You seasoned veterans are already nodding sagely and murmuring “dyslexia” under your breath, but I had never heard of the word.*

“He is special,” was all the reply I seemed to get from my heavenly Source of strength. The words took root in my heart. “If he is special, I’ll treat him special,” I decided.

Other teachers said I was cheating when they saw my method for grading this boy’s spelling. They said it wasn’t fair to the rest of the class. But my heart was at peace, and he went home elated when he received his first-ever score of 90 percent for a spelling test!

(This is how I cheated: I counted every letter of a spelling word as one. Only the letters he had wrong went down as a mistake. If I dictated *sad* and he wrote *sat*, he had two points right and one wrong. And if he just flipped words, as he was prone to do, I gave him only half a point off. I told him squarely, “You’ve got all the right letters, so it can’t be all wrong. But there’s something wrong with your word so I can’t mark it all right.”)

When we started on four-letter words, it was a punch in the gut for me. He couldn’t get them, no matter how hard we tried.

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## Attention Please!

*The primary focus of Attention Please! is on relating to students with attention deficits. However, much of the series offers practical help for an issue that many teachers struggle with—that of commanding and keeping students' attention. In part 3 Joshua offers more practical guidance and advice for relating to students with attention deficits. So, attention please!*



## Helping Students With an Attention Deficit | Part 3 | Joshua Robertson

**S**TRATEGIZE. *Special teaching strategies need to be used consistently, not just when you're desperate. Consider the following strategies.*

**Manage distractions, but don't purge the room!** Seat easily distracted students near you. Keep the curtains open, and even point out happenings outside when appropriate. Windows are *not* evil. Post interesting things on the wall, even specially for the distracted student. At a place where students' eyes often linger, you might post a little sign saying, "Hello" and then watch their wandering eyes twinkle as they realize where they are. Don't just battle distraction: feed attention.

**Get the student's attention before you begin speaking.** Make regular eye contact to help maintain a personal connection. Don't make *them* pay attention. *Make* them pay attention! Preparation, adequate sleep, and joy on your part will help quite a bit.

**Use repetition.** Repeat main points often. Drill to finally elicit an "I know that!" Repeat so they can repeat knowledge, not mistakes.

**Use mnemonics and tricks more than for other students.** Instead of being dizzied by a multistep process, a good mnemonic attracts their attention and organizes their mind.

Example: "When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking."

**Do plenty of oral reading.** Schedule ten, fifteen, twenty minutes a day, or more. Read stories, paragraphs, poems, and lesson instructions aloud with volunteer parents, aides, or older students. Encourage oral reading at home. Oral reading focuses and organizes the brain.

**Use plenty of oral review.** Oral review is more engaging than a worksheet. Consider giving as much test material as possible orally. Attention-deficient students often fare *much* better in an oral exam; and positive test experiences boost their outlook.

**Teach specific study skills.** Don't just say, "Study for your test." Write down step-by-step instructions—*how* to study, and *how* to go about a written test. Coach them in using the system till they use it well.

**Praise them and point out their success.** Attention-deficient students experience a lot of failure and discouragement. Praise them as much as your other students. They need it.

**COACH the child.** *Provide the student with one-on-one coaching.* Even though attention-deficient students can be your most troublesome students, strive to create a sense of teamwork with

them: “We are working on this problem you’re facing *together*.” If the student senses that you are struggling *against* them, their frustration and antipathy toward you will grow. Use the following pointers in your coaching.

**Befriend them.** Take time for them and treat them like a friend. Good relationships provide powerful guidance and motivation for distracted children.

**Maintain a positive environment.** They need to sense you are “for” them. If you feel frustrated, postpone the conversation until you have a positive attitude and a plan.

**Help them observe themselves.** These students often don’t see how they look and sound to others. Privately help them evaluate how their words and actions appeared, and discuss changes they need to make.

**Don’t argue or get “bent out of shape.”** Hyperactive boys usually get a thrill from arguing. Never argue; but don’t be stonily stubborn either. Remain kindly and calmly in charge. If they don’t get a “rise” out of you, they’ll seek enjoyment elsewhere.

**Agree on an emergency action plan.** Hyperactive students can be explosive. Decide together on something practical they can do or a place they can go when things are not going well. Sometimes you may initiate this plan with a note or signal. Other times, the student might request to do so. Keep it a plan, not a punishment. And gradually try to help them replace the external plan with an internal plan (e.g. praying, remaining silent) as they mature.

**Predict future scenarios.** Practice proper responses. Help them identify common areas of failure and a plan of action. “You usually get upset when you get out in softball. What are you going to do next time?” Practice proper responses together, helping them begin new habits.

**Establish daily communication with the home.** Yes, daily. One sentence or a few check marks on a standardized daily report form informs parents and reduces stress. Besides, it may help the parents identify things at home that trigger the “bad

days” and the “good days.” Make an effort to meet regularly with the parents, not just when problems develop.

**Look for their abilities and interests and draw them out.** If Johnny is an artist but is behind in math, keep working at the math, but let him work on special art projects too—perhaps some “just for him.” Or bring an old lawn mower to tinker with, instead of beating the books all day. Teach and encourage all that he will absorb. Be the friend of his abilities and interests, not a stubborn foe.

**Help them work through and rise above failures.** Give responsibility again. Repeat (seventy times seven). They need the opportunity to learn from and rise above failures.

**Don’t let weaknesses become an excuse for wrong behavior.** Anger, lying, disrespect, laziness, and disobedience are sinful behaviors and need to be treated as such, even in hyperactive, impulsive, or distracted children. Address wrong behavior with prompt discipline. When children are allowed to form sinful habits, their souls are at stake. Don’t start them down a path of excuses.

**Cautiously consider medication.** In extreme cases, when all other efforts are proving to be futile, the school may cautiously encourage parents to consider medication. A limited program of medication can help reduce ADHD symptoms, making it significantly easier to work with the child. After a time of scheduling, structuring, simplifying, and coaching the child into a new lifestyle, the medication could be gradually discontinued. The goal is not medicated existence, but a fruitful life within God’s design for the child.

**PRAY.** Remember, God has wisdom and grace for you and the student. Pray earnestly and daily for wisdom, love, patience, and progress. Pray for everyone involved, daily laying down negative feelings. Ask His Spirit to lead you to relate to your students in ways that are beyond your strategies. As you focus on God and pay attention to His leading throughout the day, even your most impulsive, hyperactive students will benefit from your peaceful, disciplined influence in their lives. ■

*Joshua grew up in western Canada and was homeschooled through Grade 12. He taught at two schools for a total of seven years, including serving as principal at an inner-city mission school focused on assisting African Christian immigrant families. He has also tutored high school students and taught short-term or substituted at several parochial schools. He is currently working in curriculum development and translation projects at Christian Light. He and his wife and two children live in Harrisonburg, VA.*

## Adventures in Peru | Part 3: Conquest and Cruelties | Luke Martin

“Time for Peru class again!” Hermano Lucas announced.

“Today will be a history class. We will look at the Spanish conquest of Peru, an event that changed the history of the Americas. The conquest was supposedly driven by Christian motives, and much of the language used by the conquistadores sounds like the fervor of the Crusades. Are you ready for this? *It’s not pretty.*”

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Charmed with the allure and rumor of riches, Francisco Pizarro, an enterprising Spaniard, set sail for Peru from Panama in January of 1531 with nearly 200 men and 37 horses. With typical Spanish zeal and the blessing of the king, the express mission was “Conquest and Christianity”; that is, to conquer the land and convert the natives to the Catholic faith. Upon arriving in Peru, he built a city on the coast. Then in September of 1532, while some of his men stayed there, the rest began the march inland to find the Inca.

Upon arriving at Cajamarca, they found the Incan ruler and his thousands of troops camped nearby. Pizarro sent a dispatch to Inca Atahualpa, inviting him to a meeting and promising him complete safety.

The Spanish had already noticed the vulnerability of the empire. A smallpox epidemic and a recent civil war had greatly weakened the empire. Pizarro, remembering what Cortés had done in Mexico, astutely took note of all these dynamics and gleefully planned to exploit them to the maximum. But here was the Inca with an estimated 80,000 soldiers. How could the Spanish hope for success, with only 170 men? Pizarro hid his men in the buildings around the plaza and fearfully awaited the Inca’s entrance.

Finally Atahualpa entered the plaza with 5,000 servants, amid great ceremony. Pizarro’s priest approached Atahualpa and gave a brief outline of Christian history. He ended with a plea that Atahualpa would stop his idolatry and willingly surrender to

the Spanish and the Christian faith. Atahualpa replied that he would not surrender his empire or his faith. He asked the priest by what authority he made these claims.

The priest replied by showing him a Bible. Atahualpa took the Bible, paged through it briefly, and then tossed it to the ground. The incensed priest turned to Pizarro. “See how he treats the Bible? Christians, come out! Attack!” The cannon roared and the Spaniards burst from their hiding places. They brutally slaughtered thousands of the unsuspecting and unarmed Inca servants. Atahualpa was captured alive. He was stunned—he had totally underestimated the Spaniards’ motives and strength. The amazed Spaniards attributed their success to God: “Truly, it was not accomplished by our own forces for there were so few of us. It was by the grace of God, which is great.”<sup>1</sup>

Appealing to the Spaniard’s lust for gold, Atahualpa promised to fill a room (5 m by 7½ m) with gold and twice with silver in exchange for his freedom. Llama trains bearing 200-600 pounds of gold a day soon began pouring into Cajamarca from all over the empire. The Spanish greedily divided the booty among themselves; a mounted soldier received 40 kg of gold and twice that of silver.

But now the Spanish couldn’t agree what to do with Atahualpa. Amid unfounded rumors of Atahualpa organizing an army against the Spaniards, Pizarro hastily arranged a mock trial and judged him guilty of death on four counts: betraying the Spanish, worshiping false gods, having several wives, and having killed his brother Huáscar.

Atahualpa pled for his life. “What have my children or I done that I come to such an end, when you have only received kindness at the hands of my people?” As the Spanish led him to his death, the priest beseeched him to repent and be baptized to save his soul. Atahualpa accepted baptism at the last when he learned that by doing so, he would be strangled instead of being burned.<sup>2</sup>

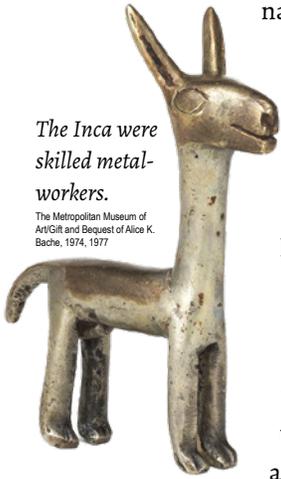
With Atahualpa out of the way, the Spanish began their march to Cusco, the capital. They continued plundering the

*The view of modern Cusco from Sacsayhuaman. The historic center and plaza are in the center foreground.*



*The Inca were skilled metal-workers.*

The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Gift and Bequest of Alice K. Bache, 1974, 1977



natives, formed alliances with rebellious tribes, and posed as liberators to the faction that had lost in the civil war.

Finally, one year after having arrived in Cajamarca, the Spanish took control of Cusco and set up Manco as a puppet Inca.

Manco cooperated until he and his people realized that the Spanish were not “liberators” but foreign invaders bent on total conquest. Manco awaited his opportunity. Pizarro left Cusco to build Lima, a group set out to explore Chile, and others returned to Spain with gold. With less

than 200 Spanish remaining in Cusco<sup>3</sup>, Manco took his chance. He called tens of thousands of native soldiers to surround the city. From Sacsayhuaman, the fortress high above the city, the soldiers rained down red-hot stones on the thatch roofs of the Spaniards’ dwellings in Cusco. But the natives had no weapons capable of killing an armed Spaniard. For every native the Spanish killed, hundreds took his place. Spanish reinforcements from the coast tried to reach Cusco, but the natives attacked these as well, killing them or else driving them back home.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, Manco told his troops to return home and plant their crops. Manco retreated to Ollantaytambo, some 100 km from Cusco. Reinforcements soon arrived from Spain and Panama, firmly establishing Spanish control of Cusco. But the Inca continued to trouble the Spaniards for years.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the Spaniards had divided into two factions. At one point, the Inca thought the Spaniards might destroy themselves! And not without reason—more Spaniards died at the hands of fellow Spaniards than at hands of the natives. Within ten years from the beginning of the conquest, Pizarro and his main rival both had been murdered by their opponents.

The Spanish did accomplish the first part of their mission—conquest. What about the Christianity part? Although they brought the Bible to Peru and many friars and priests worked hard to teach and convert the natives, to translate the Bible,



*Terraces of Ollantaytambo: Manco retreated here after his defeat at Cusco. Soon thereafter, a small group of Spanish soldiers set out to rout Manco and his army. But they arrived in Ollantaytambo to find the terraces full of armed soldiers standing guard. At the top of the terraces, Manco triumphantly pranced on a stolen horse. The Spanish were forced to give up and return to Cusco, amid taunting natives. This became known as the “last victory of the Inca.” Later Manco and his army retreated into the jungle.*

and even to protect them from exploitation,<sup>6</sup> the lives of most Spaniards were far from godly. In 1985, Pope John Paul II visited Peru and held mass in the very fortress of Sacsayhuaman. Various indigenous groups wrote him an open letter, officially returning the Bible to him. They said: “In five centuries it has not given us love, peace, and justice.” They asked the pope to take the Bible back to their oppressors in the Old World, since, in their minds, they needed it worse than the Andean people.<sup>7</sup> 

1. Hemming, *The Conquest of the Incas*, page 46.

2. Some of Pizarro’s fuming fellows wrote to the king of Spain, complaining of the incredible injustice. The king replied with a severe reproof to Pizarro.

3. Ever since the stories of the wealth found in Peru had gotten back to Panama and Spain, more Spaniards were coming to Peru.

4. Pizarro’s brother, Juan, with 50 soldiers, did manage to break through to Sacsayhuaman, where they slaughtered hundreds of the natives and took over the fortress.

5. As late as 1780, Tupac Amaru II, a self-acclaimed descendant of the royal Inca line, led an unsuccessful rebellion against the Spanish rule. He was captured and mercilessly pulled apart by four horses, one tied to each limb.

6. Most notable is Bartolomé de Las Casas, who worked unceasingly against the exploitation of the natives by his fellow countrymen. At one point the king of Spain even passed a law prohibiting slavery of the native people. But he was almost powerless to enforce it.

7. Mitchell, *La Biblia en la historia del Perú*, page 34.

*Luke has lived in Peru since 2011. He is currently in his fourth year of teaching. Luke teaches grades 6-9 at Escuela Menonita del valle de Huaral. Thirteen of the twenty-five students in the school are Peruvians. Luke’s hobby and current interest is Peruvian history and archaeology. He and his wife Grace (a former teacher) have three children.*



# Gopher Recess | Jonathan Erb

*Christian Light school representatives observe a variety of interesting situations during school visits. For this Outdoor Classroom article Jonathan Erb, a school representative from Montana, recounts an interesting school visit.*

**W**hile visiting a one-room Amish school in central Montana, I noted that every student had a small ball of baler twine on their coat hook under the lunch box shelf.

This piqued my curiosity—it was too light for jump ropes, for it was only a single piece of twine. And every single coat hook had one. Some of the balls of string contained a section of nylon twine. This only deepened my resolve to ask after dismissal.

As soon as the teacher dismissed the students, they exited into the warm late-March afternoon. I got right to the point. “Why does each one of your students have a ball of twine on their coat hooks?”

“Oh, that!” he responded, perhaps a bit sheepishly, “They use that to catch gophers.”

“But you can’t catch gophers with only a string!” I responded. “What else are they using? Is it part of a trap?”

“Come out here—I’ll show you.” We stepped out the back door, and to my surprise, two eighth-grade girls were sitting on the school porch, each cutting a tail off an expired gopher.

“I think they take the tails home for proof or keepsakes,” the teacher explained. I noticed a group of lads around other gopher carcasses, some of them likewise getting their tails docked. I saw a few tails get stuffed into pockets.

A small but eager second-grade lad asked me, “Do you want me to show you how we catch gophers?” I had scarcely nodded, before he darted into the classroom and came out with his string.

I was expecting an explanation, but instead he darted off. Slipping through the fence surrounding a several-acre horse pasture, he ran out across the scrub land. I soon realized I’d better run too. So, with less alacrity, I slipped through the fence and

soon caught up to my young hunting guide. By now we were quite a distance away from the schoolhouse. We ran on.

I could see a gopher up ahead. As I expected, it dove into its burrow and disappeared in a flash. We ran past that one—but suddenly wheeled around and ran back to it.

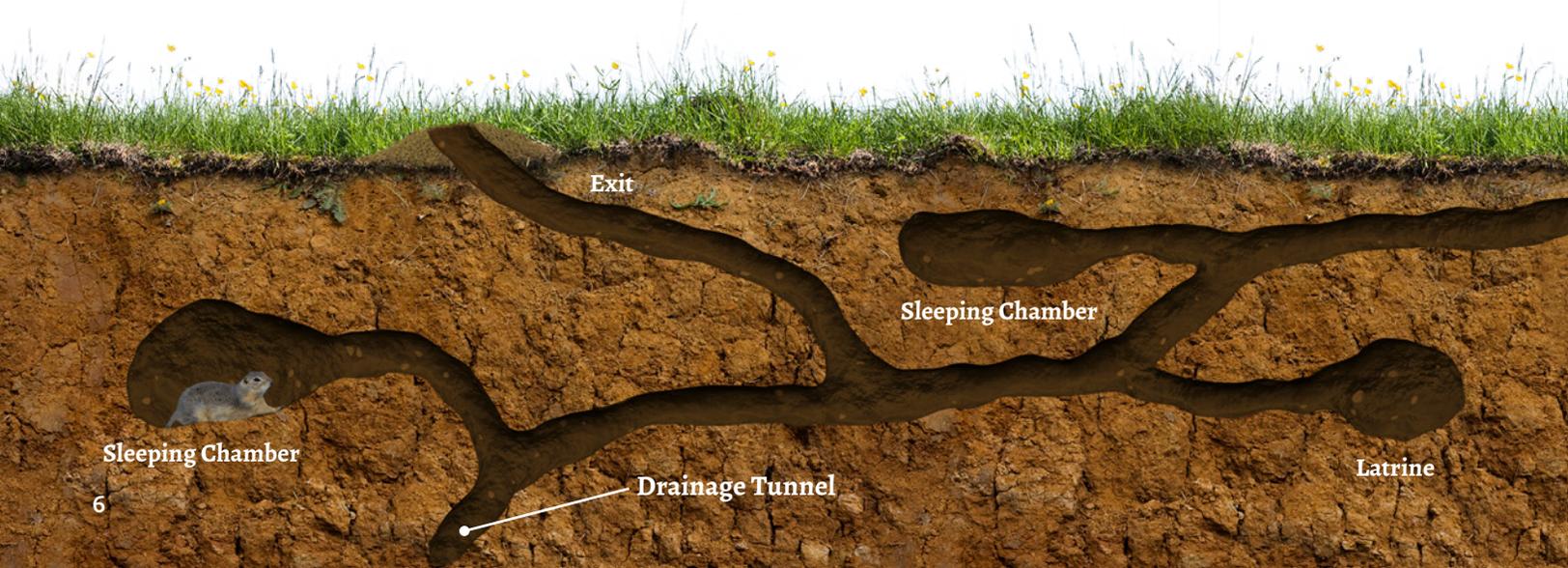
Like a man who knew his trade, the youngster got his string and carefully spread it around the hole. The end of the string was fashioned into a noose by knotting a loop and threading the rest of the string through. After the hole was surrounded by the string with the noose arrangement and pushed down discreetly into the grass, this young hunter quietly backed away from the gopher hole. Then he stood back and waited.

He stood completely motionless, eyes on the gopher’s front door. For at least 75 seconds we waited. No one spoke. I was the only one moving—and that was just my head as it swiveled slowly between watching him and the noose.

Then something happened, but it still was not dramatic. Slowly, very slowly he turned his head and mouthed in a whisper, “It’s coming.”

Sure enough, I could see the top of a gopher head emerging from its hole. But then just as unexpectedly, it was gone again. I sighed, thinking it had seen us—but no! There came the little head again, and this time it came out farther; and then quick as a flash, it was gone for the second time. This in-and-out game repeated itself, each time the gopher coming out a little bit farther than before. And, each time extending its slender torso into a noose!

Finally the gopher came out far enough that its armpits were clearly above the noose lying hidden in the grass around it. Again, it paused.



*Blam!* Quick as lightning my friend jerked back on the twine; the gopher popped up and out with frantic motions. Immediately, the young hunter pulled his catch toward us, hand over hand on the baler string.

The gopher was mad! He kicked! He bared his teeth! He hissed! He spat! He did push-ups, squats, and more, throwing himself every possible direction. But in a mere few seconds he was held suspended face-to-face with his captor. One face was smiling broadly; the other was not!

It was an interesting sight—the boy with his arm held high in front of him in a victor's pose. On the end of eighteen inches of string dangled a gopher, never madder in his life. I imagined him spitting out most of the words in the gopher dictionary, some of them several times, in about fifteen seconds.

With a quick twirl of his arm, the boy deftly dispatched the gopher. For the first time since inviting me along on the hunt, he spoke aloud.

"Seventy-six!"

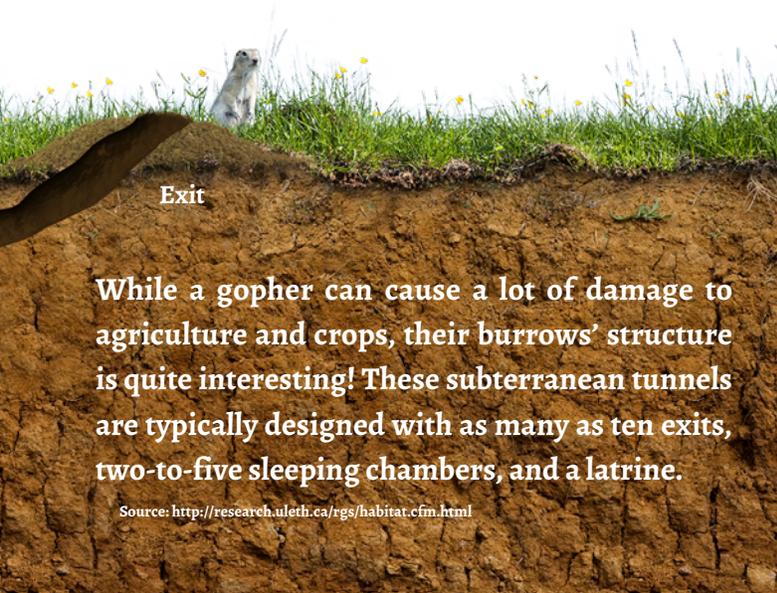
"Seventy-six what?" I asked.

"That's the seventy-sixth gopher we've caught since we started counting last week," he informed.

I later confirmed it with the teacher that yes indeed, it was seventy-six gophers. He said that there is a noticeable difference how many gophers are seen since a mere few days ago. In fact, gopher hunting had been the game of choice for the past two weeks for all three recesses! 

### **Here are a few gopher hunting tips this school learned to increase success.**

- Using nylon string for the noose portion increases success.
- On sunny days, more gophers are out.
- If you run past their hole and then return quietly, you don't have to wait so long before they come out.
- It takes patience.



**While a gopher can cause a lot of damage to agriculture and crops, their burrows' structure is quite interesting! These subterranean tunnels are typically designed with as many as ten exits, two-to-five sleeping chambers, and a latrine.**

Source: <http://research.uleth.ca/rgs/habitat.cfm.html>

### **Fun Facts**

- ⇒ The lips of a gopher are adapted to close behind his four incisors, preventing dirt from entering his mouth while using his teeth to dig.
- ⇒ Gophers often move backwards when traveling through their tunnels, using their tails for guidance.
- ⇒ Although gophers have poor hearing and eyesight, they have a highly developed sense of touch, on which they rely heavily for survival. Abundant whiskers and a sensitive tail help a gopher feel out his surroundings.
- ⇒ Gophers turn their cheek pockets inside out to clean them.
- ⇒ Gophers consume about 60 percent of their body weight in vegetation each day.
- ⇒ The average size is 5 in.- 14 in. long including the tail. The tails of these Montana gophers were about 3 in.
- ⇒ Most gophers weigh about a half a pound.
- ⇒ Of the 35 gopher species in the world, 13 live in the United States, mostly in the midwestern and western states. One species also lives in the Southeast.
- ⇒ Gophers are pros at hoarding. When foraging, they gather food in their cheek pouches to carry down to rooms where they save it to eat later.
- ⇒ Gophers are solitary animals. They are also extremely territorial and will fight to the death to protect their tunnel systems and food caches from intruders. When only a few weeks old, they leave their mother and build their own solitary burrow.
- ⇒ While often considered a pest (especially in cultivated areas), gophers can be valuable because they contribute to the formation and conditioning of the soil and provide food for larger predators.
- ⇒ Gophers can carry diseases harmful to humans, as well as fleas and ticks, which are easily contracted by the gopher as it runs along in grasses as high as or higher than its own body.

Sources: Havahart.com  
Outwitcritters.com

And he tried hard. He tried till the sweat ran down his face and his tongue had a permanent groove where he held it tightly.

“Please, please, Lord,” I begged. “I’m out of ideas, and I can’t get advice from co-teachers because they’re already saying I’m handling this all wrong. Please show me what to do.”

I was startled when the answer came to me, “Walk the second mile with him. He is special.”

I wanted to tell God I’d been all over town with this boy, that there was no mile we hadn’t walked yet, but I knew better than to argue.

The following day when it was time for spelling words, God was in the classroom with me. He knew my student was dyslexic. “Last,” I pronounced clearly for the eager class, then added thoughtfully, “l-a-s-t.”

The children grinned. It was funny to have their teacher dictate and spell out simple little words like that.

“Sand,” I said; “s-a-n-d.”

They giggled. It was a challenge to be done before I could tell them how to spell it.

I laughed too. They thought I was clowning. But God and I and one little boy knew I was not. We three were very serious under our smiles. My student was spelling four-letter words. Correctly.

I took a deep breath.

“Now a big word,” I warned the children. They wiggled excitedly.

“Teacher,” I pronounced. “Te-a-ch-e-r.”

My eyes were glued on the little struggler. He turned to the chalkboard with a fine little flourish, lifted his chalk, and wrote confidently: *teacher*.

Then he turned to me and smiled at my astonished look. *Audio was his “on” button.*

I was thinking, *Lord, if this is from You, then tell me to come to You on the water.*

I held my breath and took the plunge. “Special,” I said; “sp-e-c-i-a-l.”

Several students floundered. I was going too fast. But my dyslexic wrote without a flaw, *special*.

I laughed from sheer delight and wonder. “That was a big word, huh?” I reassured those who had misspelled. “But you are truly a special class. I’m giving you ten minutes of special recess for all trying so hard.”

Later that year I attended a teachers’ institute and met an older teacher who was well-studied in dyslexia and its complications. I shared my frustrations and my amateur approach to this student’s struggles. The teacher laughed, then grew sober. “Your efforts are being rewarded,” he said. “But I can lend you a book that could point out some methods that will be easier on you and the boy.”

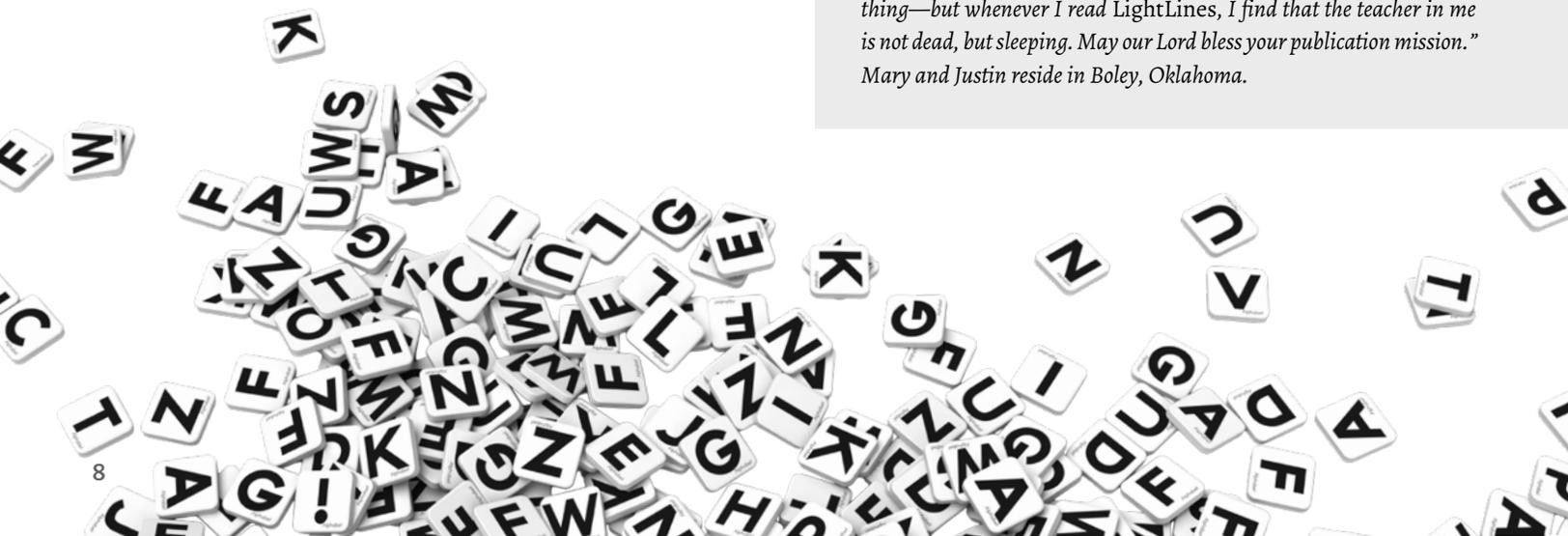
With helpful tips from this veteran and the book, I worked out a more efficient study pattern with my dyslexic student. When I informed his parents of the discovery, his dad exclaimed, “You have not only diagnosed my son; you’ve diagnosed me too! I was never able to write anything but my name.”

His mother told me tearfully; “We are so happy with his progress. We noticed you use a rather unorthodox method of grading his spelling, but he is enjoying school—and spelling—for the first time in his life.”

Yes, he would still occasionally write *blo* when I dictated *old*. I’d fetch a mirror and hold it to his spelling list. “You’ve got it right,” I’d tell him cheerfully. “But for others to be able to read it, you’ll have to flip it.”

*And now, it was the last day of the term. I might have been amused if any other student had told me that the last day of the term was the worst day of his life. But when this boy spoke those words, I didn’t find it funny. We had come through a rough term and had come out as life-long friends.*

*This happened in Belize where Mary was teaching. She shared, “I was 17 when this incident occurred. I taught all grades from first to ninth in the following eleven years. Then I met Justin and am now a happy stay-at-home wife. I wouldn’t go back to teaching for anything—but whenever I read LightLines, I find that the teacher in me is not dead, but sleeping. May our Lord bless your publication mission.” Mary and Justin reside in Boley, Oklahoma.*



# Why Some Children Learn Differently

## Part 2: Manifested in School | Peter Whitt

In school, for the first time, a child is asked not only to take in information audibly and visually and to store it, but to also retrieve it and communicate it through a complicated process known as writing. This process of expressing information in lines, circles, and symbols (*i.e.* letters) is where the real differences in students' processing equipment becomes very apparent. For most children, the process of using symbols to express familiar sounds in writing is quite simple. For others, it is not.

Imagine our memory being like a big vault with many drawers that are filled with a wealth of information. Just like any vault of stored wealth, it does us very little good if we cannot retrieve what is in it.

Students may struggle to remember into which drawer they placed a piece of information. They may have forgotten to place a "handle" on the "drawer," so they frantically claw at the drawer while other students smoothly retrieve, use, and replace information into its proper place. These differences in processing often cause us to label these students as slow or hard learners.

When a child has blond, red, or brown hair or if he has blue,

brown, or green eyes, we accept them as they are because they inherited those traits. Students have also inherited their processing equipment. We need to accept them as they are and find ways of teaching that match their brain processes so they, too, can store and retrieve information. We need to put handles on their drawers.

About one out of five people (twenty percent) process differently. Unfortunately, most of our teaching procedures and

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### Conservative Anabaptist School Board Institute (CASBI)

The 14th annual Conservative Anabaptist School Board Institute (CASBI) is planned for Friday, March 6, and Saturday morning, March 7, 2020. It is sponsored by Beth El Christian Day School at Belleville Mennonite School, Belleville, PA. The institute is planned for school board members, principals, and ministers—anyone involved with the overall planning and operation of Christian day schools.

For more information or to receive a program, e-mail [casbinstitute@gmail.com](mailto:casbinstitute@gmail.com) or contact someone on the planning committee: Victor Ebersole 540-532-0127, Linford Horst 301-491-0435, Jonas Sauder 717-285-3495, or Randall Yoder 540-309-6901.

### Thought-Provoking Quotes from Ancient Authors

⇒ There is nothing more frightful than for a teacher to know only what his scholars are intended to know. —Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749-1832 (German)

- ⇒ A tutor should not be continually thundering instruction into the ears of his pupil, as if he were pouring it through a funnel, but, having put the lad, like a young horse, on a trot before him, to observe his paces and see what he is able to perform, should, according to the extent of his capacity, induce him taste, to distinguish, and to find out things for himself; sometimes opening the way, at times leaving it for him to open; and by abating or increasing his own pace, accommodate his precepts to the capacity of his pupil. —Michel de Montaigne 1533-1592 (French)
- ⇒ Those who educate children well are more to be honored than they who produce them; for these only gave them life, those the art of living well. —Aristotle 384-322 B.C. (Greek)
- ⇒ The teacher is like the candle which lights others in consuming itself. —Paolo Ruffini 1765-1822 (Italian)
- ⇒ The teacher should be particularly cautioned against partiality. He must be, as nearly as possible, just in his treatment of all. There should be no favoritism. These things are not merely bad in themselves; they destroy the whole moral influence of the teacher. —G.B. Emerson 1797-1881 (American)

Carolyn and several co-teachers spent ten days in Ireland in the summer of 2018. The articles in this series were sparked by that visit.

## Lessons From Ireland | Part 3: The Potato Famine | Carolyn Martin

Life in the 1840s was hard for the Irish tenant farmer. Large landholders continued raising rents and taxes. Most small farmers were subsistence farmers, producing barely enough to pay their fees and feed their large families. Disease was common and political strife was normal as the Irishman sought to gain independence from their English overlords. The English Protestant landowners and the Catholic Irish farmers often clashed.

Against this backdrop of poverty and strife, disaster struck. The potato—the one crop that provided enough sustenance for large families—blighted. In September 1845, potato plants blackened, withered, and rotted. Potatoes quickly dug from the ground soon shriveled and rotted. Irish farmers watched in disbelief as most of their food source for the next year turned into a stinking field of mush. As the blight continued, in the next six years Ireland's course of history forever changed as an estimated 1.5 million people died and another million emigrated to the United States and other countries.

Imagine with me a mother who has no food to provide for her hungry children; a father who has no money to pay the rents or buy food for his family; children who have lost siblings or parents to starvation, typhus, or cholera; families evicted from their homes because they could not pay the rent; and whole families giving up, laying down beside the road, and dying. Then imagine a British government looking with disdain on the poor and uncultured Catholic Irish peoples and saying Ireland should solve its own problems rather than relying on government handouts.

Government policies helped create a vicious cycle that sent the poorest Irishmen spiraling into despair. Irish landholders, required by law to provide relief for the starving population, had little mercy on tenants who could not pay rents. By evicting tenants, a landowner could switch to raising sheep or grain. But by evicting them, he added to the starving and disease-riddled masses, increasing the need for relief funds. In many cases

the landowner himself went bankrupt and left the land.

Emigration to America held a beacon of hope to

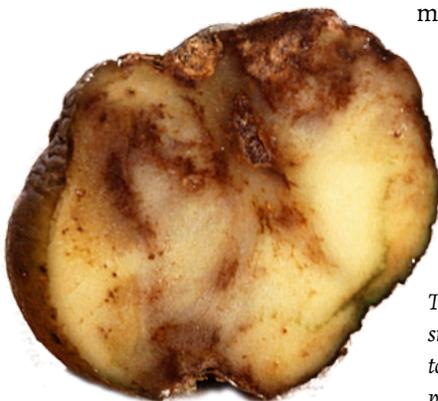
*These statues of starving travelers stand in Dublin, Ireland, in memorial to the estimated more than 1 million people who emigrated to other lands seeking better conditions.*

©William Murphy/Flickr. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/> Brightness, color, contrast, and image boundaries were adjusted.

many Irish. However, the passage was often disastrous. Emigrants were stuffed into holds of cargo ships, the so-called coffin ships, that had been refitted to carry passengers. Passengers were allotted a small space in the hold and perhaps seven pounds of food a week. Disease often raged in the cramped holds, and there were no doctors. An estimated one in five emigrants died from disease and malnutrition. Those who survived the journey faced prejudice, discrimination, and poverty in the new land.

The Great Hunger irrevocably changed Ireland's history. This tragedy helped bring about Irish independence in the early 1900s and created strong social ties between Ireland and the United States. [u](#)

*Carolyn Martin has taught first graders for twenty-five years at Hickory Hollow Christian School in Dayton, Virginia. Her first twenty years of teaching were in a chicken house that was converted into a school. She has particular interest in reading and how reading works in the brain. She enjoys children's books, story time at school, and reading stories to her nieces and nephews. Carolyn lives in Harrisonburg, Virginia.*



*A potato affected by blight.*

Public Domain



*“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 e-mail to [lightlines@clp.org](mailto:lightlines@clp.org) or by mail to LightLines Editor, P.O. Box 1212, Harrisonburg, VA 22803. (Try to limit responses to less than 400 words.)*

## Ask Another

**Question:** I feel I need to grow in building rapport with my students. How does that happen? What are some ways to build (or not build) rapport?

- Great rapport is an effective energy booster for teachers.
- Do not threaten students with anything you do not plan to follow through. Are you really going to have everyone skip break?
- Don't allow students to ask permission for the same thing every day. Ten people begging for story time outside every day wears you down! Ask students to give you the privilege of giving students surprise privileges.
- When making a decision, teach students that their begging does not affect your final call; begging may as well cease. Expect students to respect your teacher power.
- When planning special classes, like art, ask students for suggestions. Would they prefer to learn more painting techniques or would they rather learn drawing?
- Show interest in your students' lives outside of school. Ask students about things they care about, then try hard to remember “Buster's” name and “Mom's plan to teach me how to fix meals”, so you can ask more effective questions about the new batch of puppies or “what was last night's menu?”
- Give students your attention. Listen when they speak. Ask further questions.
- Remember that students most likely do not sense your pressure “to get this class done before . . .” So if a big story comes up—“Aaron pulled me in the wagon, hitched behind the four wheeler, and then”—assure the student that you would like to hear about it, at lunch time.
- Respect students. If the student is at his desk, ask for permission before you pull something out of his desk, etc. (“No” is not an acceptable answer in this case.) Yes, the teacher has authority to access a student's desk, but do it respectfully.
- When a student needs to be reprimanded or reminded, do it quietly, privately if possible. (Make it happen that you walk in from the ball field together.)
- It's okay for the students to know that you care about their grades, but they should also feel that you care most about their efforts and attitudes.
- Remember that your students are members of a fallen race. They will make mistakes—anything from spilling drinks to exploding in anger. Be willing to stand by—coaching, counseling, encouraging, and sometimes giving a helping hand as they pick up and try again. —*Diana Kornelsen, Checotah, OK (teaching in Indiana)*

**Next question:** “Being on the school board, I see pupils that have either come from our own schools or others, that have gone through first grade and were promoted to second or even third without reaching the fluency in reading that was needed. What therapy is available for them now?” —*Submitted*

**Care to respond? What has worked for you? Send your replies by March 1, 2020.** [📧](#)

Continued from page 9

materials are designed to reach the other four. Most of these “slow learners” are very bright and gifted. They often can explain in detail orally what they struggle so hard to put in written form. Writing can be one of the greatest struggles for these children.

As we struggle at times to understand these children, we may unintentionally say and do things that hurt them. “Is that all you were able to do?” “If you would stay at your work, you would get more done.”

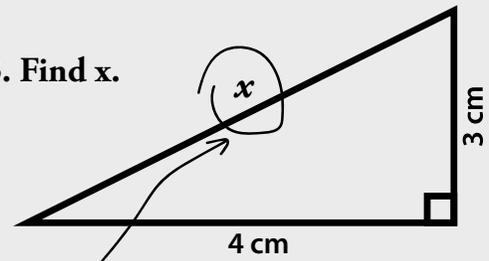
Often these children may sense they are “different” and begin to feel inferior. They don’t understand themselves, and adult impatience with their poor scholastic performance tends to compound the problems with their self-image. This baggage of inferiorities they carry can also begin to drag them down emotionally. They start thinking of themselves as “dumb” or “stupid.”

Some may spend a tremendous amount of energy and resources to keep peers from realizing how hard they struggle. They may even resort to dishonesty, which only adds to the weight they struggle to carry in their learning experience. Is there any wonder that most of these students dislike school?



### Math Genius

3. Find  $x$ .



Here it is

- submitted by Rachel Hofer

### Intercession

A first grader’s prayer request: “Pray for the widows, that their husbands won’t die.”

- submitted by Diana Kornelsen

They may in reality be working many times harder than the child who does not experience phonetic struggles.

In the next article we will explore ways we can come alongside them to ease their load and help them with their phonetic struggles. [L](#)

*Peter was a teacher for more than twenty years and administrator for twenty-two years. As a dyslexic, he understands the struggles of dyslexic students and because of his teaching experience, developed a heart for struggling students. He serves as a school representative for Christian Light. He and his wife Martha live in Georgia.*

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