



More Than Math and Science – Caring for Students’ Emotional Needs | Part 2 | Anthony Hurst

Jesus “took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them” (Mark 10:16). Jesus loved and blessed children. He, their Creator, understood their needs perfectly. Teachers have unique opportunities to be the arms and hands of Jesus in caring for students’ emotional needs.

Teaching is a demanding work. Some things simply must get done, so you need to prioritize your work. The things at the top of the list usually get done, and the things at the bottom may not. Where should caring for the emotional needs of your students be on your list? Where were they on Jesus’ list?

Students need your time

Caring for students’ emotional needs is hard to put on a list as “something to do.” But you can and should intentionally work to build positive relationships with your students. It communicates that you value them and that school is more than the academics.

Talk with students before the day starts rather than rushing around doing last-minute things. Welcome them to the classroom and interact informally. At lunchtime, enter conversations with them and talk about their interests.

Be willing to have your schedule interrupted to meet needs. Jesus paused His teaching and took time for children. You may sometimes need to pause and address needs too. It could be after a contentious recess time or when you sense there is a

relationship problem. Take time to calmly work through these issues to restore a restful classroom atmosphere.

Students need your love and acceptance

We cannot imagine Jesus beckoning only certain ones—the cute or intelligent or well-behaved ones—to come to Him. He gave every child the same attention and affection. Do we in small ways show favoritism to certain students? Some students are more lovable than others. But with Christ’s love in our hearts, we can and must love each student.

The students that are hardest to love are the ones who need it the most. For some, school is a haven from conflict at home. School is where they receive the most care—a place to experience the arms and hands of Jesus. Focus on the student that is hardest to love. Sit in that child’s seat before school starts and cry out to Jesus to flood your heart with His love—and He will.

Students need to belong and feel safe

Imagine the belonging and safety those children must have felt when Jesus put His arms around them and His hands upon them, and they heard His gentle words of blessing.

Schools are big buildings with big people with big expectations. Some children feel alone, insecure, and vulnerable as they enter school. The last thing they need is signals from you that



I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord

A teacher’s efforts to counteract a community’s worth of grudges invading the classroom.

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Making History Come Alive, Part II

History is more than marks on a page—how do we teach it that way?

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they are a bother. When corrective action is needed, be careful to not shame your students or make them feel unwanted. Look for effective ways to address their needs and affirm their value and that you really do want what is best for them.

Students need your blessing

A child needs to feel an overall sense of blessing from his authorities. He needs to know that he can succeed. Your expectations need to be somewhat flexible and, to some degree, tailored to each student. An insecure student may live in fear of his teacher's constant frown of disapproval. He may dread coming to school because every day is a reminder that he is a failure.

As the school year moves on, you may find it easy to nag and scold and point out negative things in your students. As each day ends, think back over your words and attitudes, and evaluate the spirit you portrayed to your students.

In trying to meet students' emotional needs, remember that you are not the parent. There are lines you may not cross. Never

reflect against the parents or try to win the student to your side of an issue. This will only bring confusion and insecurity. Work hard to build respect toward the parents even in difficult home situations.

The success of a school year is not measured solely by academic achievement. Think about your students twenty years from now. The influence of your love, acceptance, and blessing will outlive the academic influence. Pray for grace and wisdom to be the arms and hands of Jesus. [u](#)

Anthony lives in Berks County, Pennsylvania with his wife and seven children. He taught school for twenty-six years and is now employed with Christian Light as a school rep and in curriculum development. Special interests are gardening, honeybees, and Spanish culture and missions.



I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord

Mary Hein Dueck

I faced my new set of students. They didn't know me, and I didn't know them. I was just a name to them; they were just faces to me . . . except that I already felt an immense sense of responsibility to provide a safe and happy school environment for these children. I knew I couldn't be everything each student needed, but my prayer was, "Lord, help me die to self so that Your Spirit can work in the lives of these students through me."

Within two weeks I realized that although these youngsters

didn't know me very well, they thoroughly knew each other—shortcomings and all. Especially shortcomings. They brought a bumper crop of grudges to school every morning. These included not only the wrongs they remembered of each other, but amazingly, there were grudges that their older siblings had held toward each other, misunderstandings their parents carried around, religious disagreements, and even what student A's grandpa said about student B's grandma.

If they would all love the Lord, they would be looking for the good in each other instead of seeking ways to destroy each other's reputation.

I was shocked. As I resolved to do something about it, I felt helpless to make any lasting impact on the village. The load seemed overwhelming until my mom reminded me that I had been hired to teach school and that the students were the generation I could actually influence.

Apart from telling the story “No Place for a Grudge,” I failed to come up with any grand, reforming solution to this deep-rooted problem during the first two months of school.

I was reminded of how bad the problem was when a girl told me that her dad had said a fellow student's dad wasn't a Christian because of a perceived violation of a church standard. I knew a little about the situation and tried to correct the assumption, but I could tell I wasn't leaving any prints on her prejudiced mind. I prayed more earnestly as I noticed the two girls avoiding each other. *If they would all love the Lord, they would be looking for the good in each other instead of seeking ways to destroy each other's reputation*, I thought sadly.

That's when the idea came.

I sketched a picture of a walled city, surrounded by palms and a large lawn. Under this scene I wrote, “I love Thy kingdom, Lord.” I made a copy for each student and tacked them to the classroom walls before the students arrived the next morning.

Curiosity was the ruling sentiment the next morning as the students arrived. I answered their questions with the convenient cliché of “wait and see” until all the students had arrived. Then I explained that I would be keeping a chart for each of them, tallying the good deeds I observed. At the end of each day, they would color as many items on their picture as I had tally marks. Their good and loving deeds, I told them, were the best way of showing that they loved God and His kingdom.

When I opened up for questions, a lot of hands went up. Apparently they had all had the same question because most hands went down as soon as the first question was answered. “What about the bad things you see someone do?”

I smiled, having anticipated this question. “I'll deal with that separately. This chart talks only about loving the kingdom and doesn't mention destroying it.”

“Can we know what the good things are that you see us do?”

I shook my head. “It will be anything from wiping your feet on the mat before entering the building to . . . noticing a good deed of a fellow student.” This brought a batch of new expressions to their faces, and more hands went up.

“So we can tell you if we see something good in someone else?”

“Definitely,” I said, my smile growing, “but I will decide if the good you saw adds a tally to their account.”

“What if we do something nice, but nobody notices it?”

“Listen,” I said, “if we love the Lord and His kingdom, we will do good for the sake of pleasing Him. The good we do for Him will be written down in a far more important book than my teacher's book, whether or not anybody sees us do it. Besides, the reward for doing good will be glorious—not just coloring a section on a wall picture.”

That seemed to satisfy them. As we settled into class, I breathed a prayer for God's blessing on this undertaking that I felt He had inspired.


It caught on. The students felt weird when they saw fellow students whisper in my ear, wondering if they were reporting something nice about *them*. They had fun reporting the good they saw in each other. It was not uncommon for them to sneak in a “good-deed report” when I went to their desks to help with their work.

The results were amazing—far better than I had expected or dared to believe possible. I felt like one in a dream—marking tallies all day long. I never tired of hearing about the good they saw in each other.

The pictures on the wall began to bloom with exotic colors, and the love and goodwill in the classroom flourished as well. I began to think of the project as “the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes.” I came home every day with glowing eyes, telling Mom, “I have the BEST students!” or “I just LOVE teaching school!”

Mothers sent notes to tell me of the good things their children had voluntarily done at home. One mother dropped in at recess to tell how mannerly the neighbor children had been when staying at their house the day before.

I could tell more about the nice people in that village, of parental support such as I had never imagined, of grandparents visiting our classroom because they wanted to see what made their grandchildren so excited about school.

All I can say is that God blessed our efforts and that He deserves the glory for that wonderful year. Please don't discredit God if you try something similar and it doesn't turn out so well. He is worthy of praise even if you see only slight improvement or change. 

Mary Hein Dueck taught school in Belize. “I taught all grades from first to ninth in eleven years. Then I met Justin . . . and am now a happy stay-at-home wife. I wouldn't go back to teaching . . . but whenever I read LightLines, I find that the teacher in me is not dead, but sleeping.” She and Justin and two children reside in Boley, Oklahoma.



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Getting Students Involved and Interested | Deana Swanson

A main reason we need to teach history is to get our students to think and to make good moral decisions. As they learn to evaluate decisions of the past and learn from them, they should learn to think, *What does this teach me? How does this look when lived out in my daily life?*

How can teachers get students to think this way and to engage in history classes? Three ways come to mind. For many students, history has nothing to do with their present lives—unless we do these three things.

- Put your students into the specific situations you are studying.
- Tell true stories and show pictures.
- Have students make hands-on projects that relate to what they are studying.

Let's think first about placing students into the situations being studied. Begin by using the pronouns *you* and *we* instead of *he*, *she*, *it*, and *them*. This can help students begin to envision *themselves* in history, not some people long ago to whom they cannot relate.

For example, instead of reading or saying, "Three hundred Nez Perce Indians were surrounded by about two thousand United States Army troops just forty miles from the Canadian border. They were then forced to move to barren lands in designated Indian Territory," try this: "Imagine that *you* were one of just three hundred Nez Perce Indians left trying to reach the Canadian border and freedom. After three months of traveling, *you* were only forty miles away. Then, nearly two thousand United States Army troops surrounded *you* and what remained of *your* family and tribe and forced *you* to move to desolate Indian Territory."

"Indeed the general tendency of reading good history must be, to fix in the minds of youth deep impressions of the beauty and usefulness of virtue of all kinds." –Ben Franklin

Then ask them questions. How would *you* feel if *you* were in the Nez Perce's shoes? What do *you* think *you* would be able to carry for two months while fleeing? Which items would *you* choose to put in a knapsack to carry that far?

You can also use statistics to get students involved in historical accounts. During the Black Death or Bubonic plagues in Medieval Europe, between 30 to 50 percent of the population died from the plague. Apply that to your class. If there are sixteen students in your class, you could say something like, "If we had lived back then, five to eight of us would have died from the plague. Only eight to eleven of us would have survived."

Or this. "Over 7,000 soldiers from the Union and Confederate armies died during the three-day Battle of Gettysburg, and over 33,000 were wounded." Too often we read through statistics like this and don't let the facts sink in. Help students visualize scenes like this by placing themselves into the picture and asking leading questions. "Imagine how much of our ball field would be covered if 7,000 bodies were stacked on it." (Note: Be sensitive to your students' ages and life experiences. Adapt and adjust as appropriate.)

You can also use such accounts to reinforce Scriptural teaching. You could say something like, "It is very sad when even one man dies. But every one of those 7,000 men was somebody's son, father, uncle, or brother. Discuss the worth of their souls, the cost to their families, and New Testament teachings on such issues. "Is there a better way to solve problems?" Let the students

It can feel overwhelming to begin the year with a big thick history book, especially if you feel like you don't know much about history. That's okay! You can learn along with the students. Ideally you will have read the entire text before the term starts. If that is not possible, just jump in and learn along with the students. If we come across an interesting topic in class, I often research that topic later that same day and then add in those extra details in class the next day. Every year you teach, you become more acquainted with history, and every year you can dig in and learn a little more.

If you don't know an answer to a student's question about history, that's okay; model learning for them. I have often needed to answer, "I'm not sure about that one, but I will find out." Then I make myself a sticky note right away. My goal is to find out and then tell them in the next class.

–D.S.

come up with that answer. Then praise them for thinking and for their thoughtful answers.

This technique can be applied to just about any event in history. Consider these:

Stock market crash – Only two people (in our class) got their money out of the bank in time. The rest of the class lost everything. Now we cannot make our farm payment. What will we do?

Understanding monopolies – Each row of students opens a doughnut shop. Row 1's doughnut shop is giving away free coffee. They make more money and then buy out all the other doughnut shops. Now they charge us \$5 a doughnut with no free coffee, and there is no competition. Does that seem fair and equitable?

Women working in factories in World War I and World War II – Prior to World War I, less than 2 percent of women in Great Britain worked outside the home. That would be one or two women in our entire church. Twenty-five years later, during WWII, probably more than 25 percent of women worked outside the home. How many women in our church would that be? What happened to the young children still at home? Is that okay? What does the Bible say about that?

The purpose of patents – Alex in the front row invents a super-duper pencil sharpener and tries to sell it, but Kristen copies his design and sells it cheaper. Now everyone buys from Kristen, and Alex gets nothing. Is that fair? Was Kristen kind to Alex?

The Cold War – Make a warning siren noise and tell all the students to get under their desks or against a brick wall. What emotions would *you* feel? What if *we* were all locked in the school for a month? What would *we* do? What would *we* eat?

A second technique teachers can use to make history come alive is to tell true stories and find pictures of real people

from the time you are studying. For example, after the Battle of Wounded Knee, the United States Army hired civilians to bury the dead and frozen bodies of Lakota tribe members in a mass grave. Find and show pictures of this interesting account. Textbook sidebars often have these interesting stories; take the time to read them. Take a few minutes to research other intriguing stories mentioned in the text and give students more details.

When we study the 1960s and 1970s, I love to tell my students about the Cold War bomb drills we had at school. I tell them about being ordered off the playground to go inside and watch the Apollo 11 mission and the first man walking on the moon. I recount being able to board a plane with no security screening. Think of it! When I tell them that John F. Kennedy was the President when I was born, it makes history seem not so long ago because I am a "bridge" to historical figures or eras. Tell them stories from your lifetime or your parents' or grandparents' lifetimes. It makes history seem much more recent and interesting.

The final way to make history come alive for our students is to create hands-on projects that relate to the time being studied. Easy ways to do this as well as several classroom projects will be presented in upcoming articles. [11](#)

Deana lives with her husband Jeff (a teacher) and four of her children (two of whom are teachers also) in Terre Hill, Pennsylvania. She has taught in the classroom for twelve years and homeschooled her children for eleven years. Her favorite leisure activities are going on walks and playing board games with her family.

Summary: Getting Students Involved and Interested

- Put your students into the specific situations you are studying.
- Use the pronouns *you* and *we*.
- Use the introductory word *imagine*.
- Make it practical. Ask questions about how it would feel.
- Tell interesting stories from history or your own lifetime.
- Create hands-on projects that relate to what they are studying.



Grazing a dam

I almost experienced vertigo as I looked across and down the face of the dam. At first glance the photo had seemed to show only a tall rock dam—a feat of human engineering. But those dark specks scattered around its rocky face? Upon looking closer, I was startled to discover that the “specks” were goats! They were happily scampering their way along and up the nearly vertical rock face of the otherwise unremarkable Cingino Dam in Italy. There were even some babies scampering around, hanging on by a toehold, seemingly without a care. My hands got clammy.

Alpine ibexes are mountain goats that live high in the mountains of Italy, France, Germany, and Switzerland. Currently there are about 30,000 in the whole world, but the population is increasing. Ibexes’ preferred habitat is rocky terrains and highlands and alpine forests 6,500-15,000 feet above sea level. A herd of ibexes lives near the Cingino Dam, high in the Italian Alps near the border of Switzerland.

Visitors (which are rare) can see the ibexes nonchalantly clamoring about the nearly vertical face of the dam. They even butt



Outdoor Classroom

The Amazing Goats of the Cingino Dam

each other to gain access to the best spots and effortlessly do full 180's. Do you wonder about the sanity of these goats? Ah, the 160-foot dam, built in 1925, was laid with rocks and concrete that now exude salty minerals that the goats need—or at least they *think* they do! The nearly vertical dam doesn't deter their desire—or is it *addiction*? They're grazing the dam, licking the salt-crusted rocks!


So, getting to the salt and minerals is the reason for their death-defying sprint up, along, and back down the sheer rock face. But how can they do this without slipping and falling? Well, they are goats—and goats are naturally nimble. But these goats are specially equipped for climbing such fearsome impossibilities. Their hooves have two toes each that operate independently, allowing the ibexes to maintain dexterity with only one toe gripping. The outer edges of their hooves are sharp and tough and hard, but the inner part (sole) is rubbery, soft, and flexible, enabling a good grip. They are quite dexterous, able to jump six feet without a running start. Do they ever fall? A few have fallen to their death. But falling is rare for these nimble creatures.

More about ibexes

Alpine ibex males have big horns, curved backward. Horns of female ibexes are a little shorter, and more curved. Their horns provide self-defense against predators. Males tend to be bigger than females, often weighing twice as much. They also sport a beard on their chins. Many larger males do not climb the rock face because their size limits their ability.

Ibexes are herbivores. They feed mainly on grasses, flowers, bushes, sprigs, and other plants. The herds move upward with the receding snow line to the highest elevations and the new growth during the summer. They often make their homes on rock cliffs that are too dangerous for predators to traverse.

Babies are born in late spring. The newborns start to jump around as soon as they are born. They are weaned in 4-6 months, reaching maturity at about one year old. At two or three years old, they start reproducing.

These amazing creatures and their astounding feats illustrate marvelous design. What a Creator! 

Sources: <https://animalia.bio/alpine-ibex>
<https://www.livescience.com/28102-ibex.html>

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In “When Students Groan” (Fall 2021 issue), Nathan wrote about successfully implementing a simple and low-pressure creative writing plan in an effort to help his students excel in—and stop groaning about—writing assignments. This article follows with more details.

Getting It Done: Implementing a Creative Writing Plan | Nathan Yoder

Many of our teaching duties are fairly straightforward; we know what needs to be done. Yet, getting started and being consistent remains one of our greatest challenges. Creative writing can be like this. We know it needs to happen, but we aren’t sure where or how to start.

I had my share of failed starts before finding something that works. Here are a few ideas for jump-starting your own creative writing class.

Prioritize

It can be difficult to find time in your day to do something extra, even though it feels important. I make it a priority to have my students write five minutes each day, with a few extra minutes to introduce the writing assignment and answer any questions. We do creative writing immediately after lunch break. It is a really good segue into the next class. It’s low-pressure and helps students refocus after lunch.

If you skip creative writing occasionally, do it only for good reasons. The normal rigors of school are not good reasons.

Don’t grade

There is a time to grade writing assignments, but creative writing is not one of them. I don’t grade quality of writing, grammar, punctuation, or even spelling. I want creative writing to be as stress-free as possible—a brain playground. You would never tell a student that they are awkward on the playground; don’t do it here either.

It works well to have students turn in their writing notebooks

twice a week. Try to quickly read everything they wrote. If something is especially well-written, write a short note. If something is funny, draw a smiley face. If something spoke to you or encouraged you, let them know. Give encouragement and even a few pointers.

Create a weekly plan

A weekly rolling plan is your best friend for creative writing. Knowing what to expect each day makes consistency much easier to achieve. Many of these ideas were gleaned from others¹. Here is what works well in my classroom (Grades 8-10).

Monday (Inspirational)

Students write about something they found inspirational or encouraging from the church services the day before. It’s surprising and revealing what students write about, and it gives the teacher a unique glimpse into their spiritual lives.

Tuesday (Writing prompt)

Give the students a writing prompt. You can come up with your own, but a book of writing prompts is helpful². Try to mix the type of prompts and give them a variety of writing formats such as these:

- Descriptive Writing – Describe a . . .
- Examples – Give a list of examples of . . .
- Step-by-Step – How do you . . .?
- Hypothetical – What would you do if . . .?
- Argumentative Essay – Why is A better than B?

Wednesday (Mini reports)

In the morning students pass out encyclopedias. They spend a little time looking for a topic that interests them. During creative writing, they spend five minutes writing a mini research report on their topic of choice.

1 <https://thedockforlearning.org/contributions/journal-writing-101/>
2 *1001 Writing Prompts for Students* by Fred Cooper ISBN: 978-0976579335
(This book is getting hard to find.)



Thursday (Narratives)

Students write a short story, often highly imaginative. Frequently I write nine random words³ on the board and have students use as many of them as possible. This gives them opportunity to stretch their imagination.

Friday (Weekend plans)

Have students write about what they will be doing over the weekend. If they're not sure (frequently the case), they can write about what they would *like* to do over the weekend. Both approaches are interesting, and you'll learn a lot about your students.

Feel free to change this rolling plan. Sometimes there's already an object of discussion in the classroom that day, and students love writing about current topics of conversation.

Introducing the writing project for the day can spark some interesting discussion. Since good class discussion is something teachers crave, it is often beneficial to monopolize on this.

Keep it positive

When you first implement creative writing, many students will complain about it. One of the important parts of building positive classroom culture is to simply tell the students that complaining is not allowed.

Don't expect perfection

Creative writing class won't make everyone enjoy writing, and it probably won't make your struggling students become star writers. But it will eventually reduce students' fear of bigger writing projects and will build their confidence in putting ideas on paper. This should help reach the goal of our students having the ability to communicate by writing.

Enjoy the fruits

Students quickly learn that creative writing isn't so hard. However, you'll likely discover that some who find writing difficult may mentally separate creative writing from regular writing assignments. When students start making the connection between creative writing and practical writing, then other writing assignments such as research reports become easier to accomplish.

Once, a student came up to my desk stumped because he was to write a paragraph in Literature, and he didn't know where to begin or what to write. When I told him to treat it as if it was a creative writing assignment, his face lit up. He said, "Oh, I can do that!"

So be encouraged! It's never too late to start your own creative writing endeavor. Keep it enjoyable—for yourself and for your students. Consistent quantity is probably more important than quality. Keeping it simple and enjoyable makes it attainable for your students, sustainable for you, and rewarding for everyone.

Note: Creative writing exercises are incorporated in the elementary levels of Christian Light's language arts program. Use the ideas in this article to enrich or supplement their use. This plan is not intended to displace graded, more substantial writing assignments where revising and editing are encouraged. (These ideas might be particularly helpful for "getting it done" in Grades 7-12.) [11](#)

Nathan Yoder has completed his fourth term of teaching at Ozark Mennonite School in Seymour, Missouri, where he also serves as principal. Besides teaching, Nathan enjoys running, recording music in his closet studio, reading (goal is fifty books a year), and spending quality time with his wife Jessica (a former teacher) and their two children.

3 <https://randomwordgenerator.com/>



"Miss Leslie, do you know what I'm going to be when I grow up?" asked a second-grade student one day.

"No, what?" replied his teacher.

"I'm going to be a Mexican!" stated the student.

"Oh? What makes you think that?" inquired the teacher.

"'Cause, we've been writing in cursive so much that I forget how to write in English!" declared the young student.

Source: submitted by Carolyn Martin

We were thinking up words with our new blends. One first grader offered "claps" for the *cl* blend. Teacher said, "Yes! As in 'she claps her hands.'" Another student responded, "Or . . . the house will claps in an earthquake."

Source: submitted by Martha Kornelsen

Good Times

in ANTARIKANSAS

Michael
Mast

Monday morning dawned, not bright and clear, but dark and foreboding. As I drove to school in the blinding snow, the old Chevy failed to put out enough heat to keep my breath from icing the inside of the windshield. I was filled with mixed emotions as I constantly scraped and wiped away the ice during the four-mile drive to school. Frustration was my prevailing emotion at this point. Snow days come as a rare treat in Arkansas, and a few days of vacation had looked enticing! However, due to a late start and several days off from a wave of Covid illnesses, it was decided to do all we could to continue school. So, despite a blizzard and one to two feet of snow in the forecast, school was going on as normal.

But with the frustration and disappointment also came great opportunity! Since school normally is easily canceled, we seldom get to enjoy snow as a school. I decided to capitalize on the opportunity. However, the snow was very powdery, making it impossible to build any kind of slide or fort by packing. The idea of building an igloo seemed like a good one!

The plan was to pile up a mountain of snow, cover it with ice, and carve it out. The students were enthusiastic, enjoying the snow to the utmost. They appeared with buckets, shovels, dustpans, trash-can lids, and even thirty-gallon trash cans. It was great! Some were assigned to fill, and others to carry and dump. The snow was deep, and we were able to fill buckets about as fast as we could carry them. After working all three recesses that day, we succeeded in making a pile roughly seven feet high and twelve feet across.

After the students left for the day and most of my pressing after-school work was finished, the job continued. (The cold temperatures were only supposed to stay for four or five days, so there would have to be some after-school teacher time if the plan was to succeed.) The snow took on firmness and with the use of a metal yardstick, we were able to carve and shape it.

The next day dawned at around -3°F , and when the students arrived it was ready to ice. With small pump sprayers, they started to spray a mist of water onto the frozen mound. But accumulation was very slow, and the students' enthusiasm soon waned.

Toward evening the temperature dropped and we teachers, armed with sprayers, hit it with a vengeance. The water froze

immediately as the two of us slowly revolved around the hut. In places, small holes refused to fill with ice, but by placing wet paper over them, we were able to build over them. After nearly four hours of spraying, the ice was about five-eighths inch thick.

The recesses the next day were spent inside the hut. As we burrowed deeper into the igloo, the students supplied trash can lids while I filled them and sent them back out for disposal. With a brick trowel, I was able to cut out big chunks, which were used for animated snowball fights.

For most of our students this was a one-time school experience. Our igloo didn't last long, but to be able to work together in a constructive and fun project was priceless. Was it time-consuming? Absolutely! We spent about fifty-five hours total, but you can't make good memories without investment, can you? (This major winter storm with unseasonably cold temperatures occurred in February 2021.) [TL](#)

Michael, his wife Karla, and two children live near Strawberry, Arkansas. He taught two years in Costa Rica and is currently in his third year at Strawberry Mennonite School. Aside from teaching, he enjoys outdoor recreation. "I'd live in a tent if I could. I enjoy involving my students in outdoor activities such as fishing and hunting."

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Read Aloud Day

World Read Aloud Day is February 2, 2022. It was created by LitWorld, a nonprofit organization that “aims to bring people together through stories.” Over 173 countries participate annually.

Reading on Screen vs. Print

Apparently the pandemic has resulted in children reading more, including in digital format. How does this affect retention and comprehension? An analysis of numerous studies published in the *Review of Educational Research* concluded that all else being equal, younger children especially comprehended printed storybooks better than digital storybooks. However, when the digital text was enhanced with spoken narration accompaniment, design enhancements, and in-book dictionaries, the results were mixed, and indicated some improvement in vocabulary and comprehension. The study also found that in the classroom, digital texts tended to be less effective than printed ones.

Source: Education Week, July 22, 2021

Section Questions in Social Studies Textbooks

Christian Light’s new social studies textbooks (Grades 6-8) have been developed with a few questions or exercises at the end of each section. These questions can be used in several ways. Teachers can ask the questions orally after students have read the section to determine whether students have retained the information. They can use the questions as a pop quiz following the reading of a section. A third option is to assign students to answer the questions as they read the section. Also included is a discussion question that teachers can use to generate class discussion about the text at a deeper level.

Some have asked whether using these questions and exercises could replace the use of worksheets or LightUnits. In short, “no.” Regardless of how the questions are used, they do not provide sufficient querying of the section to replace LightUnits or worksheets.



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

Ask Another

Q

Question (From Ask Another–Summer 2021): Do you insist on neatness and accuracy in penmanship? Are all students capable of it? Should I insist on neat and precise penmanship when my own isn’t exemplary? Please share what has worked for you.

A

Some schools or classrooms have neat penmanship as a high priority and have consistently neat penmanship. Other schools or classrooms don’t have neat penmanship as a high priority and don’t have consistently neat penmanship. Is this a coincidence?

Neatness in penmanship is a worthy goal. Capable students should be required to produce neat and accurate work before they are allowed to do extra activities. For most other students it takes regular teacher reinforcement and a good bit of time. Teachers should prioritize neat and accurate penmanship, especially if they have time to do so. To do otherwise is to promote mediocrity.

When doing penmanship lessons, try to have all students show neatness and accuracy within the range of their talent. Every student can slow down enough to set their letters on the lines and form them correctly. The teacher can usually discern if the student took their time to be careful or if they sped through the lesson, even if talents vary. Require the best from your students.

Are all students capable of neat and accurate penmanship? Most students should be capable of producing neat and legible work, but not all are gifted alike. Neatness varies to some degree from child to child.

What if the teacher doesn’t have neat handwriting? Students should at least observe the teacher putting effort into neat and accurate handwriting. If you expect neat work from them and then scrawl their grade, write sloppy comments on their papers, or scribble on the whiteboard, you are not being consistent.

What are some things that work? As with any incentive, teachers should find what works for their particular students. One year many of my first graders were motivated by posting their neat papers on the board under the heading “Who has neat work?” For a few of them, erasing their work and redoing it when it became too sloppy helped. Recognizing effort put into neat work with a verbal or written comment always helps. Anything you do, though, will require investing the time and energy into maintaining the effort. Neatness, as a habit, rarely happens without cultivating and prioritizing it.

- Carolyn Martin and LightLines staff

Next question: *What are some helpful tips for dealing with a daydreaming student?*

Please send your responses to LightLines by January 5, 2022 [📧](#)

Answers will appear in the Summer 2022 issue of LightLines.

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