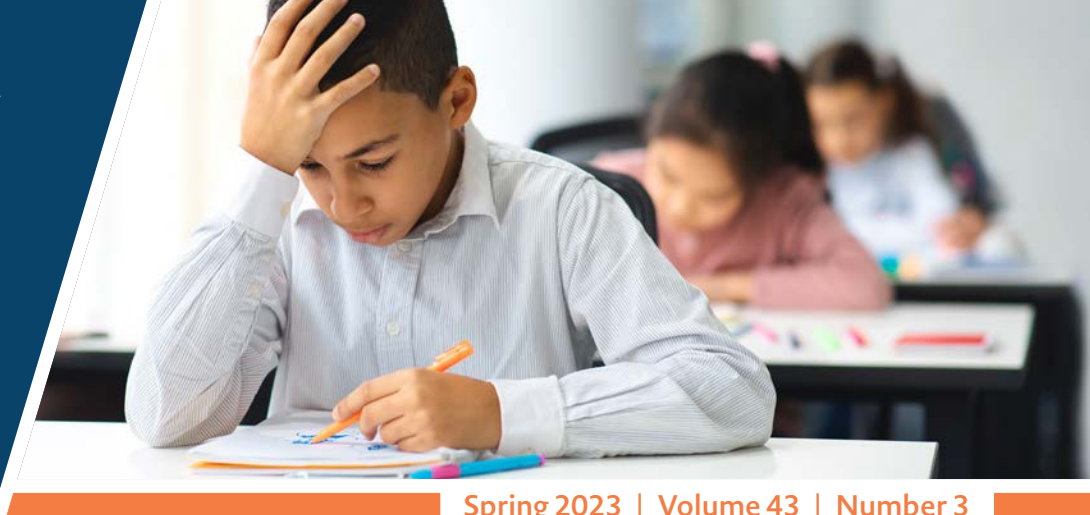


SCHOOL LIGHT LINES



CHRISTIAN LIGHT
EDUCATION



Spring 2023 | Volume 43 | Number 3

Teaching is filled with countless joys, too often unnoticed by us teachers, I believe. Here is another joy I never grow tired of (Part 3 of 4).

Joys of Teaching: Watching God's Principles at Work | Joe Beiler

Joy #3: Watching God's established principles at work from a unique perspective.

Consider the purging effect of discipline.

The Bible clearly teaches about discipline and how to nurture children entrusted to our care. Perhaps we don't even think twice about how an irritable child becomes happy again after loving discipline. We take for granted the transforming results of discipline.

But have you ever paused to wonder why discipline works? How does a guilty, sulking child find relief in firm discipline? How is it that the student who has been pushing the boundaries all morning is content and cooperative in the afternoon? How does discipline remove the guilt and bring the clear expression back to the offender's face? I cannot explain it—and I love it that way.

As counterintuitive as discipline may seem for the teacher who is loathe to use it, it works. It seems God has established a principle that has miraculous results, and teachers get to see it at work firsthand.

If you tell a friend about a stressful week at school and how relationships can so easily turn thorny, you might get a reply like this: "Well, that's why I am a carpenter (or a cleaning maid or a

farmer). My building (or house or cow) doesn't talk back to me."

Fine. I understand that. But neither does your building go from being unruly one hour to being penitent the next. Nor does your job ever get tempted—overwhelmingly tempted—to pull the inviting braid dangling in the next seat. And then he pauses with one hand in midair, glances your way with a sheepish grin, and thoughtfully pulls his hand back. I just witnessed another miracle firsthand. Ah, I love that about my job!

Or how about the Golden Rule?

Mark, a third-grader, comes to your desk after lunch. His eyes are brimming with tears and his lower lip barely under control. It doesn't take long for the story to spill out. It turns out that Mark's peers have older siblings who have taught them how to play softball. Mark does not. It should not be such a big deal, but it seems he always strikes out or gets out at first. To make matters worse, the opposing team depends on him to be an easy out, and Mark feels like a failure. To you the problem seems small. To Mark it's enormous.

Well, you could call a quick meeting of the boys and explain the situation as it appears to Mark. A lecture on kindness may be



A Call to Collaborate

The success of a special ed program depends largely on effective collaboration.

Page 2



Comprehending What We Read

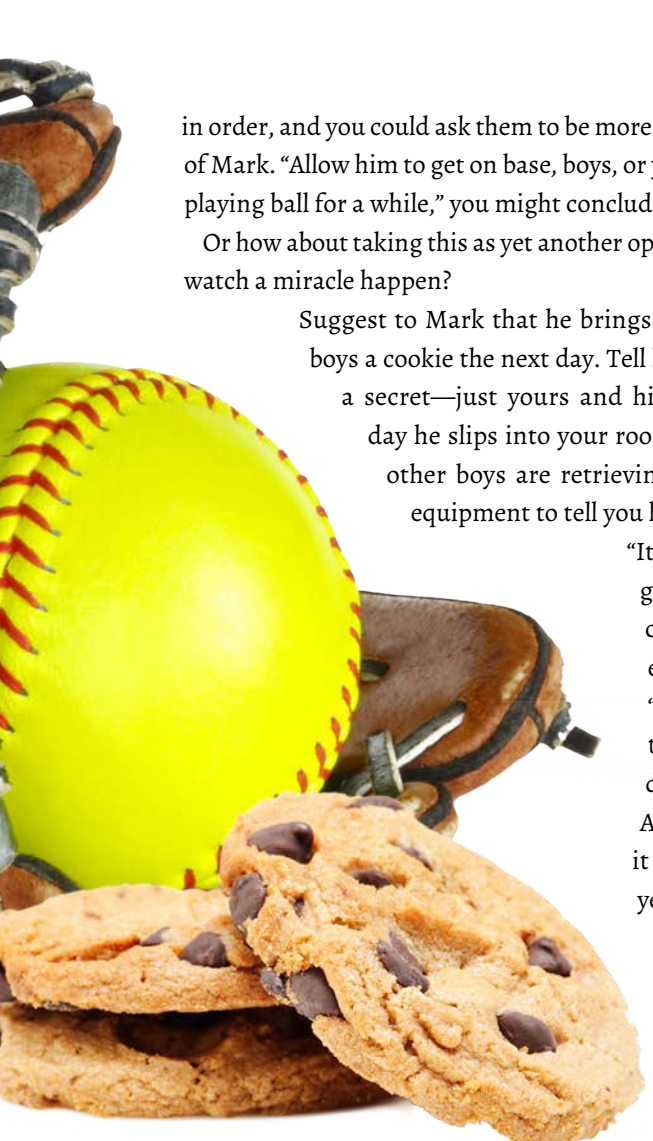
Reading words is good, but how well do we understand them?

Page 10

Also in this issue:

Dear Mr. Wood	4
Temple Grandin – Teaching Without Cues	5

The Sailing Rocks of Death Valley	6
Ask Another	12



in order, and you could ask them to be more considerate of Mark. “Allow him to get on base, boys, or you can quit playing ball for a while,” you might conclude.

Or how about taking this as yet another opportunity to watch a miracle happen?

Suggest to Mark that he brings each of the boys a cookie the next day. Tell him that it’s a secret—just yours and his. The next day he slips into your room while the other boys are retrieving their ball equipment to tell you how it went.

“It was so fun giving the cookies!” he exclaims.

“Do you think I could do it again?”

And he does it again and yet again.

Next thing you know other students are bringing small treats for each other. It seems deeds of kindness are raining everywhere. Even the big boys start bringing treats.

And what about the playground behavior? Well, the fiercely competitive spirit is in jeopardy. The flood of kindness has all but extinguished any remaining vestiges of meanness and anger. Competition is friendly now, and the same boys who once used Mark as their easy out are coaching and cajoling and cheering him on. His swing is still bad, and he still makes outs. But as things currently stand, one of these days he will make it to first base of his own accord.

And now I have just shown my hand again. I’m not sure why, but whenever I observe one of these miracles, I get this prickly feeling behind my eyes and a flood of warmth in my heart and I can’t wait to come back tomorrow to see another one. [11](#)

Joe lives with his wife and three children in Fairland, Oklahoma. He taught seven years and is currently serving as the upper-grade teacher/principal at Grand Lake Mennonite School. His passion is relationships—God, wife and family, church family, students—although he will go out of the way for soft vanilla ice-cream cones and carefully brewed coffee. He appreciates a well-researched book and believes that everything he needs to know is in a book somewhere.

The second of three articles on relating to children or students with special needs

A Call to Collaborate | Lynita Lauver

When I agreed to teach, I was excited to work with children. Visions of happy days, new curriculum, a cheery classroom, smiling students, children’s books, and students’ work adorned with bright stickers filled my mind. Then I started teaching . . . and I quickly learned that there is much more to teaching. Teaching is very rewarding but can also be quite challenging.

One challenge of teaching is working together effectively. A special ed teacher may face this challenge on a new level. This teacher often works more directly with a child’s academic, emotional, and behavioral needs than the homeroom teacher. She is the one who often knows the student best on a school level. She needs to maintain close communication with the student’s parents and know their goals for their child. In most cases, she

must also work with her students’ homeroom teachers. Many homeroom teachers willingly go the extra mile to be inclusive. The special ed teacher must work under her administrator and school board. How can each of these, with their diverse perspectives and goals, work together for the good of a child and his needs?

I love the word *collaborate*. It simply means “to labor together.” This word tells me I am not alone; I have support. This knowledge empowers me to do my job well. An African proverb says, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Personalities differ. Some people enjoy working on their own and getting the job done, but effective teaching rarely works this way. While collaboration is not always the easiest option, in most cases it is the most effective. Without the input of

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

—African proverb

others, we are confined to our own perspectives. Even an experienced teacher needs advice from others.

One of the core principles of an effective team is trust. *A team is not a group of people who work together. It is a group of people who trust each other.* —Simon Sinek. I am often amazed how grace flows easily when there is trust that each member of the team has a student's best interest in mind. No one is perfect, and there will be times when mistakes are made.

The relationship between a special ed teacher and her student's parents can be a joy. Connection becomes strong when everyone works together closely. I have a notebook for each student, and it goes to and from school with them daily. Most parents are happy for a quick report so that they know how their child functioned in school. The notebook can also inform the teacher of any evening or morning events that might affect the day. It is beneficial to have written records to track the ups and downs. I try to talk to their parents often to keep them updated. This is important for parents and teachers to maintain consistency. Some students will try to manipulate authority. Frequent communication can help bring security to the child in knowing that his parents' and teacher's expectations are the same.

A homeroom teacher takes on added responsibility by including a child with special needs. The collaborative effort between teachers can be a blessing to all. There is excellent opportunity here to teach classmates how to relate to your student. I love relating to my students' classmates and being involved in their

homerooms. Friction between teachers is a very real possibility when sharing a student. Homeroom teachers can sometimes be at a loss when dealing with special needs. They might not understand a student's needs and may try to force the special-needs child into their classroom mold. Be an advocate for your student. Both teachers need a lot of flexibility. I tend to be very scheduled and find it challenging to work with an unscheduled homeroom teacher. Give the homeroom teacher the grace to take extra time if needed. However, communication between the two teachers is huge, and it is easier to give grace when communication happens often. Respect each other's schedules. Inform each other of extra activities ahead of time. Communicate often. Know how your student is doing and be very consistent in working on the same issues.

I have been blessed with good principals who can hear me out and give advice. The principal gets the raw facts of school life and is more aware of the needs. I try to keep him informed of how things are going so that there are no surprises. The school board should be informed of the general progress of the special ed program. However, be cautious about sharing the details of students' individual challenges, backgrounds, and struggles unless the board member is fairly involved in daily school life. Board members, don't shy away from special-needs education. Be informed. Visit the special ed classroom. See the students as children with purpose and potential. Know what the teacher is doing and support her.

Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much. —Helen Keller
Each member is responsible for the effectiveness of the team, so put your energy into filling your role. There is fresh energy and hope in laboring collaboratively. ■

Lynita is from Lebanon, Pennsylvania, and is in her tenth year of teaching special ed at Myerstown Mennonite School. Besides teaching she loves shopping for and reading books, spending time with family, camping, and most of all—anything with children.





A letter of appreciation, a little late, to a teacher who made a difference.

Dear Mr. Wood | Deana Swanson

Dear Mr. Wood,
You may not remember me. My name was Deana Forester, and I was in your junior-high English class during the 1979-1980 school year. I was pretty quiet and sat in the back of the room. Ours was a small class with mostly boys who enjoyed sports. I am writing to say thank you, because that class, and more specifically you as a teacher, changed my life in a very positive way.

I had never thought of myself as a writer until I was in your class. Do you remember all those journal writing assignments you gave us? At first I was a bit intimidated by them, but I grew to love them and filled several notebooks that year because of your class. That year, I began to love writing. Thank you for all those journal assignments, and for allowing us to write about whatever we wanted to.

I was also impressed by your calm responses to some of the things that happened during class. I remember you asking us the first day to call you Mr. Wood and not Mr. Woods, because, as you explained, there was only one of you. You always answered students politely, even when some repeatedly called you Mr. Woods on purpose. Do you remember the time that a boy dropped a desk out of your second-story window? You just looked out the window and kept on teaching, not giving him the response he wanted.

One of the changing points in my life came the next year, my senior year, when I was placed in the advanced honors English class. I protested and went to the school counselor to ask to be put into a regular class. When I asked her why I was put into that class, she said it was because you recommended that I be put there. I decided that if you thought that much of me, I would try it. You helped to boost my confidence and morale at a time when


I really needed it, and I began to sincerely enjoy academics for the first time because someone—you—thought I was good at it. That made a huge difference in my life.

I went on to write articles in the school newspaper my senior year, and later studied English so that I could be a teacher. I have taught for thirteen years and hope to teach for many more. And one of my favorite activities is writing—something I began to love the year I was in your class. I'm not sure if any of this would have happened if you had not been my teacher.

So, I want to sincerely thank you. Thank you for teaching English to a challenging group of students. Thanks for making us write. Thanks for your calm, steady example. And thanks for recommending that I be placed in that honors English class. It changed my life.

Sincerely,

Deana

Author's note: After I had written the basis of this letter, I was trying to find Mr. Wood's address and instead found his obituary. He died in 2017 at the age of 80. I regret that I hadn't written this sooner so that he could have read it. *Teachers, which students in your classes need encouragement, a tough assignment or two, and a good example?* 

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.

Temple Grandin – Teaching Without Cues | Angela Freed

Educators constantly read the cues of how their teaching is coming across: wiggling means boredom, glazed eyes mean confusion, and rapt attention means learning. Seeing these signals, we automatically alter our teaching style, change our posture, or vary our tone so that we teach effectively. But how does Temple Grandin, whose autism blocks recognition of social signals, succeed as a professor?

Temple Grandin never noticed that her parents teetered on the verge of divorce. She never caught on that her sister tiptoed around her to avoid dealing with Temple's autistic traits. In school, Temple watched others cycle through a mysterious rhythm—they talked together, everyone laughed, they went back to chatting, everyone laughed. Then, suddenly, the group scattered. When she contributed to a group conversation, the others went silent. She knew they scattered much sooner than they usually did. *How do people know when to do what?* Temple wondered.

It worried Temple's mother that her daughter didn't track like a normal child. She didn't like smiles or hugs. She didn't laugh at jokes. She didn't care about someone who was crying.

Temple's mother hired a nanny who had helped another child with similar problems. She showed and explained to three-year-old Temple things most children pick up on their own. "Crying

means that someone is hurting inside, just like a cut hurts you on the outside," she would say. "Getting hit by a car will flatten you out, just like this squirrel lying here on the road."

Temple needed to see to understand.

Because she thought in pictures, these visuals her nanny used made sense; emotions did not. When a classmate asked, "Do you like my dress?" Temple answered honestly, "It makes you look fat." Her classmate's facial expression didn't register as *wounded* to Temple. Neither did she understand how emotions could be connected to clothes. So Temple's mother helped her visualize a box called Rude Honesty. She taught Temple what to put in it, giving her specific examples of times to keep her mouth shut.

But not everything fit into the Rude Honesty box. Keeping your spot while waiting in line seemed extremely important to others, and it didn't have anything to do with talking. So Temple created another category called Courtesy Rules—the stuff that kept people from getting angry. When she discovered other unspoken social rules, she made more mental boxes: Really Bad Things (murder), Illegal But Not Bad (slight speeding), and Sins Against the System (using the men's restroom).

Continued on page 8.

Autism Statistics and Facts

- 1 in 27 boys are identified with autism
- 1 in 116 girls are identified with autism
- Boys are four times more likely to be diagnosed with autism than girls.
- Most children were still being diagnosed after age 4, although autism can be reliably diagnosed as early as age 2.
- Autism affects all ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Minority groups tend to be diagnosed later and less often.
- Early intervention affords the best opportunity to support healthy development and deliver benefits across the lifespan.
- There is no medical detection for autism.
- An estimated 40 percent of people with autism are nonverbal.
- 31 percent of children with ASD (autism spectrum disorder) have an intellectual disability (intelligence quotient [IQ] <70), 25 percent are in the borderline range (IQ 71–85), and 44 percent have IQ scores in the average to above average range (i.e. IQ >85).
- Nearly half of those with autism wander or bolt from safety.
- Nearly 28 percent of 8-year-olds with ASD have self-injurious behaviors. Head banging, arm biting, and skin scratching are among the most common.
- Drowning remains a leading cause of death for children with autism and accounts for approximately 90 percent of deaths associated with wandering or bolting by those age 14 and younger.
- Research indicates that genetics are involved in the vast majority of cases.
- Children born to older parents are at a higher risk for having autism.
- Over the last two decades, extensive research has focused on whether there is any link between childhood vaccinations and autism. The results of this research are clear: Vaccines do not cause autism.

Source: Compiled from autismspeaks.org

The Sailing Rocks of Death Valley

Push. Grunt. Slip. Push. Grunt. Imagine the force (and the traction) it would take to move a 500-pound rock on a slick muddy surface. Let's go to Death Valley National Park in California to explore another nature mystery—sailing rocks.

Death Valley is famous as the hottest place on earth and the driest place in North America. The world record high temperature of 134°F (57°C) was recorded there in 1913.

Summer temperatures frequently top 120°F (49°C) in the shade.

In contrast, temperatures in winter and spring

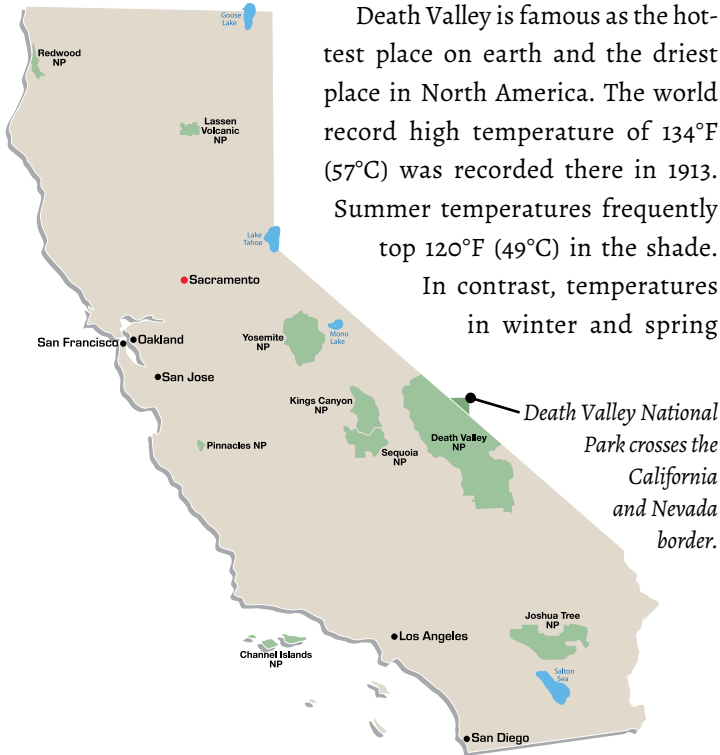
are pleasant with cool nights that occasionally reach freezing. (It was 61 degrees when I checked on December 2, 2022.)

On the northwest side of Death Valley National Park is Racetrack **Playa**, a remote dry (most times) lake bed flanked by mountains on the east and the west. Racetrack Playa is nearly 4,000 feet above sea level and is about 2.7 square miles in area. The playa is exceptionally flat and level and is littered with hundreds of rocks—some weighing as much as 700 pounds (320 kilograms)—scattered across the flat, dry cracked surface of this lake bed.

During periods of rain in the surrounding mountains, water washes down and drains into the playa, forming a shallow, short-lived **endorheic** lake. The thin **veneer** of water usually evaporates quickly, leaving behind a temporary thin layer of soft, slick mud.

So what's the mystery here? The mystery is—those rocks move! It is obvious by the trails they inscribe across the playa. They do it without human, animal, or machine intervention. Even a nonscientist knows that it takes significant force to move such rocks for any distance. Some of them have been recorded moving at 16 feet (5 meters) per minute!

Until 2013 these sailing rocks had been a mystery, and even now the agreed-upon explanation seems simplistic and fantastic. Researchers had, for some time, **hypothesized** that just-right



weather conditions, perhaps gale-force winds or large ice floes had something to do with this **phenomenon**. Researchers used a variety of means including GPS and time-lapse photography to document the movement of these stones. So there was no doubt that they moved. But how?

Finally in 2013 someone was there when it happened. When cousins Richard and James Norris, researchers from California, arrived to check their instruments, they found a large ice-encrusted pond covering about a third of the playa. After camping several days, on the morning of December 20 they decided to sit at the southern end of the playa to observe. “It was a beautiful sunny day, and there began to be rippled melt pools in front of us,” Richard Norris said. “At 11:37 a.m., very abruptly, there was a pop-pop-crackle all over the place in front of us—and I said to my cousin, ‘This is it.’”

They watched as the layers of thin ice (approximately 1/8" thick) began moving past the rocks and shoving them gently. The rocks began to inch along, but their pace was too slow to spot by eye. But when the ice had all melted, there were freshly formed trails that indicated at least sixty rocks had moved. On January 9, 2014, James Norris returned to the playa and was able to video the moving rocks. “By the end of the winter, the farthest-moving rock had traveled 735 feet (224 meters)!”

Apparently, a balance of specific conditions is needed for these rocks to sail: a flooded surface, a thin layer of clay, cold temperatures to create thin ice, warming temperatures causing ice breakup, and a breeze.

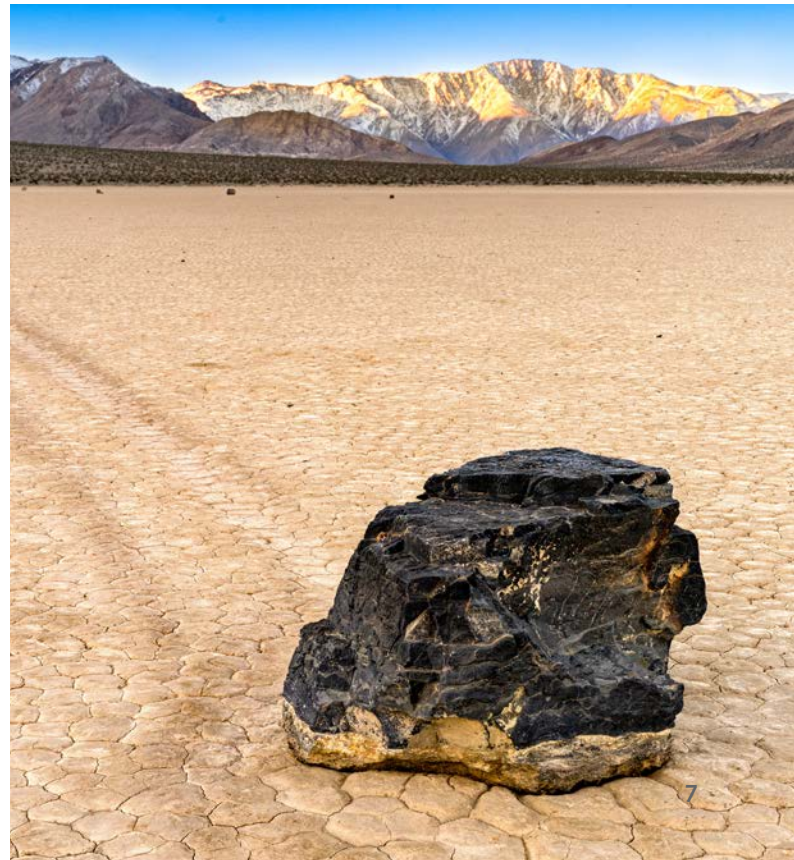
Learning Box

- Have students expand their vocabulary by looking up the pronunciations and definitions of the words in bold.
- Our article says temperatures reach 120° F in the shade. Consider and research where one might find shade. Discuss the dangers of being in the summer heat of Death Valley.
- Discuss the plausibility of ice shove being the force behind the sailing rocks.

Why was this mystery not solved before 2013? Two simple reasons: It doesn't happen very often, and no one had been there when it happened (until 2013). So, perhaps the mystery has been solved, but the wonder remains. How can ice a few millimeters thick push these large rocks with only light winds? This mysterious powerful force is now called “ice shove.” One scientist trying to explain it said, “Eventually you're going to get enough force on the pile of ice behind the rocks to be able to move them.” And that with only light winds and ice so thin you can break it between two fingers? Amazing. [11](#)

– Ken Kauffman

Sources: <https://www.nationalparks.org/connect/blog/sailing-stones-death-valley>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sailing_stones
<https://www.nps.gov/deva/planyourvisit/the-racetrack.htm>
<https://www.nature.com/articles/nature.2014.15773>



Temple needed a strong *why* for learning social cues.

Temple was learning what *not* to do, but not what she *should* do. By the time she reached her teens, she hungered for connection. So she began playing pranks on her classmates. First, her vivid imagination produced a series of images, showing her exactly how the joke would pan out. *If I rig the cord of the venetian blinds to that spot on the desk lid, the blinds will fall with a crash when someone opens the desk.* And they did, exactly as Temple had envisioned it, causing a hilarious commotion. Temple says today, “Those tricks enabled me to penetrate others’ world, without me having to interact with them.” But most people didn’t appreciate this kind of penetration, and the school eventually expelled Temple. Her parents sent her to a boarding school that educated challenged children. Here, Temple fell in love with animals. They didn’t use social cues to connect. They, too, thought in pictures. Temple loved working with the school’s horses. She could control the hot-tempered and wild ones; she could ride those that bit and kicked. She noticed the same visual details the horses noticed, especially details that had changed from the normal—a hay bale slightly out of place, a hat on a fence post, a wheelbarrow set at a different angle. She could correct these small changes to calm the horses’ fear before it turned to panic.

Temple’s science teacher noticed her talent of understanding animals, and told her, “If you become a scientist, you could make a career of working with animals. And you can start right now. Use scientific experiments to test your theories of how animals see the world.” Suddenly, Temple had a powerful incentive to interact well with teachers and classmates. She had found her niche. “Animals saved me,” she says.

Temple went to college to get her PhD in animal-behavior research. She continued adding to her library of visual images and the emotions that others attached to them. She learned that when someone crosses their arms and stiffens, they are feeling invaded and defensive; when they ignore you, they want to be left alone; and when they move away from you, they want you to give them more space.

Temple needed to teach herself how to build connections.

By the time Temple graduated, she was learning by trial and error to connect with a world she couldn’t understand. To apply for a job, she make the first contact by telephone so she didn’t have to deal with complex social signals. Then she would send the company examples of what she could do before they had to come face-to-face “with my nerdy self.” Often she would be hired, sight unseen.

She also began to specifically educate herself how to be tactful and diplomatic. She subscribed to the *Wall Street Journal* and

read about business dealings and international negotiations. Then she used those as models while she worked for the companies who hired her.

It worked. Temple has become one of a tiny handful of experts who can make animals calm and easy to handle by designing walkways and pens that don’t frighten them, creating efficient workflow for huge processing plants. By now, half the beef cattle in the United States and Canada are processed in facilities that she has designed.

Temple needs to prepare extensively for her classes and talks.

Temple learned, at forty years of age, that most people do not think in pictures, so she began to use projections to show listeners the images she’s lecturing about. When she learned that she panics at unexpected questions in question-and-answer periods, she began to “run mental video stimulations of all the different things people might ask” as part of her preparation. When she learned, at fifty years of age, that people roll their eyes and sigh to signal boredom with her teaching, she began to involve students in her projects to draw them more deeply into the class.

Temple has accepted her autism and embraced it.

“If I could snap my fingers and be non-autistic,” she says, “I wouldn’t do it. It’s part of who I am.” [\[1\]](#)

Sources: *Thinking in Pictures, My Life With Autism*, Temple Grandin. Copyright 1995, 2006 by Temple Grandin. Published by Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, NY.

Temple Grandin, How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World, Sy Montgomery. Text Copyright 2012 by Sy Montgomery, Foreword Copyright 2012 by Temple Grandin. Published by Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 3 Park Ave, 19th Floor, New York, NY, 10016.

The Way I See it, A Personal Look at Autism & Asperger's, Temple Grandin. Copyright 2011 by Temple Grandin. Published by Future Horizons, Inc., 721 W Abram St. Arlington, TX, 76013.

Angela found schooling difficult, so a lifework of education was not her dream. It still shocks her that she taught for ten years—eight in traditional classrooms and two in ESL environments—and worked for two curriculum publishers, including Christian Light currently. She lives in northern Utah, and teaches in a tiny elementary church school. Now that education is part of her blood, she dreams of starting a vacation Bible school for the children of her town. When she is not teaching or writing or dreaming, she enjoys exploring Utah's canyons and deserts with her friends.



Pi. Pie?

March 14 is Pi Day, celebrating the symbol (π) or 3.14, which roughly denotes the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. Here are a few fun facts about pi.

- The symbol for pi (π) has been in use for over 300 years. The symbol was introduced in 1706 by William Jones, a Welsh mathematician. Before then it was simply defined as “the quantity which when the diameter is multiplied by it, yields the circumference.”
- By 1665, Isaac Newton had calculated pi to 16 decimal places. In the early 1700s Thomas Lagney calculated 127 decimal places of pi, reaching a new record. In the second half of the twentieth century, the number of digits of pi calculated by an early computer increased to 500,000. In 2017 all records were broken when a Swiss scientist computed more than 22 trillion digits of pi. The calculation took a computer with 24 hard drives, working nonstop for 105 days, to make that calculation.
- People in Egypt believed that the pyramids of Giza were built on the principles of pi. The vertical height of the pyramids have the same relationship with the perimeter of their base as the relationship between a circle's radius and its circumference.
- *Piphilology* is the practice of memorizing large numbers of digits of π . The *Guinness Book of World Records* recognizes Rajveer Meen as the world champion “piphilologist.” On March 21, 2015, when he was 21 years old, Meena recited pi to 70,000 places past the decimal point. To prove his powers of memory, he was blindfolded. It took him more than nine hours.
- Play Buffon's Needles. You'll need a large sheet of paper, at least thirty toothpicks, a ruler, and a pen. Using a toothpick to indicate the distance between them, draw a series of parallel lines on your paper. Then throw the toothpicks onto the paper at random. Take away any toothpicks that are only partially on the paper, or that didn't land on the paper at all. Count how many are left on the paper. Also, count how many cross a line. Divide



the total number of toothpicks by the line-crossing toothpicks. Now multiply by two, and you should get pi!

- Pi Day is often celebrated with pies, which is appropriate, not only because *pi* and *pie* are homophones, but also because pies are circles, with circumference and diameter! So, have yourself some pi pie on Pi Day.

Source: compiled from various online sources

Achievement Test Notice

Christian Light's permission to reprint CAT 70 ended June 2022. We still have a good stock of CAT 70 items, but it may be wise to consider your needs over the next number of years and order accordingly.

Introductory Horticulture Discontinued

The *Introductory Horticulture* course is being discontinued. Schools are encouraged to stock up on the accompanying student or teacher materials if they plan to continue using this course in coming years.

Missouri School District Brings Back Corporal Punishment

The Cassville (Public) School District in Barry County, Missouri, announced it will reinstate spanking in school this term after pressure from parents to do so. Parents were notified that the school board decided to allow spanking, but only as a last resort and with written permission from the parents. The district superintendent described Cassville as a “very traditional community in southwest Missouri” and said parents have long expressed frustration that the district was not allowed to apply corporal punishment. Under the new policy paddling will only be administered by the principal, in the presence of a witness, and never in the presence of other students. The new policy reads “When it becomes necessary to use corporal punishment, it shall be administered so that there can be no chance of bodily harm.” Corporal punishment in schools was ruled constitutional by the Supreme Court in 1977, with the decision left up to the states. Missouri is one of nineteen states that still allow the practice.

Source: USA Today

Christopher Dock (1698-1771), on Punishing Slow or Dull Learners

“[Punishment] is after all, given only for correction, not for harm. Experience in teaching proves that a child that is slow in learning is harmed rather than helped when he is punished severely, whether with words or with the rod. If such a child is to be corrected, it must be done by other means. Likewise, a child that is dull is more harmed than helped by blows.”

Source: Christopher Dock, *Colonial Schoolmaster* by Gerald C. Studer. page 293

Comprehending What We Read | Part 1 | Carolyn Martin, Joyce Beachy

Reading comprehension is the product of two components: word recognition and language comprehension. If either component is missing, a student will not comprehend what he is reading. Comprehension is not the same as knowing what a word says. A student can say *paj* without attaching any meaning to it. Comprehension is about understanding. This article outlines what students need for reading comprehension and looks at strategies good readers use to comprehend text.

What do students need for comprehension?

Comprehension does not only involve written text. Many of the foundational skills of comprehension come from beyond the scope of printed text. Four things that contribute to reading comprehension are fluency, a good vocabulary, background knowledge, and cognitive interactions with the text.

First, fluency—the ability to decode words automatically—is necessary. Slow, halting reading keeps students from connecting words into meaningful phrases and understanding the text. Students who lack fluency will most likely struggle to comprehend printed text, even though they may easily comprehend text that is read to them.

Second, knowing the vocabulary of the text contributes to comprehension. When students encounter too many unfamiliar words in a text, they struggle to make sense of it. Good readers use context clues to help them understand unfamiliar words, but some students need to be taught this strategy.

Third, background knowledge, or knowledge gained previously, helps readers make sense of text. Our ability to

comprehend depends on learning from the world around us and connecting new information to what we already know. A child of the tropics who has never experienced cold and snow or seen pictures of it will have a limited understanding of a story set in the Far North.

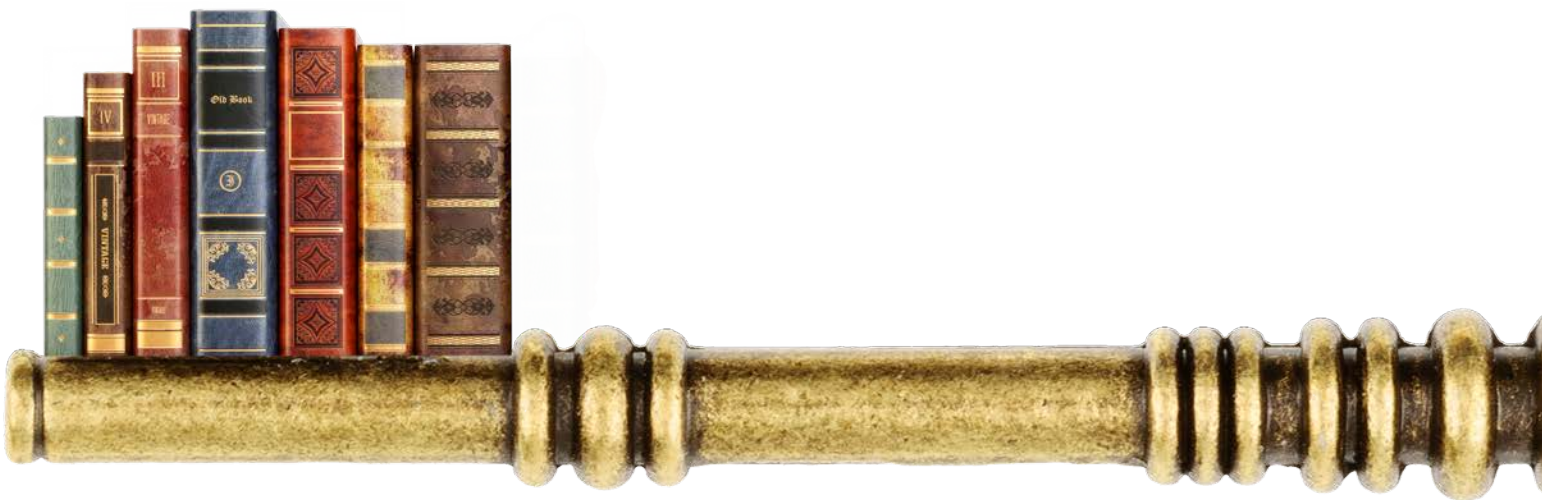
Fourth, readers need to cognitively interact with text to understand what they are reading. This includes visualizing what they are reading, relating it to what they know, and thinking ahead to what they don't know. If students do not interact with the text, they might read words without thinking about the meaning.

What strategies do good readers use to comprehend text?

Good readers use various strategies to interact with and comprehend text they are reading, even though they often do it subconsciously. Build on these strategies by encouraging students to use the ones they already know and teaching the ones they are weak in. This article gives an overview of the strategies, and the next article will give more specific ways to teach them.

Good readers preview the text. They notice the title and look at the illustrations. They make subconscious predictions about what they will read. They may scan the text for a few key points. They read headings of articles and blurbs on the backs of books. This helps them understand what they will be reading. Use this strategy with students before you assign them to read a text.

Good readers ask questions of the text. They might not consciously ask questions, but they look for information to make sense of what is happening. Who are the characters? What is the main point? Why did things happen as they did? How does one part



of the text connect with another part? How does this statement fit the whole? Before you start a lesson, help your students ask questions about what they should learn from the text.

Good readers make predictions. They predict what may come next and then check if they were right. Again, they often do this automatically. Even when reading informative text, good readers form ideas about what they will learn next and then check to see if they were right. As your students read, ask them to pause and predict what the outcome might be. Then after they read further, have them evaluate their predictions. Is that what really happened?

Good readers relate text to prior information. They connect it to other things they have learned. Help students with this strategy by providing information they may not know. A story set in a medieval monastery may need some explanation about monks, the order of their services, and some vocabulary terms. Filling in background information can help boost students' comprehension tremendously.

Good readers infer meaning from the text. They “read between the lines” and use prior knowledge to make inferences about what is happening in the text. For example, students might read that Bobby picks up his lunch box, slings his backpack over his shoulder, and goes out the door. The writer does not say so, but students can infer that Bobby is going to school.

Good readers form mental images as they read. They use their mind's eye to visualize story scenes. In my first-grade class, we call it “making a video in our heads.” Students imagine the girl with a sunbonnet and pigtails walking down the dusty path and visualize the boy in overalls fishing by the stream. As you read a story together, describe what you visualize. Providing illustrations or photographs for unfamiliar details can help students know what to visualize.

Good readers can summarize a text and sequence its main ideas. They sort out the important points without becoming bogged down with the details. They get the facts in correct order. The ability to distinguish main points from interesting details takes some time to develop. Encourage this skill by having students give a brief oral outline of what they just read. Help them separate main points from details.

Good readers monitor their understanding as they read. If something doesn't make sense, they figure out where they went wrong. Sometimes this means correcting a word they just read. Sometimes it means scanning ahead to see if the text will give more information on what they don't understand. You can help students with this strategy by encouraging them to find and correct their mistakes.

Is comprehension just for reading?

Reading comprehension deals specifically with printed text. But the ability to comprehend goes beyond printed material. Students also need to comprehend the world around them and make sense of the information they encounter through their various senses. Building comprehension is not just a task for reading class. Teachers can build comprehension through the experiences they give their students and the stories they share. Parents also broaden their children's base of knowledge and thus their comprehension by the activities and experiences they expose them to. Traveling, visiting with grandparents, exploring the woods, learning how things work, and reading good books all build background knowledge.

This article has laid the foundation for what reading comprehension is. In the next article we will look at ways teachers can help students build reading comprehension skills—not only in reading class but in other text-based subjects as well. ■



Carolyn Martin has taught first grade at Hickory Hollow Christian School in Dayton, Virginia, for the past thirty years. She enjoys seeing the enthusiasm of young learners as step-by-step they learn about the printed word, and their enjoyment of simple things such as watching a butterfly hatch. Outside of school she enjoys learning about other times and places, photography and design, and reading good books.

Joyce Beachy lives in Stuarts Draft, Virginia, where she taught school for four years. Since 2011, she has been employed at Christian Light, where she writes curriculum, edits, and proofreads. She enjoys discussing literature, language, and ideas about life.



"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

Question (appeared in Fall 2022 LightLines):

How can I help my students appreciate each other's talents? We have some competition on the playground and in the classroom, causing sensitivities and hurts because others can do it better.

— submitted at a fall educators workshop

Two scripture imperatives come to mind: "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." (Romans 12:15) and "esteem other better than themselves." (Philippians 2:3). Putting others first involves good sportsmanship from everyone—the winners and the losers. Some practical ways to address poor sportsmanship are devotionals, good stories, private talks with individual students, discussion with parents, and perhaps most importantly—full-time monitoring of playtime by teachers who play with students.

—LightLines staff

What is sportsmanship, and how does it relate to our activities in school? One definition of sportsmanship is "fair mindedness." Sportsmanship is a lot more than playing fairly. It is an attitude of the heart that will exemplify Christian conduct on the playground and in the classroom. It must come from a heart of love and humility toward fellow students. It must be taught; however, our teaching will be most effective if it is observed in the lives of teachers, parents, and older students.

Sportsmanship has largely disappeared from the American scene. In contemporary sports, it is often more important to win than it is to play fairly. Does this affect our Christian schools? Unfortunately it seems we observe the effects of a pleasure-mad world even in our Christian schools. Why? Because some have misplaced values and put too much emphasis on sports and winning and have lost the sense of sportsmanship.

How do we teach sportsmanship? The place to start teaching sportsmanship is long before children come to school. It must be a priority in the home or it will not be practiced at school. Parents must instill in their children at a very early age a love of playing and exercise without an emphasis on winning.

But, what can we do in the school? The most important thing we can do is simply and consistently apply the Golden Rule. Jesus surely had our best in mind when He admonished us to treat others as we would like to be treated. If we follow His attitude and example as recorded in Philippians 2:3-5, we will be able to teach good sportsmanship. If we do nothing through strife or vainglory, if we esteem the other players better than ourselves, if we look out for the needs of others, and if we think as Jesus thought, we will have learned the virtue of sportsmanship.

—excerpted and adapted from Teaching Sportsmanship, LightLines, March 1994

Next question: "Advice for New Teachers." In seven words or less share advice, lessons you've learned, or words of wisdom for new teachers. We'll print your submission in the Fall 2023 issue of LightLines (without names.)

Please send in your piece of advice to lightlines@christianlight.org, fax them to 540-433-8896, or mail them to LightLines, P.O. Box 1212, Harrisonburg, VA 22803 by April 10. [📧](#)

LightLines is published four times each year by Christian Light, P.O. Box 1212, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22803-1212. (540) 434-0768. Ken Kauffman, editor.

Two copies of LightLines are sent free to schools who are active Christian Light curriculum customers. Other schools and individuals may request a free subscription. To request a subscription, or to change mailing addresses or quantities received, call (800) 776-0478 or email subscribe.lightlines@christianlight.org. LightLines is also available by email. Please indicate your preference when subscribing.

Copyright © 2022 Christian Light Publications Inc. For permission to reproduce any material in this publication, contact us at the above address. Comments and materials being submitted for publication can be mailed to LightLines editor, P.O. Box 1212, Harrisonburg, VA, 22803-1212, faxed to (540) 433-8896, or emailed to lightlines@christianlight.org.

Photo Credits—The image in the thumbnail for 'A Call to Collaborate' on page 1 and at the bottom of page 3, and the image in the header of Ask Another on page 12 are © Christian Light Publications, Inc. All other photos are a courtesy of Getty Images unless otherwise noted.