

Introduction

One of my first recollections of school was in a first grade class in Westlake, California. I sat in the class feeling frustrated and wondering what was wrong with me. Yes, at the young age of six, I already knew that I was not learning like the other students in the class. The teacher put the following three letters on the blackboard (they were really black in the 50's) S—A—W. Everyone in the class seemed to know that S—A—W was the word "saw", but to me it was just S—A—W. The pain I felt was terrible and I remember it fifty-six years later. You had to know the word saw if you were going to get one of the Dick and Jane books. All the other students were excited but I wanted to cry. I did not understand how they knew what S—A—W was.

Elementary school did not get much better. I remember in the fourth grade wondering why I never could move out of the lowest reading group. I knew I worked harder than the other students and I always had the right answer, I just could not read the words out loud when the teacher called on me. In the reading group I would try to figure out when it would be my turn. I would silently practice any words I did not know trying to figure them out before I had to read. The problem with this was that I missed the meaning of the passage. It would take me much longer to read and to answer the questions. Sometimes I would be working on the answer to one question and not realize the teacher had moved on to a new question.

The only thing that made school fun was the social aspect. Every report card was filled with S-'s (barely passing) in academics except for math, and there were always notes about how I talked too much in class. Didn't the teacher get it? Talking was what I did well.

In the fifth grade, my teacher recommended me for accelerated math. I had been getting the highest math grades in the class for some time. The principal called a meeting and told my parents that I did not have a high enough IQ to be in that class. Keep in mind that much of the group IQ tests at that time were based on information that the student had to read.

Somehow I learned to read. However, I am still plagued with a slow rate and an inability to read well in public. Even though my childhood school experiences were riveted with failure, my university experiences have been nothing but honors.

As I analyzed my educational experiences, I knew I learned differently than many of my classmates. I saw this difference as alright because my father was successful as an engineer even though he had difficulty reading and spelling. When several of my five children exhibited learning problems, I wanted to find out what made us learn differently.

Circumstances had led me to consider teaching as a profession. My undergraduate degree was in business administration which meant I had to return to a university to take graduate education classes. I choose to go into special education because I wanted to help the population of students similar to my children who were experiencing those sickening feelings of frustration and failure.

The same purpose has brought me to the point of writing for this website. Writing is not my natural form of communication. I would much prefer to tell you about the topics. Since I do not have that opportunity, I am going to be writing on topics that I believe will help parents of children with learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorder. I am also going to share information on topics that will be helpful to teachers who are working with exceptional students. It is my special desire that this information will help Sunday School teachers and youth workers. It is our responsibility to find a way to help children who face academic challenges. It is my prayer that some of these topics will make a difference in the lives of God's marvelously unique creations.