

The Education of Miss Smarty Skirt

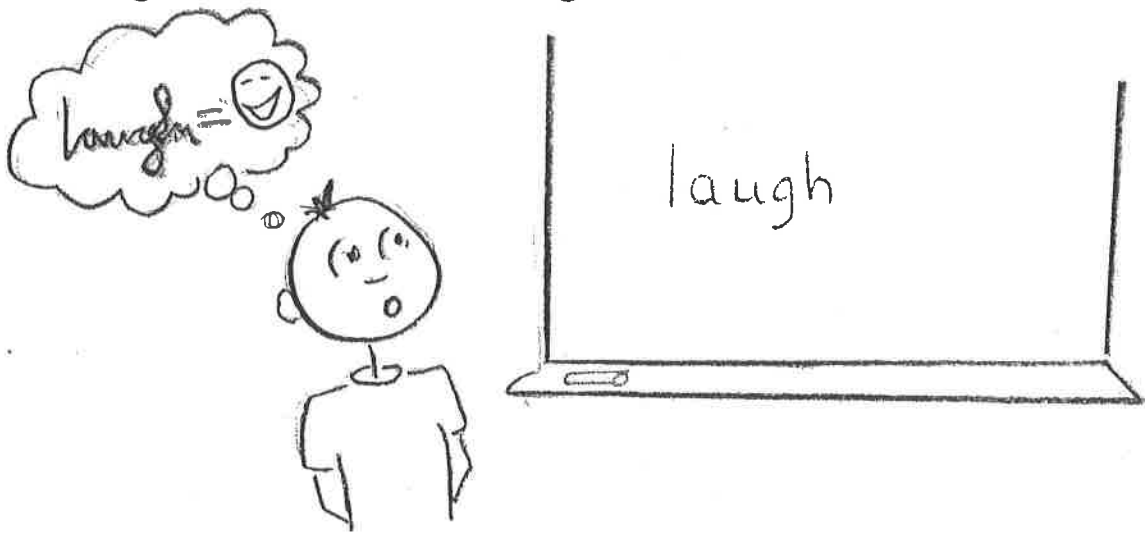
A true story*



* using actual
cutting and pasting
with scissors and glue.

A long time ago in a world where girls could not yet wear pants to school, there was a keen pupil named Miss Impish Smarty Skirt Young, or MISSY. School was easy for Missy.

She could read and write and draw awesome stick figures already, and so was promoted to the Rabbits reading group in grade 1. One day she went to the chalk board in front of the class with Bobby, from the Turtles reading group, and was puzzled when he looked at the word "laugh" on the chalkboard and very nervously 'read' it as "funny...."



That was the first time she understood not everyone's brains could make sense of written letters and words.

Years later, in grade 9, a girl in Missy's class was asked what the scientific word for the 'Northern Lights' was. After some thought, she answered sincerely: "Cantrifilus Biamus" And then, Missy realized that not all kids could remember complex, rare words correctly.

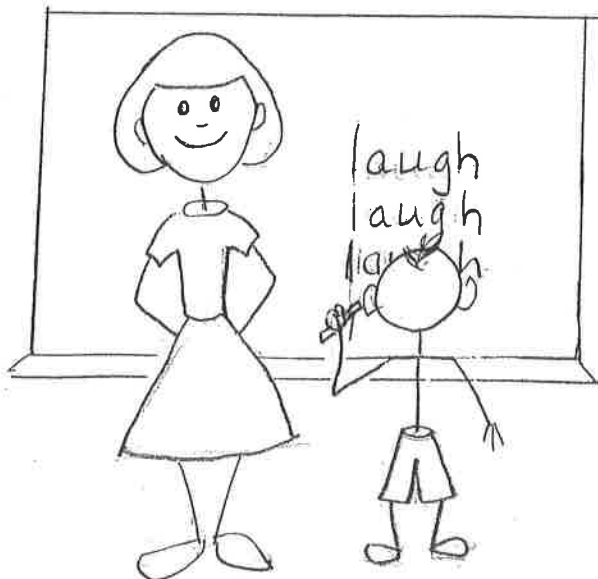


And later still, at university, Missy remembered a fellow who asked her to look over his history essay; she was gob-smacked by its lack of structure, conventions and coherence; she had no idea what to say, so she smiled, handed it back and wished him good luck-with the clear realization, that written expression was definitely NOT easy for this student.

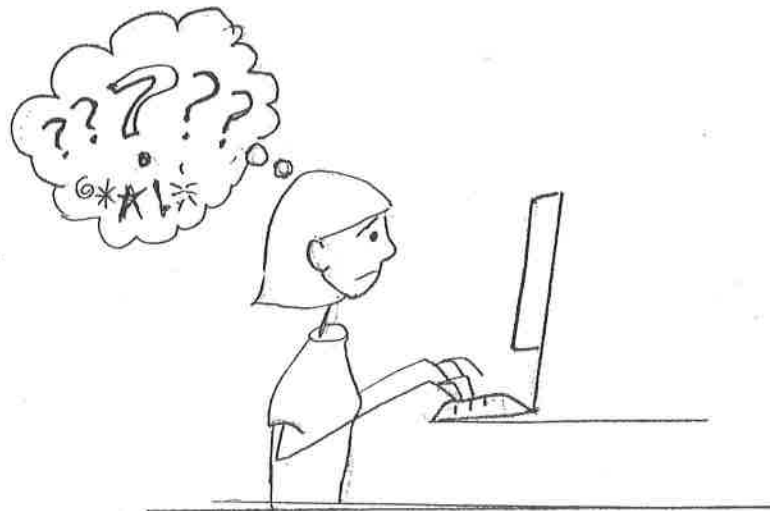
The roman empire was very big and lasted along timbut feel apart when thebarbariasn evaded the empire and then there was the dark ages that we dontknow much abut the romans were smartand builta lot of things tehromans make lots of statues and art and roads and had plumbing the head roman was called ceaser and he wore a toga and had a crownof leaves on his head...

Later in life, Missy became a teacher. She discovered that there were many kids for whom school was obviously NOT easy. These kids had many strengths and were often articulate, good artists and good thinkers, but were frequently unable to access knowledge from a book, or print source, and were even more often unable to express themselves well in writing.

Initially, Missy made the error of trying to get these kids to keep plugging away at reading and writing—surely, practice, practice, practice would do it! But, like trying to get a squirrel to swim, or a duck to climb trees, this proved to be frustrating and discouraging for everyone.



One day, many, many years later, Missy signed up for the Assistive Technology course at VIU. And there, she learned full on how it feels to struggle at school. You see, she never really embraced computers; preferred books, paper and pencil, and stick man drawings. She only used digital technology when absolutely necessary and didn't develop many skills. In her new course, she struggled to set up a web-site; had no idea how to do a power-point or upload images or download apps. Missy didn't even own a cell phone. She felt embarrassed during the on-line discussion sessions when she couldn't access web-sites, or get into the various extensions. Her flash drive needed updating, her children had to help her out-it was all so impossibly complex, overwhelming and wonderfully humbling.

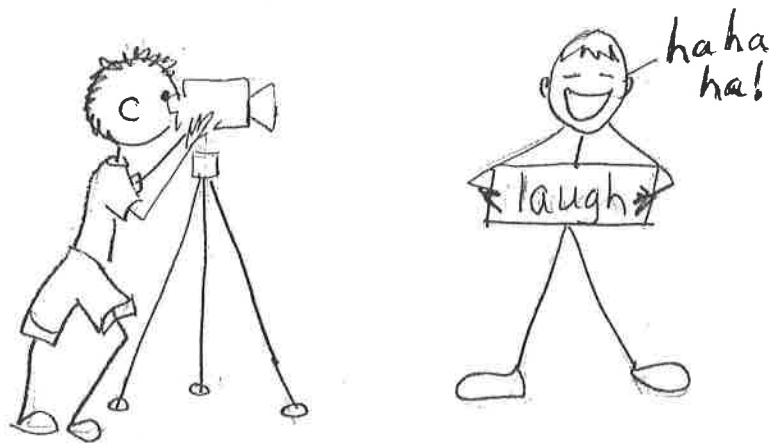


You see, happily, this was the best thing that could have happened to Missy; now she truly understood how so many students can feel when faced with a mode of learning that is challenging for them. She became even more determined to master the tools available via digital technology, because that would alleviate that feeling of stress and discouragement both for her and for the students she worked with. She would and give them multiple modalities for accessing information and expressing knowledge and, she would give them

HOPE!

Missy appreciated the patience of the course instructor and how he non-judgmentally took the time to meet her where she was at and walk her through the basics. She saw how she could do the same for her students, and how she could equip them with a tool belt that would meet their needs and help them to be thriving learners.

She was excited about the Google read and write tools that would level the field for many students without increasing the stigma of their struggles. She saw some of the multi-media tools-book creation sites, animation sites, art sites, as being an engaging and satisfying new world of expression for all students. She appreciated how some students (including her own son) loved to show their learning through film, and celebrated the use of cameras, ipads and computer editing to this end:



For now, however, Missy is sticking to showing her learning by writing stories illustrated with stick men.

And thus, everyone will live happily ever after.

The End.