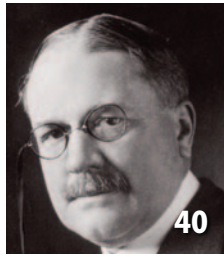
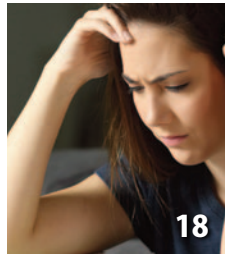
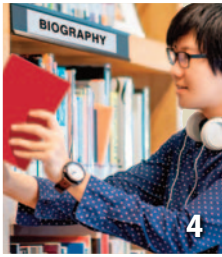


# ADVENTIST EDUCATION

## K-12 Adventist School Boards:



**LEADING NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE**



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THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION (ISSN 0021-8480 [print], ISSN 2572-7753 [online]) is published quarterly by the Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, U.S.A. TELEPHONE: (301) 680-5071; FAX: (301) 622-9627; E-mail: mcgarrell@gc.adventist.org. Address all editorial and advertising correspondence to the Editor. Copyright 2024 General Conference of SDA.



Faith-Ann A. McGarrell

In 1 Samuel 4:3, the people of Israel, because of fear and lack of trust, put the Ark of the Covenant in a vulnerable position. They were at war. They were losing the battle. And in that moment, they doubted God’s ability to care for them. Amid their battle, they asked a universal question: “Why did the Lord bring defeat on us today before the Philistines?” (NIV).<sup>1</sup> Today, many of us ask the same question: “How could this have happened?” Why did God not protect us from disease, disaster, despair, etc.?

The people of Israel did what we sometimes do—they crafted a plan to solve their problem. While this is not a horrible thing—after all, God created us with the power to think and act—sometimes the outcome is less than desirable. Like the people of Israel, we sometimes decide how we think God should help us. And, instead of anchoring ourselves until the storm passes, preserving what is essential to our survival, we begin charting a course in the middle of the storm. We rush to solve our problems ourselves, resorting to our own devices, sometimes sacrificing what is most valuable to us. We, too, say, “Let us do this/that/or the other. . . .”

### Anchor Types

Several years ago, I found an article about the Blue Water Sailing School in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Blue Water teaches individuals how to sail 35- to 50-foot vessels.<sup>2</sup> It offers lessons in sailing, navigation, and anchoring. In another article on how anchors work,<sup>3</sup> I learned that there are several types of anchors, and each works differently—no one anchor is suitable for all situations, and most boats and ships carry more than one type.

For example, lightweight anchors dig into the bottom rather than being held steady by immovable weight. They have flukes (broad triangular plates that look like prongs) that dig into softer surfaces or can be dragged along the

bottom to find a crevice on a hard surface. Some anchors that work on soft surfaces are also effective in hard mud or weeds and on rocky surfaces. These anchors have a pivot at the crown of the shank (or the main arm of the anchor) that allows the shank to swing from side to side as the sailing vessel moves in the wind. Decisions about

which anchor to use depend on factors such as the composition of the bottom surface, whether soft sand, mud, or rocks. Other considerations include the depth of the body of water, whether a lake, river, or ocean, and the current, tide, and wind direction. Possible obstructions such as debris, fissures in the surface, and sea creatures that live on the bottom surface (e.g., coral reefs, oysters, clams, etc.) also factor into decision-making.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, each type of anchor clings in a different way. Lightweight anchors “dig in” or “find a crevice” to hook themselves. Heavyweight anchors pivot, allowing the vessel to roll with the waves while they dig into the surface.

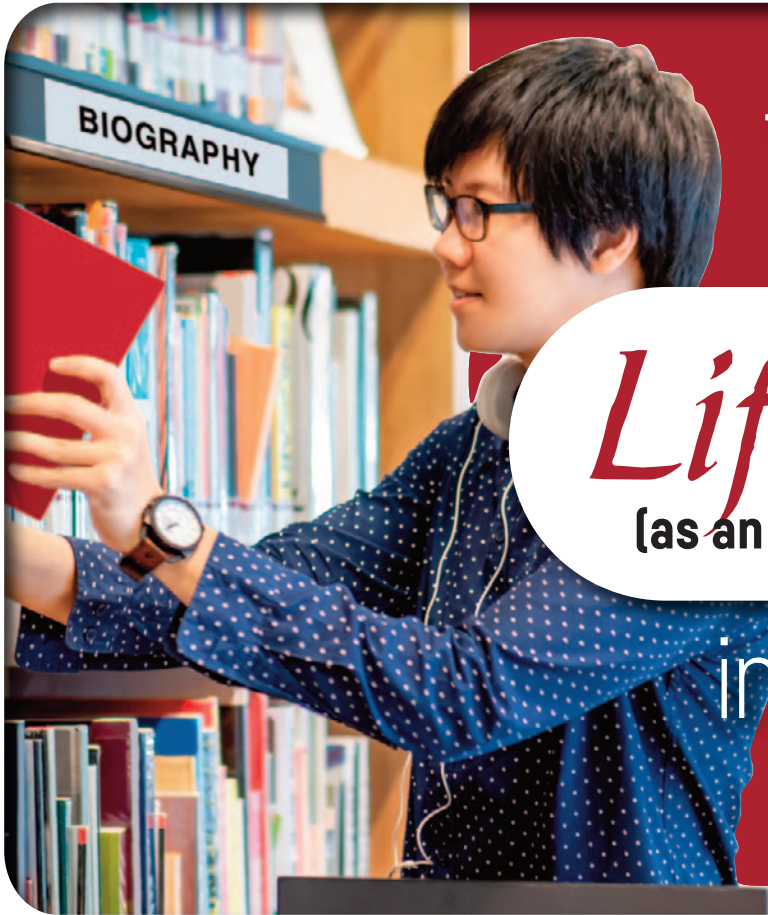
Similar to how the captain of a vessel decides which anchor to use, throughout our lives, we will need to decide what type of anchor we will need in a given situation. Do we need to cling? Do we need to pivot? Is the surface soft and flexible or rigid and immovable? And, as the old hymn says, “Will our anchor hold in the storms of life, when the clouds unfold their wings of strife? When the strong tides life, and the cables strain, will your anchor drift, or firm remain?”<sup>5</sup>

### We Need an Anchor That Holds

By 1 Samuel 7:2 to 5, the people of Israel recognized that only God, not their best-laid plans, could deliver them: “Then all the people of Israel turned back to the Lord. . . . the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only.” When Israel realized their need for an anchor, they “dug in.” In verse 5, we

## Anchored in a Covenant

*Continued on page 45*



# Teaching

## *Life Writing* (as an Alternative to Fiction)

### in the Literature Classroom

**A**dventist English teachers have a long history of defending fiction. This is in response to challenges brought by students, parents, and church members who say Ellen G. White condemned the reading of fiction.<sup>1</sup> While a number of Adventist English professionals have spent many pages arguing that Ellen White's comments on fiction have been misunderstood—as well as many pages discussing the merits of fiction—I'd like to present an alternate perspective. My aim is neither to argue for nor against fiction, since many Adventist English professionals and scholars have already shared similar arguments (see Sidebar 1 on

page 5). Instead, as a conscientious Adventist who still places confidence in Ellen White's writings, I'd like to do several things: First, I'd like to revisit a few of Ellen White's comments that once troubled a younger *me*; see what wisdom I can gain from them today; and urge all Adventists, but especially Adventist English teachers, to choose literature with care—whether they choose fiction or non-fiction. Second, as a (writing) professor who teaches mainly general-education literature classes—that is, I teach literature to primarily non-English majors—I want to present a type of *non-fiction* literature that I have found to be my best tool for creating courses that can benefit the greatest number of students: Life Writing.

Life Writing is an umbrella term

encompassing autobiography, biography, memoir, diaries, letters, or any non-fiction writing about an individual's life. In this article, I refer to the more literary and audience-focused varieties of Life Writing, such as autobiographies and memoirs. Although these genres themselves are not new, the term "Life Writing" is gaining new scholarly attention because it allows teachers to include writers of all backgrounds in the ever-changing canon.<sup>2</sup> For English teachers and scholars, a Life Writing approach opens doors to texts by many previously unknown and unstudied writers, including women, people of color, and both religious and non-religious writers throughout history—an exciting pos-

BY LINDSEY ROSE GENDKE

## Sidebar 1. Additional Thoughts for Consideration

In “Adventists and Fiction: Another Look,”\* Scott Moncrieff stated that readers could not take Ellen White’s negative comments on fiction at face value; rather, he urged readers to consider the context in which she wrote them, and also consider White’s own reading practices. For one, Moncrieff pointed out, Ellen White’s comments were appropriately directed at the popular fiction of her day, which John Wood showed deserved critique in his article, “The Trashy Novel Revisited: Popular Fiction in the Age of Ellen White.”† For another reason, as Moncrieff and other Adventist scholars have pointed out, Ellen White herself *read* fiction: notably, she praised *Pilgrim’s Progress* for having “heavenly” qualities. What’s more, “White clipped many stories from religious periodicals of her day, assembled them in scrapbooks, and eventually compiled selections from these scrapbooks into *Sabbath Readings*.”‡

Scholars like John Waller have concluded that many of these stories were, in fact, fictional; thus, Ellen White must not have been “indiscriminately” condemning “all stories that do not happen to be true-to-fact.”§ Moncrieff’s conclusion on the matter is this: “While it is clear that [Ellen White] makes many statements against the novel and fiction, a wholesale condemnation of the genre would be contradictory to her own practice, and not necessarily according to the reasons for which she condemns fiction.”¶ In other words, Moncrieff shows that the issue, for Ellen White, was not so much *fiction* as it was *undesirable qualities* of the fiction—qualities that could apply to many forms of media today, such as the qualities of being “addictive,” “sentimental, sensational, erotic, profane, or trashy,” “escapist,” or the fact that literature exhibiting these qualities “unfits the mind for serious study and devotional life.”¶¶ In addition, as noted above, the foremost problem for Ellen White appeared to be the “time-consuming” nature of fiction, which necessarily distracted readers from life’s practical duties. Moncrieff’s view, that we need to reconsider Ellen White’s comments and not throw out all fiction altogether, seems quite reasonable.

Moncrieff, joined by Vanessa Correderra in their article “Fiction and Film: Thoughts on Teaching Potentially Controversial Narratives,” continues the discussion, stating that “English professionals must think through the pedagogical value of teaching fictional narratives in the classroom, anticipate some of the most common objections to such use, and beyond that, consider the appropriate use of material that may be somewhat challenging, controversial, or mature, in addition to its fictional nature.”\*\*\* To their credit, they take up their own challenge: they enumerate commonplace arguments many other Christian literary scholars (such as Sallie McFague TeSelle, Gene Edward Veith, Benjamin Myer, and Mark Knight) have made in favor of teaching fiction. Namely, they say that fiction forms a significant part of the traditional literary canon and thus has “lasting cultural impact”; fiction is interesting and likely to capture the interest of students; fiction allows us to enter the perspectives of others, whom we as Christians are called to help; fiction allows us to encounter and think through difficult scenarios in a safe environment; and fiction allows us to develop critical-thinking skills, among others. In other words, they make a strong case that fiction can add value to literature courses.

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\* Scott Moncrieff, “Adventists and Fiction: Another Look,” *Dialogue* 8:3 (1996): 9-12: [https://christinetheclassroom.org/vol\\_18/18cc\\_363-366.pdf](https://christinetheclassroom.org/vol_18/18cc_363-366.pdf).

† John Wood, “The Trashy Novel Revisited: Crucial Aspect in Reading? Popular Fiction in the Age of Ellen White,” *Spectrum* (April 1976): 16-21; cited in *ibid.*, 10.

‡ Moncrieff, “Adventists and Fiction: Another Look.”

§ John O. Waller, “A Contextual Study of Ellen G. White’s Counsel Concerning Fiction.” A paper read to the quadrennial meeting of Seventh-day Adventist college English teachers at La Sierra College (Riverside, California), August 1965; cited in *ibid.*, 11.

¶ Moncrieff, “Adventists and Fiction: Another Look,” 11.

¶¶ *Ibid.*

\*\*\* *The Journal of Adventist Education* 78:1 (October/November 2015): 23: <https://circle.adventistlearncommunity.com/files/jae/en/jae201578012206.pdf>.

sibility for English professionals who are looking for new ways to “do” literature (see Sidebar 2 on page 6).

For Adventist English professionals, an additional benefit of Life Writing is that it offers a gold mine of previously noncanonical literature, much of it written with literary beauty and also compatible with Ellen White’s comments on literature—comments that, at some point or another, are bound to challenge literature teachers in Adventist schools. For me, such challenges came even earlier than my teaching career, and I will include some of them in this article to make my argument.

### A Young Adventist English Major Encounters Ellen White

My troubled thoughts on literature all started around age 20, when my mom sent me, a young English major, *The Ministry of Healing* by Ellen White. When I read the chapters on literature that Mom had bookmarked, I promptly became troubled.

What were Ellen White’s comments that upset me? Briefly, she stated that literature written by “infidel authors” (or non-Christians) should have no place in true education.<sup>3</sup> Referring to Greek tragedies and other classics, she wrote that this kind of education, in requiring time to study dead languages, neglected preparation for “life’s practical duties,” such as parenthood and becoming Christlike examples in the home and public spheres.<sup>4</sup> Referring to fiction at large, especially romance novels or “frivolous, exciting tales,” Ellen White wrote that such reading “encourages the habit of hasty and superficial reading merely for the story”; “creates a distaste for life’s practical duties”; and ultimately “destroys interest in the Bible,” which, for the Christian, should be the ultimate text of study.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, Ellen White targeted myths and fairy tales, saying that the ideas presented therein “impart false views of life and beget and foster a desire for the unreal,” thus “[diverting] the minds of old and young from the great

## Sidebar 2. Life Writing and Canonical Breakthroughs

For many decades, scholars have turned to Life Writing in order to include historically marginalized voices—although earlier scholars did not use this term. As James Olney notes, African American writers entered the canon “through the door of autobiography”<sup>\*</sup>; and Kenneth Roemer points out that until the 1970s and 1980s, Native American literature was not even acknowledged; now, however, with the move toward greater representation, diversity, and inclusion, scholars and teachers can include in the canon many works ascribed to Native Americans, such as the autobiography of Black Hawk, the narrative of Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, and the spiritual autobiography of William Apess, among others.† Feminist scholars make similar observations about women’s writing. For instance, Jennifer Sinor observes that women’s diaries have moved from not being considered autobiography to being considered, among many diary scholars, the “most authentic form of autobiography.”‡ Indeed, one reason life writing has become popular in the academy is that it is inclusive: It has admitted those groups that were traditionally excluded from privileges such as education, literacy, leisure time, and literary training. Currently, the field of life-writing scholarship is thriving, and the canon is expanding quickly to include women and minority writers. As scholars like James Olney, Arnold Krupat, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, and Estelle Jelinek have pointed out, Life Writing is one of the oldest genres, but it is a relatively new field in literary studies.

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\* James Olney, “Autobiography and the Culture Moment: A Thematic, Historical, and Bibliographical Introduction.” In *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, James Olney, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 15, 3-27.

† Kenneth Roemer, “Introduction.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*, Joy Porter and Kenneth M. Roemer, eds. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 15, 3-27.

‡ Jennifer Sinor, “A Story of the Diary.” In *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing: Annie Ray’s Diary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002), 48.

encounter and think through difficult scenarios in a safe environment.<sup>9</sup> Still, another argument holds that fiction allows us to develop critical-thinking skills, including comparing a Christian worldview with other worldviews.<sup>10</sup> In other words, these scholars make a strong case that certain forms of fiction belong in and add value to literature courses.<sup>11</sup>

I completely agree that fiction can add value to English classes—and to life—by inviting readers to encounter ideas, experiences, people, and situations not available in everyday life. I am poorly traveled but well-read, yet my reading has given me a fairly broad experience of the world. However, as an adult and an Adventist English professional, even though I agree with these arguments, I find myself continuing to grapple with what literature to teach in my classes.<sup>12</sup>

I realize English professionals will never completely agree on what literature to teach in our classrooms. However, for professors who profess Adventist Christianity, we must, to uphold our own integrity, give a serious ear to Ellen White’s comments, as well as the biblical injunction to fill our minds with what is lovely, pure, and true (Philippians 4:8). We also ought to check in regularly with the guidelines for choosing literature provided by the Adventist Church (see Sidebar 3 on page 7).<sup>13</sup>

### My Reading Background

I developed a love for literature through reading fiction. Some of my best memories growing up come from reading “exciting stories,” some of which I’m sure Ellen White would have condemned. My parents were new Adventists still trying to figure out the mechanics of the Adventist home. It’s hard doing life in a way you’ve never done before—just like it’s hard teaching differently than you were taught. So, I inherited a home full of the books, music, movies, sports, and media my parents grew up on.

Somewhere amid my profuse media exposure and mounting chal-

work of character building” and “[preventing] them from obtaining a knowledge of those [biblical] truths that would be their safeguard.”<sup>6</sup> A careful reading of these comments reveals that Ellen White did not claim that fiction in and of itself was wrong; rather, her foremost criticism of certain literature was that it distracted Christians from what they should be doing instead.

At my particular Adventist university, these questions were not often raised in class, so I carried them into my Master’s and doctoral degrees years later, writing a seminar paper and then a dissertation chapter on this topic, trying to figure out my stance on Adventist Christians and literature.

### Some Responses to the Fiction Question

During research for my Master’s degree, I discovered that Ellen White wasn’t the only religious writer to criticize literature and that Seventh-day Adventists are not the only denomination to struggle with this issue. As I studied the topic of “Christians and Literature,” I found plenty of scholarship from other Christians.<sup>7</sup> One common argument I found from these scholars was that fiction is useful because it allows us to understand the perspectives of others we, as Christians, are called to help.<sup>8</sup> Another argument holds that fiction allows us to

lenges in my home, I began to question the potency of our faith. Of course, I continued to love fiction. Good things happened in the fiction I read. Bad things happened in real life. So, I numbed myself through my coming-of-age years through fiction. In college, I quelled major depression and suicidal tendencies with mind-numbing 18-credit semesters and 30-hour workweeks. By the time I started my first job teaching high school English, I realized that I could no longer hide in fiction. I had to face some serious realities. I fell on my knees after an excruciating first year of teaching, and I begged God to give me a new mind because my mind was literally bent on self-destruction.

### New and Renewing Reading Habits

As I pleaded for God to change me, He answered that I also needed to change some things. Because I struggled with self-destructive thoughts, I had to change my reading habits and my media habits at large. So, I purged music, movies, and books—including some literature anthologies from my bachelor's degree. I turned to the

Bible, and, providentially, I turned to true stories. To be more specific, I sought out autobiographies and memoirs of people (some Christian and some not) who faced hard times and who overcame them or who grew up to do great things despite traumatic childhoods. Although I didn't know the correct technical terms at the time, I was discovering the power of Life Writing. In my case, reading true stories of real people who had surmounted depression, despair, and even death, as well as coming-of-age stories where the protagonist finds his or her purpose in life, became a lifeline to hope. I began to imagine that such was possible for me.

Of course, this was a process of trial and error over some years. Just because a story is "true" doesn't make it uplifting. Many non-fiction books end in despair, celebrate evil, or, for many other reasons, don't belong on the shelves of Christians. Unfortunately, in my search for answers, I also read some non-fiction books of that variety. So, I kept searching.

I started looking for true stories

written by Christians. I found some, but not as many as I would have liked.<sup>14</sup> So, I wrote and published my own.<sup>15</sup> I decided then that a major goal of Christian English teachers should be to prepare students to write their own stories and testimonies and those of others: The world needs these stories! This is where reading and writing constitute a loop: The Bible says that by beholding, we become changed (2 Corinthians 4:18). I say that by reading and writing, we also become changed. As English teachers, we should carefully consider what literature we teach, both fiction *and* non-fiction, knowing it will influence the mindsets and characters of our students. Likewise, we should carefully craft our writing assignments. Who knows, we could be influencing generations of readers to come. Fortunately for me and my experimental ways of teaching, the field of English is currently changing to accommodate many new approaches, such as including more Life Writing in literature and composition courses.

### Recent Trends in English Departments

The college English department is unique because there is no set course of study for each English major. Having recently completed my PhD in English, I know that what gets taught largely depends on field trends and instructor preferences. One current trend is that Western culture is out; diversity is in. The traditional canon, which includes mostly fiction—novels, short stories, plays—is not the giant it once was because these genres were historically dominated by white men from Europe and North America, or those privileged with education, social status, and money. Now, the primary concern of many English professors and literary scholars is diversity, representation, and inclusion, opening the canon to ordinary, non-fiction genres—those historically *available* to women and people of color. This includes not only the more literary genres of autobiography and memoir, but also the lesser studied, and usually non-literary, gen-

### Sidebar 3. A Brief Summary of the Guide to the Teaching of Literature in Seventh-day Adventist Schools

Literature assigned in Adventist schools should;

- Be serious art;
- Lead to significant insight into the nature of humans and society and be compatible with Adventist values;
- Avoid sensational (the exploitation of sex or violence) and maudlin sentimentality (the exploitation of softer feelings to the detriment of a sane and level view of life);
- Not be characterized by profanity or other crude, offensive language;
- Avoid elements that give the appearance of making evil desirable or goodness trivial;
- Avoid simplified, excitingly suspenseful, or plot-dominated stories that encourage hasty or superficial reading; and
- Be adapted to the maturity level of the group or individual.

Adapted from the General Conference Department of Education's *A Brief Summary of the Guide to the Teaching of Literature in Seventh day Adventist Schools* (2011): <https://www.adventistedge.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Literature-Selection-Summary.pdf>.

res of diaries, letters, and other personal documents.<sup>16</sup> As I quickly discovered through graduate courses like Early Native American Literature, Early African American Evangelical Literature, and Early Modern Literature (in which we studied recipe books by women), Life Writing can be and has been written by anyone, no matter his or her race, class, or education level.<sup>17</sup> As I also found out, religious Life Writing can be found in virtually any literary period one is studying—or teaching.

My graduate professors, then, were teaching Life Writing texts, including spiritual autobiographies, as a way of including minority writers.<sup>18</sup> They were *not* teaching these texts to inspire faith in their students. However, as a Christian English professional searching for texts that could support my students' faith, as well as bolster my own, I *was* inspired. With this new vista of Life Writing open to me, I was able to compile long reading lists of texts that were considered both "exciting" in the field of English *and* compatible with a Christian worldview. (View a sample Life Writing syllabus here: <https://www.journalofadventisteducation.org/en/supplement.-life-writing-sample-syllabus>).

### Teaching Idea: What My Adventist University Is Doing

At Southwestern Adventist University, in Keene, Texas, U.S.A., we have decided to open this topic for investigation by our students through a new course called "Christians and Literature." In the course, which I am currently teaching for the first time, students will read what Ellen White, Adventist literary scholars, and scholars of other faiths say about the topic of literature; they are also asked to articulate ("discuss and defend") their own philosophy of reading, writing, and/or teaching literature in weekly class discussions and a 10-page capstone paper.

My goal as the teacher of this course is to give students the gift of time to work through some of the hard questions I was able to work through during my MA and PhD studies. In contrast with typical literature courses and literary analysis assignments, which have already decided for students what they should read, this new course asks students to go "meta": to think about what we should really be reading in the first place. The course is designed so that

**What would happen if Adventist English teachers could detach themselves from their formative influences, and face the question with an open mind: What should we read and teach? What if we stop looking at Ellen White's counsel negatively (as prohibitions) and look at it in the positive?**

my students will investigate the options, including fiction *and* non-fiction; think through principles for choosing literature; and support whatever they choose with an essay, much like this one, that blends research with personal experience to explain *why* a particular form(s) of literature holds value for *them*, and potentially for *their own* future students. For my students who are Christians, I also ask them to talk about how they will use their knowledge of literature to serve God and others throughout their lives.

### Conclusion: Life Writing as an Alternative to Fiction

One of the main questions that drove my research into this topic was: What literature will be *most* beneficial to the greatest number of students? In response, I'll offer a few additional questions. What would happen if Adventist English teachers could detach themselves from their formative influences, and face this question with an open mind: *What should we read and teach?* What if we stop looking at Ellen White's counsel negatively (as prohibitions) and look at it in the positive? Using guidelines from Ellen White, the Adventist Church, and other Christians and scholars whom we respect, what excellent literature is available to us?

In some of her last recorded advice before she died in 1915, Ellen White wrote:

"We should advise the young . . . to take hold of such reading matter as recommends itself for the upbuilding of the Christian character. The most essential points of our faith should be stamped upon the memory of the young. . . . Our youth should read that which will have a healthful, sanctifying effect upon the mind. This they need in order to be able to discern what is true religion. *There is much good reading that is not sanctifying.*

"Now is our time and opportunity to labor for the young people. Tell them that we are now in a perilous crisis, and we want to know how to discern true godliness. Our young people need to be helped, uplifted, and encouraged, but in the right manner, not, perhaps, as they would desire it, but in a way that will help them to have sanctified minds. They need good, sanctifying religion more than anything else."<sup>19</sup>

Along with Ellen White, I believe Adventist schools should have a different primary focus than secular schools. While Adventist educators share the common goals of virtually all educators to help students think critically, and to expose them to



many and varied perspectives, we differ in that we place a Christian worldview at the center of our classes; we also differ in that we believe that we are not just preparing students for “service in this world” but also for “wider service in the world to come.”<sup>20</sup>

In my experience so far, I have found non-fiction—specifically, uplifting true-life stories (often, but not necessarily, by Christians)—to be the most valuable to the greatest number of my general-education students. These true stories seem most likely to help students live in the real world, and true stories by Christians seem the most uplifting to me as the professor who has to live and breathe what I teach. Scholars and teachers at many public universities have already embraced Life Writing as a new way to “do” literature; maybe this is one trend from which Adventist English professionals should take inspiration. ✍

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*This article has been peer reviewed.*

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#### Recommended citation:

Lindsey Rose Gendke, “Teaching Life Writing (as an Alternative to Fiction) in the Literature Classroom,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 85:4 (2023): 4-10. <https://doi.org/10.55668/jae0053>.

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Some examples include Estelle Jelinek, “Women’s Autobiography and the Male Tradition,” in *Women’s Autobiography: Essays in Criticism* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1980), 1-20; Arnold Krupat, “American Autobiography: The Western Tradition,” *The Georgia Review* 35:2 (1981): 307-317; James Olney, “Autobiography and the Cultural Moment: A Thematic, Historical, and Bibliographical Introduction,” in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 3-27; Kenneth Roemer, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*, Joy Porter and Kenneth M. Roemer, eds. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-24; Jennifer Sinor, “A Story of the Diary,” in *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing: Annie Ray’s Diary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002); Roger Smith, “Self-Reflection and the Self,” in *Rewriting the Self: Histories From the Renaissance to the Present*, Roy Porter, ed. (London: Routledge, 1997), 43-47; Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, “Situating Subjectivity in Women’s Autobiographical Practices,” in *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, eds. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 3-52.

3. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1905), 440.

4. *Ibid.*, 444, 446.

5. *Ibid.*, 445.

6. *Ibid.*, 446.

7. John A. Anonby, “A Christian Perspective on English Literature,” in *Christian Worldview and the Academic Disciplines*, Deane E. D. Downey and Stanley A. Porter, eds. (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 233-247; Mark Knight, *An Introduction to Religion and Literature* (London: Continuum, 2009);

Arlin G. Meyer, “Teaching Literature as Mediation: A Christian Practice,” in *Teaching as an Act of Faith: Theory and Practice in Church-Related Higher Education*, Arlin C. Migliazzo, ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 253-276; Susan Resneck Parr, *The Moral of the Story: Literature, Values, and American Education* (New York: Teacher’s College Press, 1982); Sallie McFague TeSelle, *Literature and the Christian Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966); Gene Edward Veith, *Reading Between the Lines: A Christian Guide to Literature* (Crossway Books, 1990).

8. TeSelle, *Literature and the Christian Life*; Veith, *Reading Between the Lines: A Christian Guide to Literature*.

9. Anonby, “A Christian Perspective on English Literature”; Knight, *An Introduction to Religion and Literature*.

10. Knight, *An Introduction to Religion and Literature*; Myer, “Teaching Literature as Mediation: A Christian Practice”; Parr, *The Moral of the Story: Literature, Values, and American Education*.

11. Mark Knight says, “Our reading of literary texts is not bound by the views or beliefs of the authors, a point that is liberating for religious readings of literature” (*ibid.*, 4). In other words, teachers can use nonreligious texts to approach religious topics. For example, *Frankenstein* offers an interesting, if troubling, perspective on creation that could be connected with the Genesis narrative (*ibid.*, 15); Dickens’s *Bleak House* and Kafka’s *The Trial*, with their focus on legalities, could be used to examine the Law, as it relates to Christian tradition (*ibid.*, 49); and various works by Coleridge, Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Philip Roth, and Ian McEwan could all provide inroads for talking about “the stain of sin” (*ibid.*, 90). Though these works and authors may not exemplify Christian beliefs, they can still be useful for examining those beliefs. “A religious reading of a text,” Knight says, “is congruent at some level with virtually every branch of literary criticism and it does not have to restrict itself to subject matter typically seen as sacred” (*ibid.*, 3). However, Arlin Myer holds that “almost all great works of literature deal with fundamental moral issues and to that extent are religious works” (“Teaching Literature as Mediation,” 265).

Writing from the position of a secular educator looking to promote morality through her classroom, Susan Resneck Parr says that literature “often encourages students to consider difficult moral problems that they might otherwise choose to ignore” (*The Moral of the Story: Literature, Values, and American Education*, 19). Building on TeSelle and Lewis’s idea that studying literature enables readers to broaden their experiences (for the purpose of becoming better able to relate to and save fallen humanity), Myer suggests the added benefit of concentrating on many works by one author, and then having students compare the author’s worldview with their own.

Doing so, he says, allows students to examine the worldviews embodied in the writers' works, which then "prompts" students to "re-examine their own views of the major questions of life in relationship to those embodied in the literature" ("Teaching Literature as Mediation," 264). In his 20th-century fiction course, Myer juxtaposes the teaching of writers who rejected Christianity—such as James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and E. M. Forster—with other writers who either "write from a Christian perspective or deal explicitly with issues of faith," such as Flannery O'Connor, Graham Greene, John Updike, Larry Woiwode, and John Irving (*ibid.*, 265). A final way Myer gets students to examine their own worldviews is to compare and contrast them with those of an author they have studied in depth on the final exam (*ibid.*, 265). Myer says that just as each work of art has its own vision, so every "mature reader has her own worldview, her vision of reality, her set of beliefs. And if I do my task properly as a teacher, then it is precisely the . . . direct confrontation of these differing visions of the world that makes the reading of fiction such a powerful, transformative, and profound experience for my students" (*ibid.*, 266). I, of course, think this is an effective,

worthy approach in the Christian classroom, just as long as Myer and I can agree that many college students are not yet "mature readers," a point to which literature teachers must remain sensitive when teaching fiction.

12. In some parts of the world, extensive knowledge of fictional works is needed to pass entrance and exit exams or GRE literature exams, and students without this knowledge risk failure.

13. General Conference Department of Education, *A Brief Summary of the Guide to the Teaching of Literature in Seventh-day Adventist Schools* (2011): <https://nad-bigtincan.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/curriculum/secondary/secondary%20textbooks/literature%20selection%20guidelines%20for%20secondary%20schools/Literature%20Selection%20Summary.pdf>.

14. Standards of evaluation are essential when searching for true stories. That stories are true does not rule out the potential for bias, inaccuracy, trite themes, poor quality writing, or bad theology.

15. Lindsey Gendke, *Ending the Pain: A True Story of Overcoming Depression* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2016).

16. Desirée Henderson and Amy Tigner are two scholars under whom I studied who

include in their graduate and undergraduate courses a major focus on diaries and Early Modern women's recipe books, respectively. Henderson is the author of *How to Read a Diary: Critical Contexts and Interpretive Strategies for 21st Century Readers* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

17. For those who couldn't read, sometimes life narratives—including the popular genre of slave narratives—were written by an amanuensis. These "as-told-to" narratives also count as Life Writing.

18. *The Book of Margery Kempe, The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, The Collected Works of Jupiter Hammon: Poems and Essays*, edited by my professor, Cedrick May (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2017), *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings With John Marrant, A Son of the Forest* by William Apess, and the spiritual autobiographies of Elizabeth Ashbridge and Richard Allen are a few of the religious Life Writing texts I read for my studies.

19. Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1915), 448. Italics supplied.





20. \_\_\_\_\_, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 13.



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# K-12 Adventist School Boards:



**A**dventist education is foundational for church growth and identity, but its continuation is not guaranteed. It must be defended and renewed with each generation. Each new school year can be a test of loyalty for church communities to determine if funding this evangelistic enterprise is worth their time and effort. How do boards present a persuasive case to parents and church members? Understanding that enrolling students in Adventist schools can make a big difference as they become contributing citizens in this world and for God's kingdom is not always a given. So, how do we continue to move forward, recognizing, as Taylor points out, that "Adventist education is the longest and largest evangelistic event held by the Adventist Church"?<sup>1</sup>

School boards are charged with --defining and furthering the school's

mission and ensuring its success in achieving curriculum and instructional goals for modeling and teaching Christian behavior, providing religious instruction, and ensuring the integration of faith and learning. This unique evangelistic opportunity is too important to leave to fate and must be continually renewed, adjusted, and adapted to meet the needs of its students and church communities. To a large degree, the success of Adventist education depends on how well school boards manage their schools now and lead them into the future.

Now, more than ever, school boards must acknowledge and respond to an increasing sense of urgency regarding school governance that includes all education stakeholders expecting educational leadership to provide continuous improvement and ready solutions to the persistent challenges that schools face. The quality of education provided in an Adventist school is directly related to its school board's mission, vision,

professionalism, and efficiency. As a result, school boards are persistently confronted and challenged regarding how they lead and support this vital work of educating the young people of the church and community.

## **Effectiveness and Relevancy**

The effectiveness and relevancy of school boards today need to be re-examined to purposely lead Adventist schools forward. John Mannes believes that "Our national conversations on education should include more discussion of effective school system leadership."<sup>2</sup> Are they prepared to lead? Are school boards equipped to handle the challenges of culture, structure, change, finance, and admissions to ensure their schools remain open and thrive? What will school boards look like in the future? Will they be agents of change or defenders of the status quo? How boards func-

BY ROBERT D. CRUX

tion, both now and in the future, will determine if schools will be successful and relevant in addressing the changing and evolving needs of their students and church communities.

Independent School Management (ISM), an organization that provides resources for independent schools, has summarized the mission of school boards by stating, “the Board’s core activity is planning, and the Board’s primary constituency is not today’s students but the students of the future.”<sup>3</sup> This article identifies some best practices that I believe will empower boards to lead their schools into the future more effectively and responsibly while at the same time continuing the sacred trust of being “mission keepers” of the school.

### Setting Tightly Focused Goals Using School-based Data

What can we expect from school boards, and how can we measure how well they accomplish those tasks? Which goals should be considered most important by school boards? Is there a process to help school boards identify goals that should be adopted? Broderick believes that school boards, both now and in the future, should be able to “set tightly focused goals and rigorously monitor their district’s progress towards meeting those goals, use data to monitor and evaluate progress, ensure resources are allocated where they can make the most difference, and constantly strive to improve instruction and learning for every child.”<sup>4</sup> It is vital that school boards include these goals now.

The adage “Doing one thing and doing it well” can resonate with school boards, which may feel overwhelmed if too many goals are introduced each school year. Too many goals can kill productivity and creativity. Having only one goal makes self-control more successful than when people have two or more conflicting goals. With too many goals, boards often are afraid of making the wrong choice, so they end up doing nothing. Still, boards must learn to manage multiple tasks. Bridges identifies seven easy ways to

stay focused on achieving a specific goal or task. These include setting goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant/realistic/recorded, and timely (SMART), visualizing and scheduling goals, finding ways to manage distractions, avoiding procrastination, prioritizing, and tracking progress—all of which requires taking the “big picture” and breaking it down into manageable parts.<sup>5</sup>

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ment. If this does not become the board’s standard operating procedure, then school improvement succumbs to a hit-and-miss exercise each school year. It is one thing to identify a problem but quite another to use data to determine what is and isn’t working in each school (see Sidebar on page 13). Using data specific to their local school should help boards make timely decisions, implement meaningful change, and redirect resources to support excellent teaching (and administration) and improve student learning.

### Board Members Need Sustained and Specific Training

Board members must be appropriately prepared and expected to perform as competent, caring, consensus-based leaders. Becoming an effective school board member is more of a process than a pronouncement. Hekman and Smoley believe that Christian school boards are typically composed of dedicated volunteers who are interested in the school’s mission but lack the training to lead and complete the difficult work they face. While public school board members can receive specific training from state and local agencies, Christian school boards mostly receive little, if any, formal training. Helping school boards understand that intervention and training can improve their effectiveness needs more emphasis in Adventist schools.<sup>6</sup>

Within the Adventist system, board members are volunteers who commit to serving. As a result, careful consideration must be given to monitoring the expectations and valuing the time and commitment of these volunteers.

The importance of school board training has had and continues to have substantial support for public education stakeholders in the United States. An example is a recent survey by the Michigan Association of School Boards. The statewide survey of 600 persons showed that 74 percent of the responders/voters “reported their belief that formal professional development instruction for school board members was either ‘Essential’ or at least ‘Very Important’ (33 percent and 41 percent, respectively). Significantly, this sentiment among an overwhelming majority of the respondents cuts across all demographic subsets such as age, race, religion, region of state, formal education level, income level . . .).”<sup>7</sup>

The most recent *North American Division (NAD) Manual for School Boards of Seventh-day Adventists* (2018) recommends two resource modules for effective school board membership. Both modules (Adventist K-12 School Board Membership Training and Adventist K-12 School Board Legal and Financial Issues Training)

## Sidebar. Obtaining a Data Picture of Schools

School board members who wish to lead their schools competently now and into the future will want to obtain and analyze data that will give them a better sense of their current reality. Administrators and school board members should be able to access and review a “data picture” of their school that includes a three- to five-year response to the following:

1. Union/conference/district assessment data
2. State/provincial data
3. Recommendations from the most recent school evaluation
4. Average daily attendance in order to assess absenteeism rates and address them
5. Number of referrals for special education services (specifically if receiving assistance from the public school district)
6. Number of parent conferences regarding student discipline
7. Number of suspensions and expulsions
8. Number/percent of special-education students/students requiring Individual Education Plans
9. Student satisfaction or perception assessment
10. Alumni satisfaction or perception assessment
11. Parent satisfaction or perception assessment
12. Teacher/staff satisfaction or perception assessment
13. Administration satisfaction or perception assessment
14. Church/community satisfaction or perception assessment

While many other indicators could be added to the above list, it is up to the discretion of each school board to determine which indicators will be most helpful in their quest for school improvement and developing focused and relevant goal(s) for the school year (or longer if necessary). Positive responses to the above indicators will provide evidence that the school has a culture that values learning and academic success for every student.

quires no training or preparation, Adventist school boards must take the next step of requiring sustained training of all new and returning school board members. Candidates for the position of school board chair should only be considered eligible if they have successfully completed several CEU credit modules relating to school board leadership.

During the Renaissance Adventist Education Summit that convened in Orlando, Florida, in 2010, several hundred attendees were asked to identify obstacles that hindered Seventh-day Adventist schools from thriving. The attendees cited school board competence as the number one obstacle, concluding that “Boards receive inadequate training for governing schools.”<sup>9</sup> Adequate professional development of school board members will better prepare them to put the needs of the students first. It will signal to the students, school staff, community, and other stakeholders that the board and conference administration are serious about school improvement because they are intentionally developing effective school leadership skills. Board members must realize that ongoing learning is not just for teachers but is vital for everyone involved in educating children and youth.

### Access/Contract With Social Workers Must Be Part of the School Staff and Partners in the School Mission

One primary aim of true education is to restore human beings to the image of God as revealed by the life of Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup> We need not look that far from our church pews to see that many families and children in our schools need restoration and assistance.

Children and youth today are increasingly victims of many social forces that hinder and interrupt their role as students in our schools. Students attending Adventist schools are not immune from those forces. Since children spend a significant portion of their time in schools, school boards must recognize that this is the primary environment where children and youth learn to grow academically, so-

are excellent resources for new school board members.<sup>8</sup> Other continuing-education training courses for board members are available through the Adventist Learning Community (<https://adventistlearningcommunity.com>). While these modules are not mandatory for Adventist school board members, they can help them understand the organizational structure and how they can effectively serve their local school.

Conference and union leadership could work together to create and establish a system of evaluation for additional modules or mini-courses to address board members’ unique roles and responsibilities. Such training

could include a more detailed emphasis on understanding and managing school budgets, team building, building board and community relationships, diversity, the liability of members, accountability to the school’s mission/vision, how to build school data-information systems, visionary leadership, etc. These and other topics could be added to the Adventist Learning Community website (<https://adventistlearningcommunity.com>) as continuing-education (CEU) modules for Seventh-day Adventist school board members.

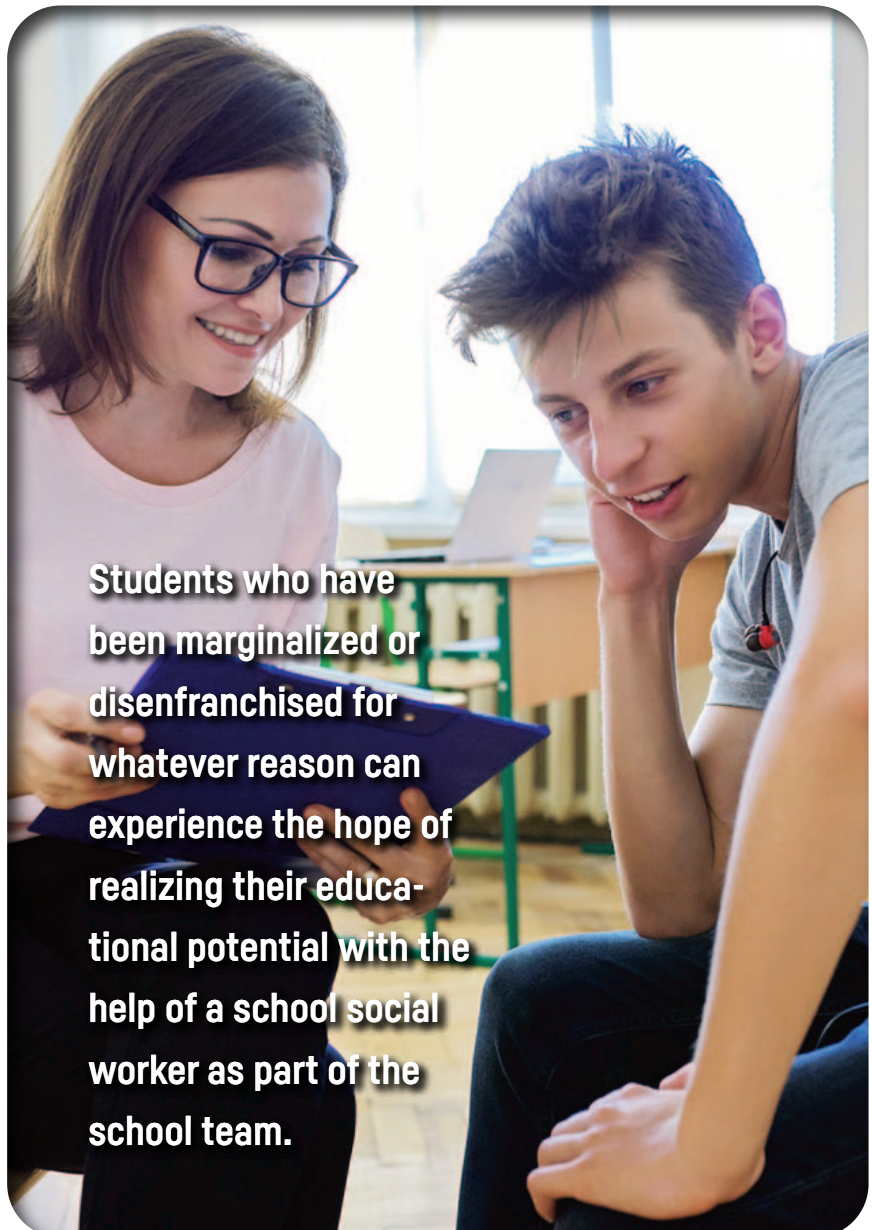
While school board membership in most Adventist schools currently re-

cially, emotionally, and spiritually. Students in Adventist schools can be affected by problems such as poverty, family relationships, drug and alcohol use, violence, various forms of abuse, and mental-health issues. Difficult transitions in their lives (i.e., grief and loss, depression, parental separation and divorce, bullying, etc.) can hinder and even prevent them from reaching their full academic and personal potential. Previously, the availability of help and resources for such students in our schools was often limited. Therefore, schools are finding it necessary to employ full-time or part-time school social workers.

Church communities and parents rely on teachers to create a learning environment that will help students succeed. They expect teachers to provide basic school supplies, ranging from sophisticated technology (e.g., computers and tablets) to basics such as pens, pencils, notebooks, rulers, erasers, and other classroom tools. In some places, teachers supplement these basics with their own funds since many students don't have these items. These and other new realities (i.e., school safety drills, active shooter drills in 90 percent of public schools, and proposals for armed security staff on campuses) give students the idea that schools are unsafe places and have increased stress levels for both teachers and students. In addition to safety concerns, many children and young adults experience adverse childhood events (ACES) that impact their ability to succeed in school. The prevalence and impact of these traumas are evident in the global population.<sup>11</sup> Miller indicates that "children who have been neglected or abused have problems forming relationships with teachers, a necessary first in a successful classroom experience. They've learned to be wary of adults, even those who appear reliable since they've been ignored or betrayed by those they depended on."<sup>12</sup> Given the global prevalence of trauma, more and more students in Adventist schools need care for these challenges. Trauma-based education and counseling are

necessary services that schools must be prepared to implement on short notice. This means that classroom teachers need additional professional support to work with busy parents to provide the education their children deserve. Without additional professional support, many children will receive a poor start in life, leading to lowered economic prospects for the future. School social workers have the potential to be the bridge that helps school boards/educators obtain resources to meet classroom and student needs.

Students who have been marginalized or disenfranchised for whatever reason can experience the hope of realizing their educational potential with the help of a school social worker as part of the school team. Ellen White addressed this issue in particular when she wrote: "The question will often arise: What can be done where poverty prevails and is to be contended at every step? Under these circumstances how can we impress minds with correct ideas of improvement? Certainly, the work is difficult and unless the teachers, the



**Students who have been marginalized or disenfranchised for whatever reason can experience the hope of realizing their educational potential with the help of a school social worker as part of the school team.**

thinking men, and the men who have means will exercise their talents and will lift just as Christ would lift were He in their place, an important work will be left undone.”<sup>13</sup> Intentionally supporting the mental-health needs of children and youth within the school environment will positively impact the school environment and teaching staff.

### **Strengthen Relationships Between the School Board and the Superintendent**

The relationship between school boards and superintendents can be strained at times if boards decide to micromanage or challenge the superintendent’s decisions on management. While it may sound simple to state that the school board governs and the superintendent administers, it is often difficult for the board and superintendent to understand and clarify these roles. The Hanover Research Review states, “the most common types of confusion in districts involves superintendents focusing too heavily on policy and school boards extending too far into administrative functions.”<sup>14</sup> A fractured relationship between the superintendent’s office and the local school board can negatively affect the school program’s success and indirectly influence students’ learning experience.

Failing to understand the proper roles of the board and superintendent can lead to poor communication, lack of trust, conflict, and, ultimately, the closure of the school. As a general rule, boards establish policies, set priorities and goals, and maintain the operation of the school facility. Superintendents identify district needs and policies, evaluate the outcomes of the day-to-day operation of the school educational program, and recommend the hiring and continuation of teachers’ contracts. When a board decides to micromanage the superintendent’s decisions on management, this can create an uncomfortable and unproductive relationship.

Within the Adventist school governance system, the opportunities for building trust and respect between the

superintendent and local school board can be limited due to geographic factors and other office duties that superintendents must perform. For some school boards, the only time they may see their conference superintendent is when there are personnel items to review that require the attendance of the superintendent or associate. Superintendents must be proactive rather than reactive when building trust and respect in school board relationships.

While the *NAD Handbook for Superintendents of Seventh-day Adventist Schools* indicates that “the conference superintendent and/or associates should regularly attend a reasonable number of board meetings at each school,”<sup>15</sup> this particular guideline may provide too much latitude for a conference superintendent to decide what is a reasonable number of board meetings to attend each school year, a consideration often based on the schools’ geographical distance from the conference office. Superintendents and their associates must be more intentional and accountable now and in the future to ensure that their relationships with their school boards are maintained at optimum levels. This may include video conferencing or Zoom meetings with school boards as a substitute for face-to-face communication. It may require more face-to-face meetings with executive members of each school board at the local conference office on an annual or semi-annual basis. Scheduled meetings with school board chairpersons from each district/conference school would also serve to build rapport and encourage discussion of policy items, school evaluations, vision setting, school board training programs, etc. School boards and superintendents will increasingly need to collaborate and consult regularly to enhance the quality of education and performance of the students entrusted to their care.

### **Incorporate More Student Voices in Decision Making**

Stakeholders sometimes question educational policymakers regarding the purpose and meaning of a particular item or decision. A typical response is, “We are doing this for the good of the students.” While this may be a sincere and honest assessment, the fact that students are mostly not included in district-wide or school-wide decision-making leaves them “outside the window looking in” and prevents them from sharing with decision-makers their ideas about what is “for the good of the students.” It is time for students to become more involved in decision-making activities that affect them, their fellow students, and their school. Fletcher says that including students as school board members “may be the most powerful untapped resource available to educators and school leaders today.”<sup>16</sup>

When Google hosted a meeting for the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) digital consortium in Chicago in July 2016, they realized they were planning how technology would transform schools without considering the most influential voices—the students.<sup>17</sup> As superintendents at the consortium explored the future of learning together, they concluded that “putting student voices at the center of everything we do will help us design the future with them and for them. . . . it occurred to us that students are our users, and our users weren’t part of our conversation as much as they should be. Without their input, we wouldn’t be poised for success, because we weren’t.”<sup>18</sup>

Fletcher offers several purpose-filled steps to get student voices on the school board. Students on a school board can serve as voices and consultants regarding their “on-the-ground experience” at their school and as advisory, not voting members. The benefits of incorporating student voices include the following:

1. Students learn the processes used to shape and improve education.
2. Students can provide regular

feedback to the administration regarding current school policies.

3. Students and parents become better informed of important school policies.

4. Students can provide input and share their perspectives regarding the development of policies.

5. Students can build important relationships with the leaders of their community who serve on the school board.<sup>19</sup>

A successful school board will partner with the community to ensure it can respond to the hopes and aspirations of the young people under their care. One meaningful way this can be done is by intentionally including student voices on the school board.

### Improve School/Community Partnerships

Adventist schools must never lose sight of their primary purpose. Our school/church communities can instinctively recognize whether our schools are fulfilling their mission of preparing students as contributing citizens in this world and for God's kingdom. They know if their school board has veered into "mission drift" and adopted a different agenda. The mission and vision of the school must be shared with the community, so our schools can reap the benefits the community has to offer.

Students will better grasp the importance of the school's mission and vision as they connect with the school community. School boards can encourage and support the school by becoming involved in building/improving school-community partnerships. Such partnerships can pay substantial dividends when the community becomes part of the school's identity. Below are some suggestions on how boards and school leadership can work collaboratively to build or improve school-community partnerships:

**1. Student-led evangelistic meetings:** Junior high school students can preach sermons directed to their peers and the general community by pitching a tent on campus or holding meetings in the school gymnasium or local

church. Such events often result in faith lessons as the student body and community witness baptisms and church/community support.

**2. Class service projects:** A variety of projects can be scheduled that provide weekly or monthly opportunities to serve the community and which can be integrated into the Bible curriculum. Community involvement can help "shine the light" on students whose talents may not be apparent in the classroom.

**3. Encouraging community use of school facilities:** The school building/gym often sits empty at the end of a school day and on weekends. Encouraging non-profit community groups to use the facilities (with appropriate oversight) can allow the school to get involved in community projects.

**4. Banquets for senior citizens:** The students can invite the senior citizens of the church and community to a luncheon banquet at the school at least once a year. The school can ask a business or non-profit corporation to sponsor the event with the assistance of parents.

**5. Hosting community cooking schools and health evaluations:** Nutrition education and tips for a healthy lifestyle benefit both the students and the community. Increasingly, people are interested in learning how to live healthier lives and cook healthful foods to save money and avoid the health hazards posed by the high fat and sugar content of fast foods.

**6. Career days:** Planning at least two career days per school year provides a great educational experience for students. It also enables local businesspeople and professionals to learn more about the school and its needs, and to share their experience and expertise.

**7. Communication/message boards:** Schools can use communication or message boards at the front of the school to thank businesses/organizations for their involvement and special donations or announce school-sponsored events.

**8. Back-to-school week:** The school board and administration can

invite community members and business leaders to attend school for several hours or even a day. When people learn more about the school, this tends to open doors and promote a better understanding of the school's mission.

School boards need to understand that the more interaction and collaboration their school has with its community, the greater the likelihood that resources and school support will increase. The adage, "It takes a village to raise a child," can be reimagined by boards by advocating that it takes a community to raise (and sustain) a school. When schools and community organizations work together to support learning, everyone benefits.

### Summary

Real change and sustained growth begin at the local level. School boards must play an essential role in achieving student growth and school improvement. Boards, now and in the future, must operate differently. They must not only rely on mandates from districts/conferences alone but independently collect crucial data from their respective schools to make decisions and prioritize goals (see sidebar). Ensuring continuous professional development of school board members will generate innovative and creative problem solvers to deal with the complex issues that face boards daily. Boards must also work collaboratively with superintendents to ensure that the school mission works in tandem with community needs and that school administrators and staff implement it in all aspects of the program.

As Broderick indicates, "With all this on their plates, school board members have an important role in positioning our districts for a future in perpetual motion. To survive and flourish, we need to govern in ways that value creativity, dreaming, proposing, and risk-taking."<sup>20</sup> Consider the following words:

"The men whom God has connected with His institutions are not to



feel that there is no improvement for them to make because they stand in responsible positions. If they are to be representative men, guardians of the most sacred work ever committed to mortals, they must take the position of learners.”<sup>21</sup>

The role and responsibility of the Seventh-day Adventist school boards require more learning about visioning and governance as we move further into the 21st century. To maintain their central position in educational governance, boards must be future-ready rather than satisfied with the status quo. Board members of K-12 Adventist schools can't wish where their school and students will be four or five years into the future; they must design it now. ✍

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*This article has been peer reviewed.*

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**Recommended citation:**

**Robert D. Crux**, “K-12 Adventist School Boards: Leading Now and Into the Future,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 85:4 (2023): 11-17. <https://doi.org/10.55668/jae0054>.

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Rigaud Joseph



## A Teaching Practice for Fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education

Over the past few years, there has been an exponential growth in enrollment in colleges and universities in the world. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in 2023, approximately 235 million students attended higher education institutions worldwide.<sup>1</sup> Higher education attainment for people 25 years of age and older continues to increase, and data indicate that, globally, many of the students enrolled in tertiary education can be considered nontraditional. Nontraditional students can be learners who delayed enrollment into postsecondary education (25 years of age or older), are enrolled part-time in college, maintain full-time employment, claim independent status on financial-aid applications, have dependent(s) other than a spouse, live as single parents, and did not complete a high school diploma.<sup>2</sup> Students with low socioeconomic status and those with minority backgrounds are also classified as nontraditional.<sup>3</sup>

Causal factors for the growth in college enrollment among nontraditional students include—but are not limited to—economic downturns like the Great Recession (people tend to pursue education in hopes of improving future job prospects),<sup>4</sup> competition from automation and artificial intelligence,<sup>5</sup> college aspirations, and family/life transitions.<sup>6</sup> Nontraditional adult learners face many obstacles to success, including juggling different roles (inter-role conflict),<sup>7</sup> lack of academic flexibility,<sup>8</sup> and isolation.<sup>9</sup> These result in lower retention and graduation rates.<sup>10</sup> Nontraditional students are less likely to avail themselves of

faculty office hours than their traditional peers.<sup>11</sup>

Many universities have developed campus support services to assist nontraditional students, including extending faculty office hours,<sup>12</sup> adding library support,<sup>13</sup> and providing mentoring.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, most universities now offer distance education<sup>15</sup> and part-time enrollment options.<sup>16</sup> If received, campus support services can help students succeed in higher education.<sup>17</sup> However, as mentioned above, nontraditional students are often unable to utilize the services primarily designed for traditional students.

### Purpose

Because existing campus-based services leave few opportunities for faculty to help students outside regular scheduling times, there is the potential for mismatched expectations between faculty and nontraditional students and the inability of students to get the help they need. This article presents the Post-Lecture Tête-à-Tête technique as a teaching approach that can help to address the needs of nontraditional students in higher education. The goal is to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion in postsecondary classrooms. A description of this technique—along with theoretical assumptions and connection to the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) framework—is provided below.

*Diversity* has been defined as “the sum of how people are alike and different.” It also relates to *equity*, a process of “taking into account differences to ensure a fair process and, ultimately, a fair (or equitable) outcome,” and (3) *inclusion*, “an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully.”<sup>18</sup>

Taken as a whole, diversity, equity, and inclusion constitute a conceptual framework that supports a level playing field for all individuals, particularly historically marginalized populations.<sup>19</sup> DEI has been used as a guiding framework for retention practices in higher education beginning in the 1960s in the United States, and expanding with each decade.<sup>20</sup>

### Definition of Post-Lecture Tête-à-Tête

Post-lecture Tête-à-Tête (PLTT) combines two concepts: *post-lecture* and *tête-à-tête*. The first concept (*post-lecture*) indicates things that take place immediately after an instructional presentation in a higher education setting. The Latin prefix *post-* simply means “subsequent to” or “after.” *Lecture* is any form of conversation, talk, or discourse that a faculty member or guest speaker leads in front of an academic audience—in this case, college and university students. Borrowed from French, the second concept (*tête-à-tête*) could literally be translated as “head-to-head.” However, the broader meaning of the term would have been lost with this translation because “head-to-head” implies confrontation. Far from conveying a sense of confrontation, the Gallicism *tête-à-tête* involves a friendly, one-on-one dialogue between two people. In academia, PLTT refers to the conversation that occurs after class between a faculty and one or more students.

Post-Lecture Tête-à-Tête consists of brief content-focused meetings with students during the last 15 to 20 minutes of class and is designed for classes that last two or more hours. For various reasons, some students may hesitate to ask questions in class to avoid being perceived as unintelligent, especially when their peers appear to grasp the content of a lecture more quickly than they do. Instructors can allocate the final 15 to 20 minutes of class to the small number of students who desire more clarification regarding lectures and/or assignments. In some cases, faculty may choose to arrange office hours for these students or refer them to key campus resources.

It is true that nontraditional students have a history of not benefiting from campus services due to the reasons discussed earlier. However, there are cases where students face severe challenges to achieving academic success. Once aware of students’ struggles (either

through poor performance on assignments or via self-disclosure during PLTT), the instructor may recommend specific strategies and campus resources to enhance students’ success. These may or may not include changes in students’ daily routines to facilitate a smoother adaptation to college life.

Hence, PLTT allows instructors to better understand the pressing needs of students and more accurately determine how these needs can be successfully met. For example, an instructor might assign an academically fragile student to a group project where the student can benefit from working with peers. The same goes for a physically, mentally, or linguistically challenged student. It is incumbent upon the instructor to guarantee that every student has optimal opportunities to succeed.

**Nontraditional students remain an overlooked population throughout the existing higher educational system. Colleges and universities need to provide students with more opportunities to achieve their highest potential.**

### Theoretical Assumptions

There are currently seven guiding principles or assumptions upon which PLTT relies. These assumptions are supported by the literature on modern andragogy (teaching practices that best support adult education), and webagogy (teaching practices that integrate online tools and technology resources). In no particular order, they can be listed as follows:

1. Nontraditional students face more academic barriers than their traditional counterparts.<sup>21</sup>

2. Nontraditional students remain an overlooked population throughout the existing higher

educational system.<sup>22</sup> Colleges and universities need to provide students with more opportunities to achieve their highest potential. Such opportunities may come with higher costs, so pursuing grants or fundraising for this specific purpose might be a necessary venture.<sup>23</sup>

3. Communication between faculty and students is key to academic success.<sup>24</sup>

4. One-on-one interactions between faculty and nontraditional students foster equity and inclusion in the classroom.<sup>25</sup>

5. PLTT is primarily designed for classes that last two or more hours.

6. In distance learning, PLTT is a better fit with synchronous delivery methods, although a blended version of synchronous and asynchronous approaches might also work well.<sup>26</sup> This assumption is consistent with Equivalency Theory, a seminal distance-education theory that

says courses should provide equivalent learning experiences regardless of modality—synchronous or asynchronous—to be of benefit to the nontraditional learner.<sup>27</sup>

### Connection With the Existing Theoretical Frameworks

With its focus on adult learners, many of whom are often taught online, PLTT mirrors the premises of andragogy and webagogy. In addition, by targeting primarily nontraditional students, this teaching intervention dovetails with the underlying principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

### Connection With Andragogy

Andragogy, the art of teaching adult learners, is different from pedagogy, which has its roots in Greek and initially referred to the teaching of children (“paidos”—child and “agogos”—leader). Credited for the development of andragogy in the 1980s, American adult educator Malcolm Shepherd Knowles believed that adults gain, memorize, and retrieve information differently than children.<sup>28</sup> The literature on adult learning has identified six different assumptions about learning that can be expressed when associated with andragogy: self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, motivation, need to know, and learning approach.<sup>29</sup>

In general, adults are independent learners (self-concept), have life experiences that are relevant to the learning process (experience), are ready to learn things that carry real-life applications (readiness to learn), are both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated (motivation), want to know the rationale for learning something (need to know), and respond better to problem-centered learning (learning approach). Knowles<sup>30</sup> argued that instructors play a key role in facilitating a student’s movement toward self-directed learning. By facilitating frequent encounters between the adult learner and the instructor, PLTT is arguably consistent with the andragogical framework, particularly the different ways adult learners engage with self-concept, readiness to learn, motivation, and need-to-know assumptions.

### Connection With Webagogy

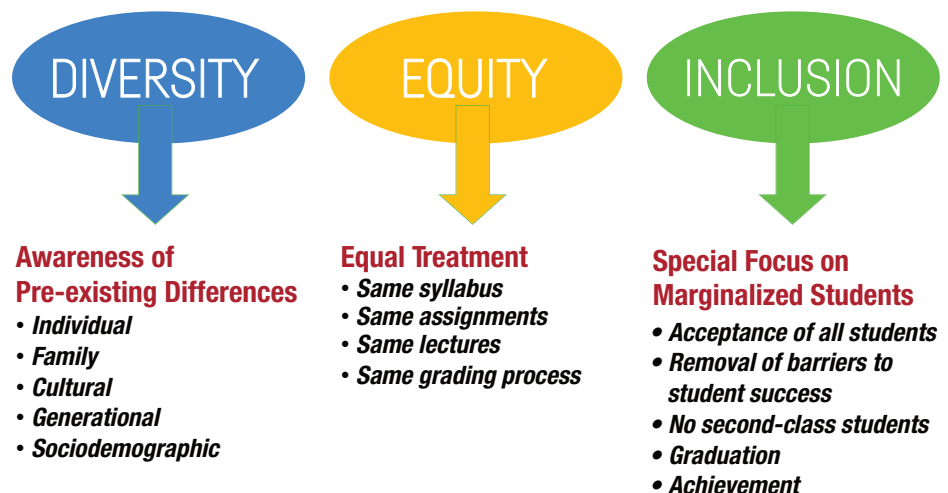
In simple terms, *web-*

*agogy* refers to how teaching practices use online tools and technology to facilitate web-based learning.<sup>31</sup> This term is similar to *cybergogy*, which implies the use of technology in learning.<sup>32</sup> Over the past few decades, the brick-and-mortar educational system is slowly but steadily being replaced by distance education<sup>33</sup> and the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this process.<sup>34</sup> Appavoo created the acronym “TELEPHONE” to illustrate a webagogical approach: T = Tutoring; E = Experiential Learning; L = Leverage; E = Excitement; P = Peer; H = Harmony; O = Orientation; N = Neutral; and E = Engagement.<sup>35</sup> According to Appavoo, tutoring improves students’ learning (T); students’ own experience helps their learning process (E); technology creates/leverages learning opportunities (L); online course activities create excitement for students (E); students learn from their peers (P); online course activities harmonize learning (H); students appreciate orientation received in online learning (O); the neutrality of online platforms ensures that each student has a voice in a given course (N); and engagement is a fundamental part of learning (E). By being student-oriented, PLTT echoes five tenets of webagogy: tutoring, harmony, orientation, neutrality, and engagement.

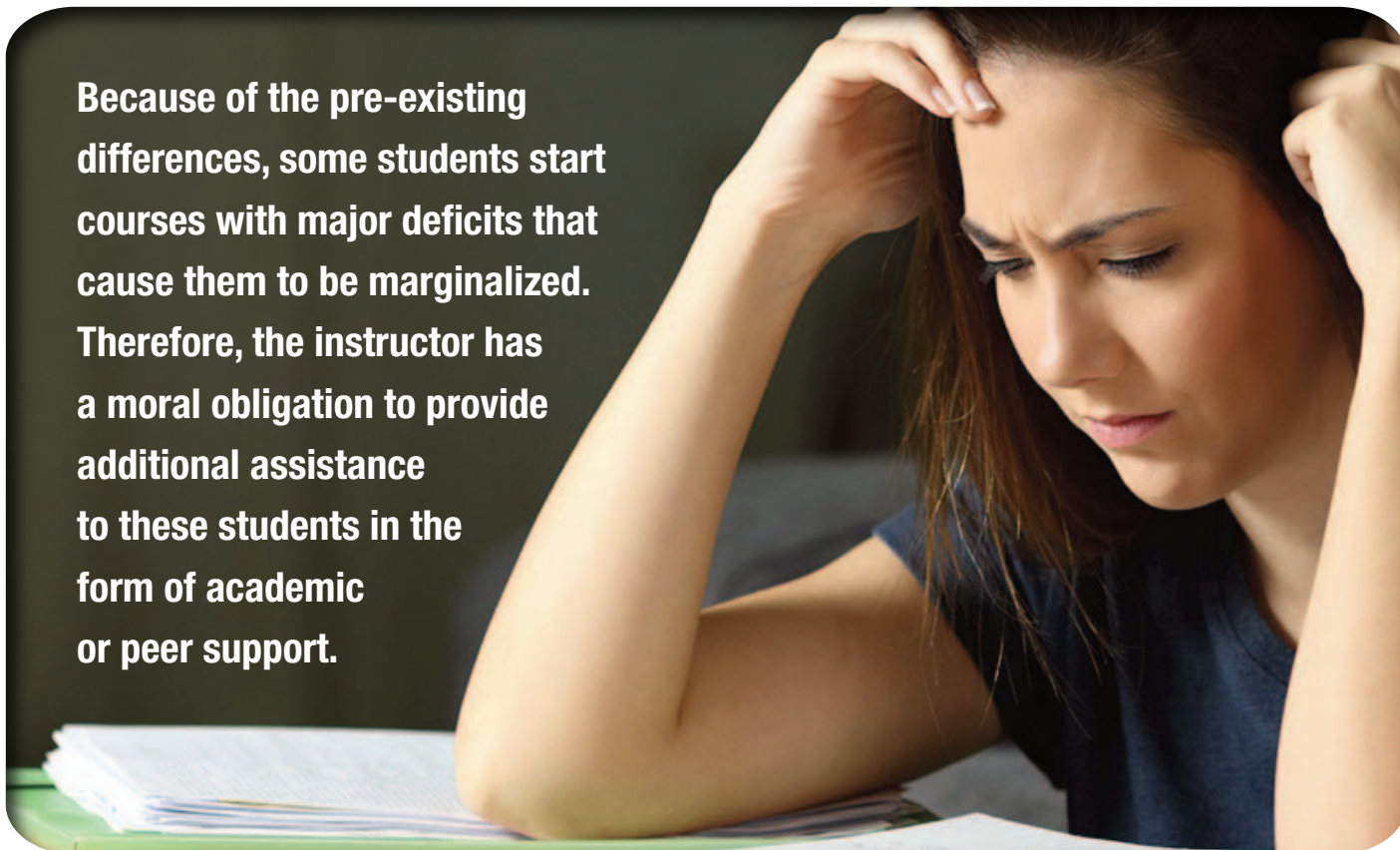
### Connections With Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The seven assumptions of PLTT pertain to the DEI paradigm. In this article, diversity represents differences among students; equity focuses on each student’s specific needs; and inclusion deals with the removal of educational barriers so that students feel respected and accepted. Figure 1 below establishes the connection between the PLTT model and the DEI paradigm.

**Figure 1. The Post-Lecture Tête-à-Tête Technique and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework**



**Because of the pre-existing differences, some students start courses with major deficits that cause them to be marginalized. Therefore, the instructor has a moral obligation to provide additional assistance to these students in the form of academic or peer support.**



As displayed in Figure 1, in terms of diversity, instructors should be aware of pre-existing differences among the student population. These differences can be of an individual nature (e.g., student disability), a family nature (e.g., a student who is a parent), a cultural nature (e.g., a speaker of English as a second language), a generational nature (e.g., an older student or a first-generation immigrant student), as well as a socio-economic nature (e.g., a low-income student). Keeping these differences in mind is the first guiding principle of Post-Lecture Tête-à-Tête.

As the numbers of nontraditional students increase, instructors must recognize that these challenges will become more prevalent in classrooms.

Regarding equity, the playing field must be level for all students. This means that students who need support or additional resources can access them. While this is the ideal, the reality is that many schools, especially small private schools, do not have the funding to provide additional resources nor to support professional development and training for faculty to better serve students. Consequently, institutions have a responsibility to provide resources and support systems that can help instructors implement approaches such

as PLTT. Within a university structure that provides support through the various student services, instructors are better able to level the playing field for their students. It is true that all students, by virtue of enrollment in a course, have automatic access to the same lectures, classroom activities, course materials (syllabus, assignments, etc.), and grading patterns. However, because of the pre-existing differences described above, some students start courses with major deficits that cause them to be marginalized. Therefore, the instructor has a moral obligation to provide additional assistance to these students in the form of academic support or peer support. With its fourth and fifth assumptions, PLTT reflects the equity aspect of the DEI framework.

Finally, at the inclusion level, institutions must provide instructors with the necessary equipment, training, and financial and technical support needed to ensure potential barriers to student success are removed. This requires collaboration between administration and instructional staff. Through frequent contact with the instructor and participation in group work, nontraditional college students can become empowered. Once empowered, these students are

more likely to complete courses successfully. A true educator does not settle for preparing second-class students, defined here as those who cannot graduate on time and/or are not eligible for graduate school due to low GPAs. All students, regardless of their socio-economic conditions, should be afforded a chance to perform at the same level as their peers. This will be possible only if there is a genuine effort to help them successfully negotiate the many barriers they face. Post-Lecture Tête-à-Tête is based on the idea that the instructor has something to offer in this regard. Because it is designed to improve educational outcomes for students, PLTT clearly reflects the DEI framework.

### Discussion and Implications

The PLTT framework is limited in that teachers may not be able to implement its assumptions in asynchronous environments. This is a major concern because many nontraditional students have enrolled in asynchronous programs, a situation that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>36</sup> Faculty working in online, asynchronous environments need to interact with students in a timely manner, namely via e-mail, text, WhatsApp, and various online platforms such as Zoom, WebEx, or GoogleChat.<sup>37</sup> However, some faculty, due to their limited technology skills and resources, may experience difficulties implementing the intervention in an asynchronous environment. In such a scenario, a blended version of synchronous and asynchronous methods is advisable.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the aforementioned limitations, this article has potential implications for the DEI paradigm. The paradigm advocates for the educational well-being of all students, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds or other difficulties. The existing scholarship has shown the limitations of campus-based programs designed to help marginalized students. This article proposes Post-Lecture Tête-à-Tête as an important tool for diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education. Indeed, PLTT constitutes a new tool in an instructor's arsenal of pedagogical resources. It provides instructors with an additional opportunity to

assess and meet the academic needs of their students. Once securing one-on-one contact with a student, the instructor will be able to determine how to be more helpful. This may include solving the issue(s) for which the student sought help in the first place, assigning the student to the right team for group projects, and, if needed, encouraging the student to use faculty office hours, library support, and other on-campus services.

While implementation of PLTT is important, it is just one form of one-on-one interaction between faculty and students. Communication between faculty and student matters, and can occur in many different settings.<sup>39</sup> Studies have shown the importance of faculty-student interaction both inside the classroom<sup>40</sup> and outside the classroom.<sup>41</sup> Such interaction enhances academic outcomes for students, including those from underprivileged backgrounds.<sup>42</sup> That is because faculty/student relations/interactions promote diversity and inclusion in the classroom.<sup>43</sup> As a variant of faculty-student engagement, PLTT is not new. However, previous research has not focused on this strategy.

The description, assumptions, and theoretical connection of the proposed model provide ways for future research to assess its practicability and effectiveness. Hence, this article calls on postsecondary instructors and administrations to implement the model in various settings and to evaluate its effectiveness, and to document their findings through rigorous research. Instructors and administrators (and researchers) who wish to do so can choose course grades, timely graduation rates, or eligibility for graduate studies as possible outcome variables and Post-Lecture Tête-à-Tête as an intervention. Using quasi-experimental designs, future work can compare educational outcomes between students who participate in PLTT sessions (nontraditional students) and those who do not receive this intervention. Educational researchers could also use third-party instructors to interview PLTT-receiving students about their perception of the intervention and the extent to which the program has contributed to their success.

**Studies have shown the importance of faculty-student interaction both inside the classroom and outside the classroom. Such interaction enhances academic outcomes for students.**

## Conclusion

This article seeks to target a global audience. In effect, although the existing scholarship on nontraditional students comes primarily from developed countries, particularly the United States, it can be argued that the concepts discussed in this article (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Post-Lecture Tête-à-Tête) are international in nature. First, nontraditional students are found across multiple educational settings—whether public or private, large or small, affluent or non-affluent, urban or rural, campus-based or online, faith-based or secular. Second, DEI is a topic with no geographical boundaries. Even in places less demographically diverse (compared to the United States), the student body at colleges and universities is arguably not monolithic. There are differences among them in terms of age, gender, socioeconomic status, parental status, employment status, etc. Third, the potential usefulness and applicability of PLTT as a pedagogical technique can be worldwide. That is, it is likely that educators, regardless of cultural background, could successfully implement this intervention for the benefit of their students.

This article seeks to inform Adventist professors teaching in both Adventist and non-Adventist colleges and universities. The Seventh-day Adventist Church maintains a global educational presence with 118 tertiary institutions and 141,115 students.<sup>44</sup> Hence, using the Adventist educational audience as a fulcrum, this article aims to reach a broad range of stakeholders, specifically the ultimate target population of higher education faculty, including those who are non-Adventist, non-Christian, non-religious, and non-theist. ✍

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*This article has been peer reviewed.*

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## Recommended citation:

**Rigaud Joseph**, “The Post-Lecture Tête-à-Tête: A Teaching Practice for Fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 85:4 (2023): 18-25. <https://doi.org/10.55668/jae0055>.

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Junjun Manalo Amparo

## Using Christ's Method for Reaching Students

I first learned about John Maxwell from a book gifted to me titled *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Maxwell, a prolific author, speaker, and leadership coach, has written several books on leadership and personal development that have sold more than 24 million copies in 50 languages. One morning recently, I had the opportunity to watch his presentation about the “Five Steps to Sharing Your Faith”<sup>1</sup> and became very intrigued by Maxwell’s thoughts about faith and how best to share Jesus’ love with others.

### A Passion for Sharing Faith

In his presentation, Maxwell identifies the following five steps to sharing one’s faith: (1) Value people and add value to them; (2) Embrace and hold fast to your faith; (3) Enter their world to know and understand them; (4) Be creative in sharing the good news; and (5) Never forget why you entered the world.<sup>2</sup> In his ministry so far, Maxwell has spoken more than 12,000 times in locations worldwide. Because of his numerous leadership and personal-development books, everyone expects him to discuss these topics, especially as they relate to the secular business community. However, in one interview, he was asked about his favorite topic. Maxwell replied that he loves to share two topics. First, he deeply loves to share his faith. Second, he is passionate about teaching people how to share their faith. Nothing is more rewarding, he said, than introducing a person to Christ. His belief in the value of each person and his deep love for God has shaped his ministry. I was deeply impressed by his passion for sharing God’s love.

### The Science of Soul-saving

Most educators readily discuss research, academic

service, teaching strategies, professional development, and teaching-related tasks. These topics are central to the profession and occupy most of our time. But could we share God’s love in the context of our teaching career? Ellen White offered an interesting insight about reaching others, especially our students: “The highest of all sciences is the science of soul saving. The greatest work to which human beings can aspire is the work of winning men from sin to holiness.”<sup>3</sup>

If soul-saving is the highest science of all the sciences, it is worth learning how to partner with Christ to do it well. Why is soul-saving considered a science? “In order to lead souls to Jesus there must be a knowledge of human nature and a study of the human mind.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, we need to deeply understand the condition of the human mind and our nature.

In a school setting, students are confronted with issues such as academic pressure, broken relationships, financial challenges, drug dependency, lack of motivation, video game addiction, homesickness, anxiety, etc. When teachers share their faith, they share truths that can transform people’s lives. However, while the school community, in general, is willing to offer support, some students do not seek help. Some are hesitant to unload their burdens and suffer quietly from the pressures and challenges of life.

## Understanding Christ's Method

The secret to successful teaching requires the application of various methods and effective teaching strategies. But what can we learn from the life of a Master Teacher in terms of reaching students and winning them for Christ? Ellen White emphasized the significance of using Christ's method and highlighted the five strategies for reaching people: "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"<sup>5</sup>

Christ's ministry has transformed countless precious souls. Christ's method is timeless and universal, and I have contemplated how to contextualize and integrate such an approach on school campuses to achieve a meaningful ministry.

### 1. Jesus mingled with people.

While positive student relationships are fundamental to success, an important question is this: How do we, as teachers, counselors, chaplains, staff, and school administrators, mingle with students? Do we seize every opportunity to interact with them? This is the first step in Christ's method—to mingle with people. This requires investing valuable time. Unfortunately, teachers are often too busy with deadlines, assessments, grade reports, and lesson planning. The truth is, we often find ourselves so occupied that we don't have much time to meet the needs of students.

However, just as in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), we must intentionally make time. The Good Samaritan temporarily set aside his schedule to help someone in need. While the man being robbed and beaten along Jericho Road had visible and urgent needs, it isn't easy to minister to students who have less-recognizable needs. We will never discover their actual needs and challenges unless we mingle with them and engage them in authentic conversation through personal dialogue. Mingling with people is the initial step to understanding their personal needs,

whether emotional, financial, or spiritual. Moreover, we can establish great relationships through personal conversations and quality time with our students.

Jesus loved being with people regardless of their background (Matthew 9:10-13; Luke 15:1, 2; John 1:14). This is why He was accused of mingling with sinners and eating with sinners and tax collectors. In *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 6, we read, "The work of Christ was largely made up of personal interviews. He had a faithful regard for the one-soul audience."<sup>6</sup> While true witnessing entails mingling, the



**For the professor or teacher, interacting with students may require more creativity and intentionality. For example, this may mean visiting students in the dormitory, offering extra sessions to help them with homework, playing sports, joining after-school activities, or even just sitting and talking.**

love from God should be the driving force and the supreme reason for reaching others.

Along with teaching and counseling, working at the university level allows me to serve as a club adviser and mentor and support student-life activities, providing me with precious opportunities to interact with students. However, for the professor or teacher, interacting with students may require more creativity and intentionality. For example, this may mean visiting students in the dormitory, offering extra sessions to help them with homework, playing sports, joining after-school activities, or even just sitting and talking together at the cafeteria during mealtimes.

## 2. *Jesus showed sympathy for others.*

Sympathy is an expression of care; it indicates sorrow and understanding of someone else's hardships, suffering, grief, misfortune, etc. Reaching students becomes meaningful when sympathy serves as a bridge that connects two people: the sufferer and the comforter. The sufferer could be academically at risk and/or emotionally disturbed due to a broken relationship or personal issues at home. When an authentic connection is established, it creates a space for understanding, compassion, and healing. We have an excellent example in Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus. When He saw Lazarus' family and friends overwhelmed with grief, His heart stirred with sympathy and compassion, and He wept with them (John 11:33-35). Then, He met their need and raised Lazarus from the dead, a foreshadowing of how He would meet humanity's needs in the future when He arose from the tomb, defeating death forever.<sup>7</sup>

In showing sympathy, we must look for ways to relieve suffering. In *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 4, we read, "Any human being who needs our sympathy and our kind offers is our neighbor. The suffering and destitute of all classes are our neighbors; and when their wants are brought to our knowledge, it is our duty to relieve them as far as possible."<sup>8</sup> We often think of sympathy as a feeling of sadness for others because of their situations. However, to sympathize is not just to feel sorry for others but to take action in practical ways. This method is visible in the life of Christ, and He didn't just show sympathy but took that sympathy to the next level—compassionate action. Again, in Matthew 14:14, we have another example of Jesus' compassion: "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick" (NIV).<sup>9</sup>

The Bible is full of reminders regarding action-oriented sympathy, such as feeding the hungry (Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-13), clothing the naked (Isaiah 58:7; Matthew 25:35-45), welcoming the stranger (Matthew 25:31-40; Hebrews 13:2), visiting the sick (Matthew 25:36; James 5:14), and prisoner (Matthew 25:34-40; Hebrews 13:1-3), visiting widows (Luke 7:11-15; Acts 9:39), and orphans (Deuteronomy 14:28-29; James 1:27), and comforting those in trouble (Jonah 4:5-8). Every teacher needs to be proactive and sensitive to students' needs to ensure that they receive essential

**If we want to become effective educators, we need to understand the emotions of our students and sympathize with their needs, just as Jesus did when He interacted with people.**

support. If we want to become effective educators, we need to understand the emotions of our students and sympathize with their needs, just as Jesus did when He interacted with people. When teachers and staff are more intentional about this, many students on campus will be touched by the ministry of compassion.

## 3. *Jesus ministered to people's needs.*

The life of Christ is an example of how to meet the needs of people. For instance, Jesus addressed the need to avoid potential

social embarrassment at the wedding feast in Cana. Also, He met the collective physical needs of the more than 5,000 hungry people by feeding them. On another occasion, He addressed the private need for the emotional security of the woman at the well and the personal spiritual needs of Zacchaeus and Nicodemus. Jesus is a perfect example of how to practically respond when a felt need is discovered—and how to meet it in a timely way: "The Savior has given His precious life in order to establish a church capable of caring for sorrowful, tempted souls."<sup>10</sup>

However, by nature, we desire for our own good. Just like the priest and the Levites in the parable of the Good Samaritan, none of us likes interruptions. Teachers are busy people. They have committee meetings to attend, grading to do, project proposals to submit, and jobs to get done. They set goals for themselves and want to meet them, sometimes within a short time. That's why when a student requests help or a principal calls an emergency meeting because of a misbehaving student, it can be challenging if the timing isn't convenient. Sometimes, it's difficult to drop whatever one is doing to undertake another urgent matter.

But most of the time, the greatest opportunities to minister to people's needs happen in the midst of interruptions. As we study the ministry of Jesus, we notice that some of the needs He cared for occurred as interruptions, to which He lovingly responded. To minister to the needs of others often entails time and sacrifices.

While God asks us to desire other people's good, we minister to others not just because we want something in return but to show that we genuinely care and love them. I remember visiting a student in the dorm after one of her family members died because of a car accident. She appreciated that I was just there to

listen. Other students have shared with me that just having someone listen to their frustrations and feelings of burnout due to holding various leadership positions on campus or being unable to manage their time assured them that they were seen and heard. In many cases, ministering to their needs means offering a listening ear. The ministry of presence and praying with them are priceless, especially during the most difficult times.

#### **4. *Jesus won people's confidence.***

In any relationship, integrity and open communication are essential to inspire confidence. When there is trust, even if the words aren't perfectly packaged, people will still get your meaning. But without trust, misinterpretation can happen no matter how carefully one crafts the words. A lack of trust and reservation about others occurs when people have been taken advantage of by others. Relationships thrive when there is confidence, and trusting someone requires knowing his or her character. This is why gaining confidence is a long process. It involves character traits such as integrity, pure motives, and good intentions in building relationships with people.

On one occasion, the fishermen who followed Jesus cast their nets unsuccessfully (Luke 5:4-11), yet they trusted the Carpenter's words when He said to try again. The following questions are ones every teacher should reflect on as we strive to build better relationships with students and share our faith. When you're talking with people, do they trust you? Do they put confidence in you? Why would students confide in teachers they do not trust? Can they trust that any sensitive issues they share with you will be kept confidential? What are some of the elements that encourage the growth of such confidence? What causes people to be willing to trust or have faith in someone? The starting point of winning confidence is listening. It's hard to survive in an environment where people do not listen consciously—bosses not listening to employees, students not listening to teachers, young people not listening to church leaders, and spouses not listening to each other.

Students must also know that you, their teacher,

care about what is best for them. This means showing that you care about what happens to them, the decisions that they make, and that you have their best interest in mind. Ethical principles and clear boundaries must guide relationships with students. In many countries, educators are considered mandatory reporters, so while confidentiality is essential, anything divulged that may cause harm to the student or others must be reported. Knowing someone cares about what happens to them is built on consistency and honesty.

As a counselor, I always ask myself, "How do I win students' confidence? Why would they come to my office and listen when they can talk to their friends?" When we listen, we gain trust because it means we value people. Listening is the starting point for winning people's confidence.

**As a counselor, I always ask myself, "How do I win students' confidence? Why would they come to my office and listen when they can talk to their friends?" When we listen, we gain trust because it means we value people.**

#### **5. *Jesus invited people to follow Him.***

"Follow me," Jesus said to the people He called to be His disciples. The appeal came after He met their needs and won their confidence. This is a vital, sequential step in Jesus' method. It's tough to win students' confidence when you have not mingled with them or haven't met their needs or sympathized with them. Leading people to God is a natural result of using Christ's method as the solid foundation of campus ministry. It arises from the first four steps, during which genuine relationships are built. When students start questioning our motivations and why we live the way we do, we can spontaneously start talking about the source of our spiritual commitment and inspiration.

In my years of teaching and counseling students, I have discovered that educators can genuinely impact students' lives if they intentionally apply Christ's method. When their words are filled with hope and encouragement, students will be drawn to the feet of Jesus.

#### **Final Thoughts**

Living a godly life is an integral aspect of Christ's method. Therefore, teachers should model a Christian lifestyle and show evidence of the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. There is no shortcut for reaching students, but Christ's method provides an opportunity

to break down walls and build bridges for true witnessing. In addition to demonstrating profound knowledge of their subject areas, every educator can learn from the Master Teacher and become an effective missionary as they reach out to students who need help. ✍

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**Recommended citation:**

**Junjun Manalo Amparo**, "Using Christ's Method for Reaching Students," *The Journal of Adventist Education* 85:4 (2023): 26-30. <https://doi.org/10.55668/jae0056>.

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Carol Linda Kingston

# Effective Strategies for Teaching Second Language Learners

Learning a new language can be a challenging experience for students. Teachers also face challenges in teaching second language learners since each learner comes from a different background, and some have more exposure to the language being learned than others.<sup>1</sup> Many of these learners, in addition to learning to read and understand the new language, need help to speak or write in the targeted language. As a result, they can experience lack of motivation and discouragement while learning the language.<sup>2</sup>

In my years as a teacher of English language learners, some of my most enjoyable moments have come from teaching vocabulary. Students learning to speak the English language may have a limited vocabulary and having an in-depth knowledge of a wide variety of words is essential for language learning.<sup>3</sup> In a study of 100 male students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia during the academic year 2017-2018, Afzal identified some vocabulary learning problems that English language learners in the BA English program experienced:

- Learning the meaning of new words
- Using new vocabulary
- Pronouncing and spelling new words
- Memorizing and recognizing new words
- Understanding multiple meanings
- Guessing meaning
- Learning culture-specific words<sup>4</sup>



Several other studies have shown that students learning English face similar challenges, and teachers must find ways to help them learn and comprehend.<sup>5</sup> Often, it is challenging for teachers to help students move from using simple, basic words with recognizable primary structures to more complex words that have multiple meanings, prefixes, and suffixes that change the meanings.

These are words that need to be explained for them to be understood and modeled for correct pronunciation.<sup>6</sup> Having

varied ways to help students memorize and use vocabulary correctly is vital to a language teacher's toolbox. Here are some approaches I have found useful:

**1. Silent Minute.** Students read silently and think about the passage given to them. Then they are asked to identify the main idea of the passage. The Silent Minute strategy allows the learners to comprehend the passage, insert or substitute appropriate synonyms, and acquire new words by building on words found in the passage. Furthermore, the Silent Minute allows the student to learn and then review the base/root word for any new vocabulary.

**2. Video Clips.** Videos can enhance students' learning and provide a gateway to learning a new language. They can be used as visual aids or to enhance other visual aids that help language learners understand new vocabulary, grammar, and sentence formation.<sup>7</sup> Video clips can be used to strengthen listening skills

and help students with pronunciation. In addition to contextualizing real-life situations, videos can also expose students to different cultures, customs, and traditions of the English-speaking world, helping them improve their communication skills.<sup>8</sup> When I use a video clip as part of a class activity, I ask students to look for the topic or theme and to provide a summary of it verbally or in writing.

**3. Expressive Approach.** This approach allows learners to express creatively what they think about the activities in the learning process and the tasks given to them. Students are divided into groups and assigned tasks to work on together. For example, I ask my students to identify a topic they believe in or feel strongly about. Then I divide them into small groups and encourage them to use language creatively and to express their thoughts and feelings. The main goal is to develop the learners' ability to communicate effectively with one another. Activities like role-playing, storytelling, and creative writing allow learners to practice using the language in different contexts and to develop their own unique way of learning the targeted language. The expressive approach is often used in teaching communicative language, emphasizing the importance of real-life communication and interaction. Teachers should plan on responding to these activities with sensitivity and care. Providing feedback in a way that is culturally appropriate, careful, and kind is essential to building the learner's confidence.

**4. Think-aloud.** Think-aloud is a cognitive strategy where the learner verbalizes his or her thoughts while completing a task. It is an effective way to help students learn to monitor their own thinking. In English education, think-aloud is often used as a teaching strategy to encourage learners to develop their metacognitive skills for understanding a task or activity. The think-aloud exercise helps students talk through their thinking process as they complete a task.<sup>9</sup> This helps learners to understand how they approach the task, the strategies they use, and their decision-making processes. It also helps the teacher identify any misconceptions or gaps in understand-

ing. To summarize, think-aloud can be a powerful technique for enhancing metacognitive awareness and improving learning outcomes.<sup>10</sup> Encouraging the students to methodically examine their learning processes will help them to better understand their learning styles and to develop methods for improving their performance.

**5. Calendar of Words.** Students are asked to create or purchase an empty (blank) calendar with the outline for the days of each month. On each calendar day, they are to insert a new vocabulary word and a date. Daily, the teacher provides new vocabulary words for students to write on their calendars. The

words can be integrated into daily lessons and assignments. This approach can be used for a month or semester, or to support a whole year of learning. The calendar helps learners remember these new vocabulary words. Students can display the calendar in their homes for daily perusal or—for smaller versions—keep them in their notebooks as reminders to use the words in daily speaking interactions. I have found this to be a very effective strategy for vocabulary retention.

**6. Visualization.** This technique can be used to help second language learners better understand and remember new vocabulary. Learners are encouraged to create mental images of the new words or

phrases. For example, when an English language learner tries to remember the word *diagram*, he or she could visualize any drawing of a diagram. Such images can help learners quickly memorize the words and associate the image of the word with the meaning, making a cognitive connection.<sup>11</sup> This strategy can be used by both teachers and students to create visual aids, flashcards, or diagrams to explain new concepts. Visualization helps engage the imagination and enables learners to make connections between new language elements and their meanings.

**7. Differentiated Instruction.** Differentiated instruction means adjusting and adapting to the needs of the learners. Westwood referred to it as “mixed ability to teach.”<sup>12</sup> This means that the teacher in-

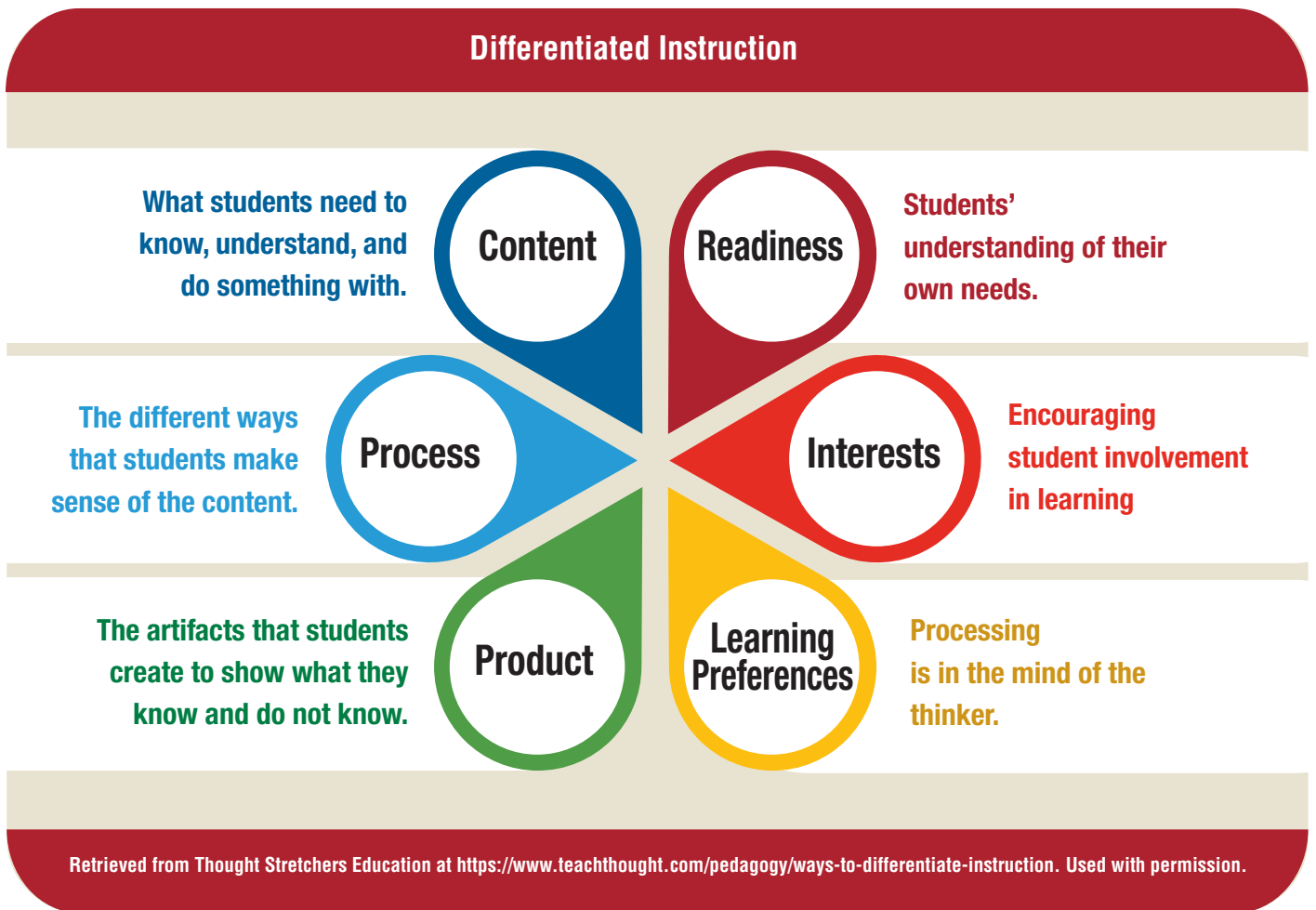
**The expressive approach is often used in teaching communicative language, emphasizing the importance of real-life communication and interaction. Teachers should plan on responding to these activities with sensitivity and care.**



structs students of varying abilities in the same space while giving each pupil the same materials and resources. Students in a classroom come from different cultures, possess different learning attitudes, and have different interests. A teaching strategy known as differentiated instruction adapts lessons to the individual learning requirements of each student. Every student aims to learn the same thing. However, the way that students are taught differs according to their passions, inclinations, assets, and challenges. Below is a figure of the six elements of differentiated instruction and how teachers must understand having different learners within a classroom. Differentiated instruction recognizes and seeks to cater to learners' unique, varied learning styles and needs. This approach to instruction requires the teacher to restructure the classroom to accommodate students' diverse learning abilities, interests, and profiles<sup>13</sup> and to modify lessons to meet the needs of the learners.<sup>14</sup> The teacher can incor-

porate flexible groupings and tiered activities in many ways. Flexible groups are shaped around what students need or to address their interests—in contrast with fixed groups, which are based on grade level. Homogenous groups can be used for students with the same ability level; while heterogeneous groups can accommodate students with different abilities, backgrounds, or interests. Flexible groups can change as learners develop skills or to better address their needs.<sup>15</sup>

Tiered activities can be created at varying levels of complexity but are presented in ways that ensure that the instruction meets the needs of learners at different levels. For example, if the lesson objective is for each student to be able to engage in conversation with another learner, then the conversation component of the lesson can be tiered. One group of learners may need help to complete generic greetings such as “Hello, I’m \_\_\_\_\_” or “My name is \_\_\_\_\_,” while another group may be at the level of



being able to roleplay simple conversations, and a third group is able to conduct a full discussion on a topic of interest. Although the goal is for all learners to engage in conversation, tiered assignments provide varying levels of complexity and engagement so that students at different levels of expertise can build the skills they need.<sup>16</sup>

**8. Using Web Tools.** Web tools provide second-language learners with engaging and interactive learning experiences that facilitate the development of a variety of skills.<sup>17</sup> They are also a great help in teaching the targeted language to second language learners. These tools include Quizlet (quizlet.com) for simple exercises, Freerice (freerice.com) for vocabulary learning, Kahoot (kahoot.com) for creating simple quizzes, and many others.<sup>18</sup> These web tools support language teaching by providing a variety of digital resources, assignments, and feedback that is useful for both teachers and learners.

I prefer activities that allow students to participate, have fun, and learn simultaneously. Some activities that work well include flipped activities, pair work, sharing with a neighbor, roleplay, mix and match, grid activities, pictures representing words, and impromptu oral presentations. These cooperative learning activities encourage a better understanding of vocabulary and allow students to mingle and get to know one another well. The social aspect makes the class more enjoyable for many students, which helps boost their learning and enthusiasm. Building self-esteem and confidence is a gradual process that involves consistent effort and positive reinforcement. Activities encourage personal strengths and interests, and encourage acquisition of new skills and knowledge, and can help students develop interpersonal skills.

### Conclusion

Many different strategies can be used to help students navigate the challenges of learning a new language. Some of these challenges include developing a strong vocabulary in the language, learning how to pronounce new words, understanding the new culture, and developing confidence in learning to

communicate and converse. Strategies such as the Silent Minute, think-aloud, calendar of words, visualization, and the use of video clips and web tools can be effective in creating interest and building cognitive skills. Incorporating differentiated-instruction approaches can also help target the varied needs of language learners. As teachers, we can take encouragement from the Scriptures, which counsel, “If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well” (Romans 12:7, NLT).<sup>19</sup> And, with this counsel comes a promise that we can do all things with the strength and help provided by Christ (Philippians 4:13). As we actively look for

ways to adapt and adjust the learning and teaching environment to support language acquisition, let us do our best to deliver the best for our students and to prepare them for life here on earth and for heaven. ✍

**Studies have shown the importance of faculty-student interaction both inside the classroom and outside the classroom. Such interaction enhances academic outcomes for students.**

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### Recommended citation:

**Carol Linda Kingston**, "Effective Strategies for Teaching Second Language Learners," *The Journal of Adventist Education* 85:4 (2023): 31-35. <https://doi.org/10.55668/jae0057>.

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H. Stephen Bralley

# Turning Points in Adventist Education:

## A Video Series

During the 2023 North American Division Educators' Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, U.S.A., a series of six short videos highlighting significant turning points in Adventist education was shared. The production of these videos was a collaboration between the North American Division Office of Education (NADOE) and the NAD Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research under the direction of Michael W. Campbell, who serves as the director. The idea for the series grew from Campbell's and my shared love of history, a deep curiosity about the past, and a passion for connecting people with what can be learned from the past and how it applies to today and the future.

Michael W. Campbell puts the need for the video series into context: "We have a rich and diverse history in Adventist education with significant points in its development that have shaped its influence today. From the mid-1800s to today, Adventists have created the

largest Protestant education system in the world. Adventist schools can be found in nearly 150 countries, 85,000 teachers, 1.5 million students, and 7,500 schools.\* We hope that the introduction of these videos will help people recognize the amazing impact of Adventist education and allow us to embrace our role in evangelism and ministry fully. We believe these first videos will lead to more stories being produced in the future, continuing to highlight significant moments throughout our history."

Education is wholistic; it is a ministry. It encompasses the physical, social, and spiritual aspects, which are just as important as academics. We have unique lessons to learn from the mistakes and suc-



cesses of those who came before us. When we recognize the founders of Adventist education were men and women just like us, we recognize their inspiration is available to use as well. They had work to do, and so do we. All of us can participate in the ministry that was started in the late 1800s. It's essential to recognize that our founders fought to stay focused, and the system has receded and surged throughout its history. This history is worth exploring; in many cases, our system is envied by other denominations, yet Adventists don't often recognize or know the system's value.

Here is a brief synopsis of the series:

***Turning Points in Adventist Education, Part 1:***

The early Seventh-day Adventist Church questioned how they should live and work if they expected Jesus to return soon. How could this earnest group of believers go from vehemently denouncing education to building one of the world's largest private education systems?

<https://vimeo.com/853360970>

***Turning Points in Adventist Education, Part 2:***

A poorly appreciated man, Goodloe Harper Bell, was the first Adventist educator. Could Adventists repair the educational neglect created by their early misunderstanding?

<https://vimeo.com/853368541>

***Turning Points in Adventist Education, Part 3:***

Adventist education became too successful in the 1870s; however, they needed a cohesive plan. An unlikely advocate shapes Adventist education into a unique ministry of wholistic learning.

<https://vimeo.com/853368722>

***Turning Points in Adventist Education, Part 4:***

Adventist education in crisis: Rapid growth leads to disagreements about its future direction. Was the education ministry larger than the men and women who started it?

<https://vimeo.com/853369402>

***Turning Points in Adventist Education, Part 5:***

Apathy creeps into Adventist education a decade after the crisis. An education convention helps revive the ministry and helps to forge the distinctive teaching philosophy of Adventist education more clearly.

<https://vimeo.com/853368999>

***Turning Points in Adventist Education, Part 6:*** Adventist education needs to be more balanced and fight irrelevancy. How could Adventist schools reach their full potential? Could pursuing something better lead the system to a deeper understanding of its purpose?

<https://vimeo.com/853370039>

These videos are freely available and may be used schoolwide or in classrooms to introduce students and educators to Adventist education history. For more information, contact the NAD Office of Education at <https://v1.adventisteducation.org/off.html>.

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\*According to the General Conference Annual Statistical Report, in 2022, there were 9,836 institutions and primary schools, 117,115 teachers, and 2,173,886 students. See General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, *2023 Annual Statistical Report New Series, Volume 5: Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' 2022 Statistics* (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference, 2023), 94: [https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2023.pdf?\\_gl=1\\*fdvt22\\*\\_ga\\*NzE2MDg4NDY3LjE3MDI2NTU3NTQ.\\*\\_ga\\_2VBYH6KEBQ\\*MTcwMjY1NTc1NC4xLjAuMTcwMjY1NTc1NC4wLjAuMA](https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2023.pdf?_gl=1*fdvt22*_ga*NzE2MDg4NDY3LjE3MDI2NTU3NTQ.*_ga_2VBYH6KEBQ*MTcwMjY1NTc1NC4xLjAuMTcwMjY1NTc1NC4wLjAuMA).

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**Recommended citation:**

**H. Stephen Bralley**, "Turning Points in Adventist Education: A Video Series," *The Journal of Adventist Education* 85:4 (2023): 36, 37. <https://doi.org/10.55668/jae0058>.

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Donald R. Sahly



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Alayne Thorpe

In the early 1900s, because educational opportunities were rare, correspondence education increased in popularity within the United States. Adventist educators at Walla Walla College in Washington state and Keene Industrial Academy in Texas had attempted to develop correspondence schools. Goodloe Harper Bell, one of the early founders of Adventist education, hoped to develop such an organization.<sup>1</sup> Taking inspiration from Bell, and after attending a conference on the successes of correspondence schools, Frederick Griggs, chairman of the General Conference Department of Education, envisioned educating people around the world through a similar method.<sup>2</sup> As a result, in 1909 he launched the Fireside Correspondence School, with the goal of providing the benefits of an education to those unable to attend traditional schools.<sup>3</sup>

Within two years, the Fireside Correspondence School was offering 11 secondary courses and nine college courses. By 1916, its students represented nearly every state and province in the United States and Canada as well as 12 other countries.<sup>4</sup> After his appointment in 1924, Principal Mahlon E. Olsen rapidly ex-

panded the work of the Fireside Correspondence School. By 1930, its enrollment had grown to be the largest of any school within the denomination.<sup>5</sup>

In 1931, the Fireside Correspondence School was renamed Home Study Institute. At that time, it had an enrollment of more than 2,700 students, representing over 50 countries. In 1982, the school was renamed Home Study International (HSI). In 1990, Griggs University/Home Study International was created, with Griggs University serving as the degree-granting branch of HSI. Also in 1990, Griggs, which had operated for six decades



## Griggs International Academy and Griggs University

in Takoma Park, Maryland, U.S.A., moved its headquarters to nearby Silver Spring. Griggs was granted permission by the Maryland Higher Education Commission to offer degree programs in several disciplines. At that point, the Griggs board of directors assigned names to each of its academic divisions: Home Study Elementary School, Home Study High School, and Griggs University,<sup>6</sup> all of which were fully accredited.

In 1991, Griggs began offering college degrees to international students who would otherwise have had no access to a Seventh-day Adventist campus. In 2003, the board voted to name the K-12 division Griggs International Academy. These name changes were registered with the State of Maryland and various accrediting agencies. In 2006, the name “Home Study International” was retired, and its preschool, elementary, secondary, and university offerings were given the combined name of Griggs University/Griggs International Academy in honor of founder Frederick Griggs.<sup>7</sup> Online courses were developed, providing a new learning environment for students.

In 2009, the Seventh-day Adventist Church formed a Commission on Distance Education Models and Structure to conduct an in-depth investigation of best practices for distance education and to make recommendations on expanding its distance-education offerings to better meet the needs of a rapidly growing worldwide constituency.<sup>8</sup>

In October 2010, the commission brought a formal recommendation to the General Conference Annual Council meetings and Niels-Erik Andreasen, president of Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.), that ownership of Griggs University/Griggs International Academy be transferred to Andrews University. Andrews University faculty and administration also met and deliberated on the impact that ownership of Griggs would make upon the university structure.<sup>9</sup>

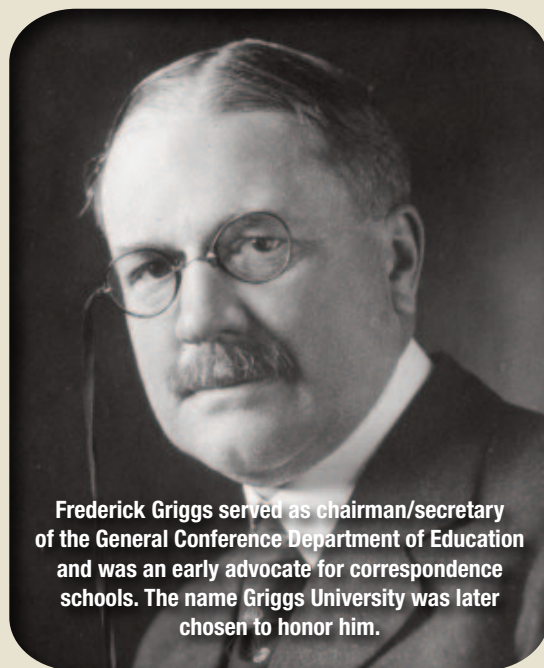
Those deliberations were informed by a long-term partnership that had already been enjoyed between Griggs University and Andrews University, as they offered distance-education degree programs through

Griggs, and as the university had also been offering its own array of online courses and programs through its academic schools.

At the same time, the Andrews University board of trustees considered a plan to fully merge Griggs with Andrews University. After researching many models and possible working relationships, Provost Andrea Luxton (who became president of Andrews University in 2016) presented a plan to the Andrews University board of trustees at its October 2010 meeting, recommending that Griggs University/Griggs International Academy be formally integrated into the general university structure as part of the new School of Distance Education.<sup>10</sup>

With this new plan, there would no longer be a president for Griggs. Instead, it would be overseen by an Andrews University academic dean and two associate deans (one for higher education and one for K-12) who would serve in place of vice presidents. General services for Griggs University (records, admissions, marketing, human resources, technology services, enrollment, and finances) would be handled by personnel dedicated to Griggs but embedded and working within the various Andrews University departments handling those services for the entire university. These basic concepts—the creation of an Andrews University School of Distance Education by merging Griggs University and Andrews University and the embedding of Griggs services on campus—became important guiding principles in the transition process. They also helped provide a structure to strengthen both the management and support of the church’s online education.

At the same October 2010 Andrews University board of trustees meeting, it was also voted to ask Alayne Thorpe, then president of Griggs University/Griggs International Academy, to serve as the dean of the School of Distance Education. She was given the title of interim president of Griggs University/Griggs International Academy, as well, to fulfill specific procedural and legal needs for Griggs during this time of transition.<sup>11</sup>



**Frederick Griggs served as chairman/secretary of the General Conference Department of Education and was an early advocate for correspondence schools. The name Griggs University was later chosen to honor him.**

Center for Adventist Research



### Box 1. Senior Leaders, Principals, and Presidents\*

Frederick Griggs, Founder	1909
Warren Eugene Howell, Principal	1909–1913
Charles Clarke Lewis, Principal	1913–1924
Mahlon E. Olsen, Principal/President	1924–1946
W. Homer Teesdale, President	1946–1965
Delmer W. Holbrook, President	1965–1985
Charlotte J. Conway, Interim President	1985–1986
George P. Babcock, President	1986–1989
Joseph E. Gurubatham, President	1989–2004
Alayne Thorpe, Interim President	2004–2005
Donald R. Sahly, President	2005–2010
Alayne Thorpe, President/Dean	2010 –

\* *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, rev. ed., s.v. "Home Study International/Griggs University" (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1996), 706, 707.

After analyzing the physical administrative and teaching space required, Andrews University purchased a building on the edge of its campus that had been built and owned by the Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The first floor of the second wing of that building, and several offices on its second floor, provided spaces for the newly formed School of Distance Education/Griggs University and Griggs International Academy.

In a nod to both a shared history and the integration and operation of Griggs University and Griggs International Academy on the Andrews University campus, the entire building space was renamed Griggs Hall after Frederick Griggs, the founder of the Fireside Correspondence School, which later become Griggs University/Griggs International Academy, and a person who was also important to the history and development of Andrews University.

Following the Griggs University physical move to and integration with Andrews University, completed in 2011,

other organizational changes occurred, including the renaming of the Griggs University Consortium, which became the Consortium of Adventist Colleges and Universities.<sup>12</sup> That consortium was later fully integrated into the Andrews University School of Distance Education & International Partnerships. At that point, all Griggs University courses and degrees were fully integrated into Andrews University coursework and degrees, and Griggs University no longer operated as a distinct entity.

At the same time, the School of Distance Education & International Partnerships then fully coordinated all operations of the Consortium of Adventist Colleges and Universities. The newly formed School of Distance Education & International Partnerships continued to offer oversight for all international programs owned and operated by Andrews University.

In 2019, following an academic restructuring, Griggs International Academy—which continues to operate globally—became a formal part of the An-



Employees and administrators of Griggs University and Andrews University School of Distance Education after Griggs' transition to Michigan, July 15, 2011. At the far right is Charles Tidwell, Jr., dean of affiliation and extension programs for Andrews University; standing next to him is Alayne Thorpe, interim president of Griggs and currently president of Griggs University and provost for graduate education at Andrews.

College of Education & International Services, Andrews University

Andrews University College of Education & International Services.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to offering programs directly to students, Griggs International Academy and the Andrews University College of Education & International Services work in partnership with a number of Adventist and other private and public institutions around the world to provide religion and business programs to local populations, modeling these international agreements after processes first established by Andrews University.

From its early years, when it operated out of a one-room office at the General Conference, Griggs has focused on the goal of operating a worldwide school system that maintains high scholastic standards, using the services of qualified professionals committed to the Adventist education mission in all phases of its operation. In turn, people from all walks of life have discovered that a private correspondence school, or online study, helped them develop self-reliance, independent thinking, and responsibility. And, since it began in the early 1900s, the Griggs system has emphasized a personal focus in its student-teacher relationships, giving students guidance and tutoring however it is needed.

Today, correspondence schools and distance education continue to play a vital role in the educational development of students in many parts of the world



College of Education & International Services, Andrews University.

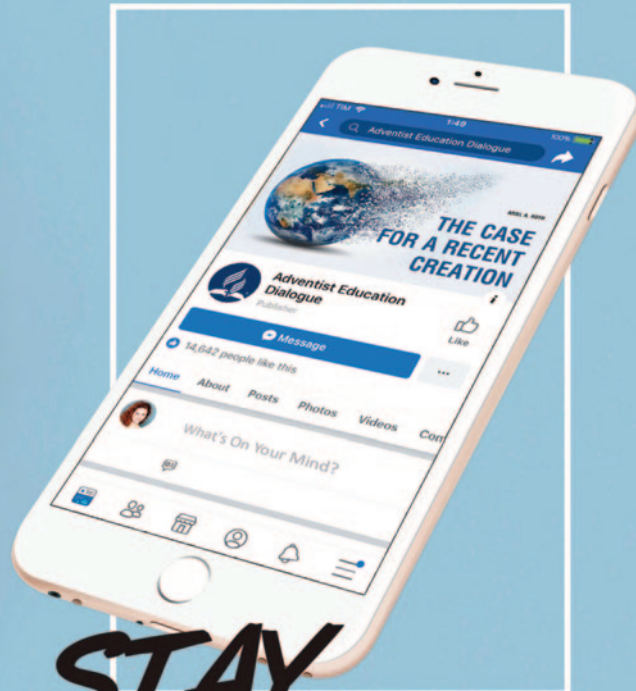
and within the global Seventh-day Adventist school system. More than 300,000 students have been impacted through a variety of distance studies options offered over the years by the Fireside Correspondence School, Home Study Institute, Home Study International, Griggs University/Griggs International Academy, Andrews University School of Distance Education/Griggs University, Andrews University School of Distance Education & International Partnerships, and Andrews University College of Education & International Services.<sup>14</sup>

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**Donald R. Sahly, EdD**, served as an educator in the Adventist school system from 1964-2010. He held a wide variety of positions in Adventist schools, including working as an elementary school principal and teacher for 12 years, as principal of Ekamai International High School in Bangkok, Thailand; and as President of Southern Adventist University, Southwestern Adventist University, Griggs University, and Southeast Asia Union College in Singapore. In addition, he served in the Education Department for the Far Eastern Division of Seventh-day Adventists in Singapore and for the General Conference Department of Education. He holds Bachelor of Science and Master of Arts degrees from Andrews University and a Doctor of Education degree from the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, U.S.A..

**Stephen Payne, BA**, the former Special Assistant to the President for University and Public Affairs at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A., recently retired after nearly four decades serving in a variety of Adventist higher education roles, including vice presidential assignments in enrollment and marketing at three Adventist universities.

**Alayne Thorpe, PhD**, is the Dean of the College of Education & International Services at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A. She also serves as Associate Provost for Graduate Education. Dr. Thorpe has a long history in distance and higher education, both as an administrator and a faculty member, including roles as Vice President and Interim President of Griggs University at the time of its transition to Andrews.

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## Recommended citation:

**Donald R. Sahly, Stephen Payne, and Alayne Thorpe**, “Griggs International Academy and Griggs University,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 85:4 (2023): 39-44. <https://doi.org/10.55668/jae0059>.

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read: “Then Samuel said, ‘Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and I will intercede with the LORD for you.’”<sup>6</sup> When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. They fasted that day and confessed, “‘We have sinned against the LORD’” (vs. 6). With fasting, prayer, and sacrifice, they recommitted, re-consecrated, and anchored themselves in God.

Sometimes, we must “dig in” and anchor ourselves deeply because the storm is bearing down; the waves are tumultuous and tossing us back and forth. The hearts of those around us are hardened or obstructed, making it difficult to remain secure in our convictions. How we anchor in times of trouble is vital because, regardless of the circumstances surrounding us, the anchor must hold.

The good news is that we *have* an anchor! For the people of Israel, it was the God whose presence inhabited the Ark of the Covenant, a symbol of God’s binding agreement with His people and the hope and promise of a Savior. The Ark contained artifacts to remind them of how God had been with them through perilous times: as they fled from Egypt (Aaron’s rod that budded); as they wandered in the desert (manna); and the lid—the Mercy Seat—a tangible, visible reminder of the plan instituted for the forgiveness of their sins, and a promise that one day there would be a Lamb who would wash away the sins of the world forever (2 Samuel 7:10-13; Isaiah 53:1-12).

For us today, it is this same God: “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19). We have an anchor that holds. Anchoring does not keep the storm away; it keeps us secure in the storm. Though the storm is unrelenting, we must anchor ourselves in the Rock that is Jesus Christ, for He is our only sure hope.

### Relentless Hope

The story continues in 1 Samuel 7:7: “And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines” (KJV). During the Israelites’ repentance and recommitment to the God of Israel, the Philistines came against them once more. We all know those times—when things can’t seem to get any worse, and then they do! Despite all possible interventions, the situation deteriorates. Yet, Colossians 1:27 reminds us that our hope is the “hope of glory”; we have “a living hope” (1 Peter 1:3).

This time, instead of taking matters into their own hands, the Israelites asked Samuel to continue praying

on their behalf (1 Samuel 7:8, 9). He did, and God delivered them (1 Samuel 10 and 11).

What is your “Philistine army”? Those challenges that continue to advance? Those situations that seek to steal your confidence in God? God still keeps His people amid the storm; He still delivers.

We always have a choice if we believe God is leading. Our life’s journey might have storms and rough seas—some stronger than others. *Yet, we must press on.* We will get weary and tired—*yet we must press on.* We will see financial, political, religious, and social crises—*yet we must press on.* We press on because we know that God can transform any situation, and we can be sure that we have *nothing* to fear for the future *except* as we forget how God has led us in the past.<sup>6</sup>

We hope you enjoy the articles in this issue and that they stimulate thinking, foster good practice, and generate hope. Most of all, we encourage you to write for us! Visit our Calls for Manuscripts section (<https://www.journalofadventisteducation.org/calls-for-manuscripts>) to see our current priorities and our author guidelines (<https://www.journalofadventisteducation.org/author-and-reviewer-guidelines>) for the various types of articles we accept.

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### Recommended citation:

**Faith-Ann A. McGarrell**, “Anchored in a Covenant,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 85:4 (2023): 3, 45. <https://doi.org/10.55668/jae0052>.

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