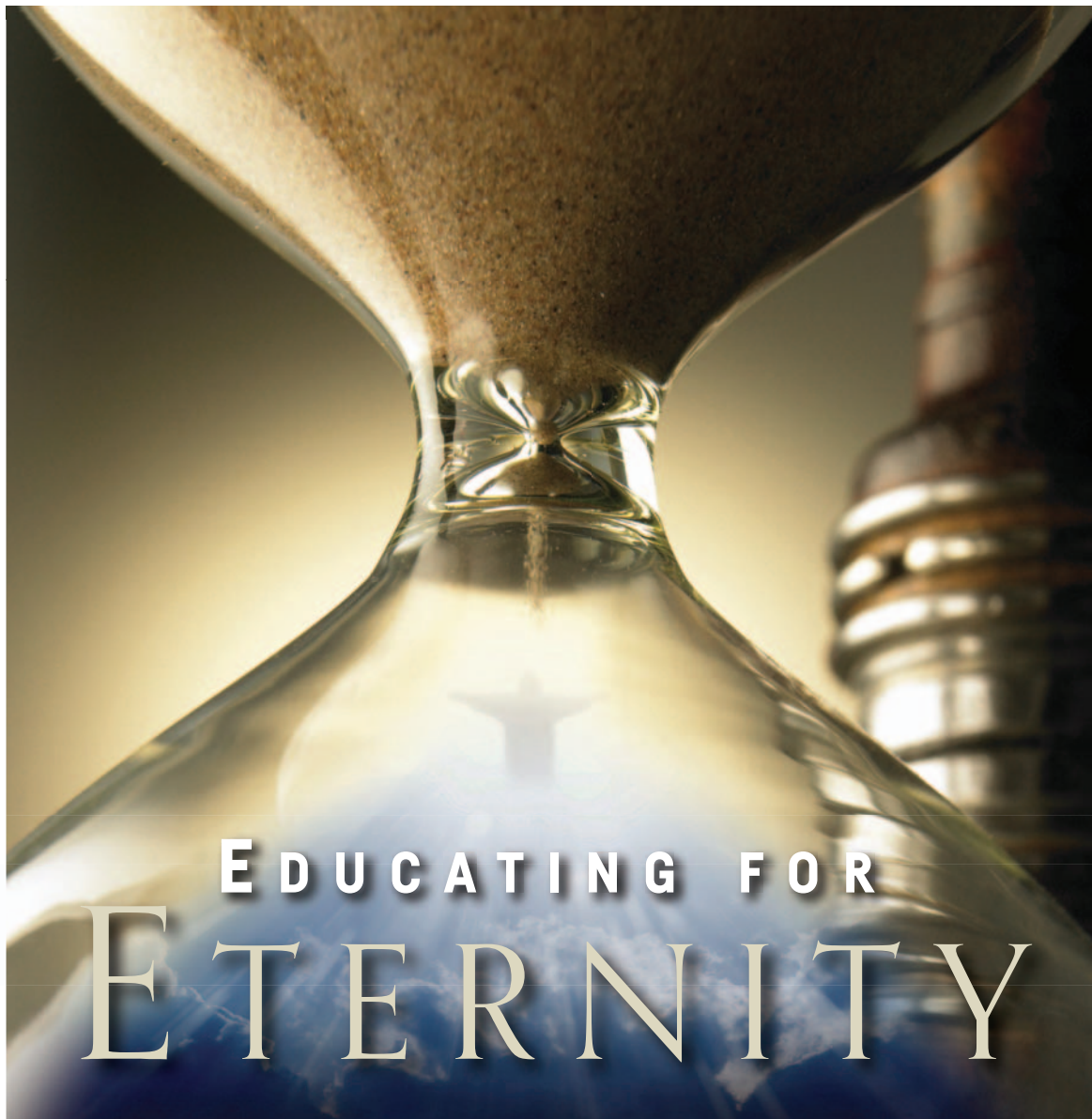


# ADVENTIST EDUCATION



## EDUCATING FOR ETERNITY

The Great  
Commission  
and the  
Educational  
Imperative

The Divine  
Blueprint for  
Education

Cognitive and  
Non-cognitive  
Factors  
Contributing  
to Academic  
Success

Increasing  
Student Access  
in K-12 Education

Strengthening  
Adventist  
Education in  
the North  
American Division

## SPECIAL ISSUE



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Lisa M. Beardsley-Hardy

## EDUCATING FOR ETERNITY

Education is front and center! It is the focus of a year-long series of conferences and church publications globally. Education was the cover story for the February 2017 issue of *Adventist World*.<sup>\*</sup> This issue of THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION shares a collection of talks and presentations made during the 2016 General Conference Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) Conference, the North American Division Year-end Meetings, and the 2017 Pan-African LEAD Conference. Each one presented stakeholders with a call to action to ensure that all God's children are taught of the Lord (Isaiah 54:13, KJV).

The 2016 LEAD Conference took place October 5-7, 2016, in Silver Spring, Maryland. The theme "Educating for Eternity" underscored daily devotionals, plenary and invited addresses, panels, and sessions that outlined plans for each region of the world. Topics ranged from Adventist education's educational imperative (George R. Knight), the divine plan for education (George W. Reid), and cognitive and non-cognitive factors contributing to academic success (Elissa E. Kido), to the state of Adventist education (Lisa M. Beardsley-Hardy), and challenges to increasing access (David R. Williams). Within this special issue are the adapted transcripts of the plenary and invited presentations shared during the conference.

The LEAD Conference "Educating for Eternity" will be replicated throughout various regions of the world church during 2017 and 2018. The first of these planned conferences, the 2017 Pan-African LEAD Conference, took place in Kigali, Rwanda, February 15-19, 2017. There was a lot of energy in these meetings as educators and church leaders from every part of Africa formulated educational plans to incorporate local, national, and regional priorities and objectives. They

made recommendations on how to achieve higher visibility for education globally and how to coordinate action through a united, empowered network. Educators especially appreciated the discussion across different regions and the participation of division officers and treasurers. Presentation topics addressed current trends, steps to overcoming challenges, and the influential role of Adventist education in the lives of those who become and remain Seventh-day Adventists (John Wesley Taylor V).

Adventist education in the North American Division (NAD) is addressed within this issue (Jerome Thayer, Anneris Coria-Navia, Aimee Leukert, Elissa E. Kido, and Larry Blackmer).

This article reports the findings and recommendations from two study groups—The North American Division Education Taskforce (NADET) and the Strengthening Adventist Education (SAE) research project. Officially shared with attendees at the 2016 NAD Year-end Meetings in October, this report is made available through THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION. A concurrent article, with specific recommendations for pastors who are the gatekeepers for church schools, will be available in the June 2017 issue of MINISTRY.

Work continues through the three remaining regional summits in Slovenia (May 30-June 4, 2017), the Dominican Republic (August 7-11, 2017), and Thailand (January 29-February 3, 2018). But the real work occurs day in and day out in thousands of classrooms around the world where committed men and women faithfully and creatively carry out the teaching ministry of Christ. This issue is especially for them.

<sup>\*</sup>Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, "Adventist Education: Rediscovering Our Mission," *Adventist World* (February, 2017): 24-27.

An hourglass graphic with a gold top and bottom bulb and a white central neck, set against a green background that tapers to a point at the bottom.

# THE GREAT COMMISSION

## and the Educational Imperative

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**C**hristianity is primarily a mission movement. And the Seventh-day Adventist Church exists for only one reason: Mission, especially end-time mission as Planet Earth moves toward the long-awaited eschaton. When Adventism loses its mission-to-the-world orientation, it has lost its only reason for existence.

### The Great Commissions

When we think of mission, Matthew 28:18 to 20 generally comes to mind: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (RSV).<sup>1</sup>

But the Great Commission of Matthew 28 is only one of at least five mission commissions in the New Testament.

- A second is in Acts 1:8: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”
- A third mission imperative is implied in Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.”
- The fourth commission is found following the bitter experience of the opening of the little book of Daniel in Revelation 10:11: “Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” (KJV).
- And the fifth is found in Revelation 14:6: “Then I saw another angel

flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.”

There are several interesting things about these five gospel commissions. The first is that they imply education and teaching, a fact made explicit in Matthew 28 with its command to “teach” all things that Christ had commanded.

A second thing to note is that the first three of those commissions have been undertaken by the Christian Church in general. But the last two in Revelation 10 and 14 have been sounded only by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which has put the preaching of the end-time apocalyptic package and the three angels’ messages at the very center of its identity. In other words, Adventism has never viewed itself as merely another de-

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BY GEORGE R. KNIGHT

nomination, but as a called-out movement of prophecy with a unique message to teach to the ends of the earth. That understanding has pushed Adventism around the world, making it the most widespread unified Protestant body in the history of Christianity.

### The Adventist Journey From Anti-mission and Anti-education

Modern Adventism views (or should view) its massive educational system as a major arm of its missiological endeavor. But that wasn't always so. In fact, early Adventists were both anti-mission and anti-education.

The earliest Seventh-day Adventists firmly believed that they had no mission to the world. As they saw it, the door of probation had been shut in October 1844, and future mission was impossible. Their only task was to comfort one another and seek to wake up backslidden Millerites until the soon-expected end came.<sup>2</sup>

Only very gradually did they give up their Shut Door to mission theology in the early 1850s. Slowly, very slowly, they began to understand that they had a wider mission. But even as late as 1859, Uriah Smith put forth the idea that since the United States was composed of people from around the world, the message of the three angels to every nation could be accomplished if one person from each country as found in the United States heard the message. Thus, he wrote, it needed to be preached to one German, one Australian, one African, and so on.<sup>3</sup> Even 20 years after the Millerite disappointment, the idea of world mission had not registered in the minds of our early leaders to any significant degree.

The same can be said about Adventist education. Most believed that there was no need for it. It was that mentality that led W. H. Ball in 1862 to ask if it is "right and consistent for us who believe with all our hearts in the immediate coming of the Lord, to seek to give our children an education?"<sup>4</sup> Note that that question was being asked 18 years after the Millerite disappointment. The anti-edu-

cation "bug" had firmly implanted itself in the Adventist mentality.

James White's reply is of interest, since he argued in answering Ball that "the fact that Christ is very soon coming is no reason why the mind should not be improved. A well-disciplined and informed mind can best receive and cherish the sublime truths of the Second Advent." His wife was of the same opinion.<sup>5</sup>

Early Adventists were both anti-mission and anti-education. That would change in the early 1870s, nearly 30 years after the Millerite disappointment. By 1872, the church was not only growing, but also needed ministers. Those who had come into the church from Millerism were aging, and the church needed to think seriously about training future leadership. Beyond that, by the early 1870s the church was earnestly considering its responsibility toward foreign missions.

It was with those concerns in mind that the General Conference established the School Committee. The committee reported in May 1872 that "there are persons all through our ranks, who have come to years of maturity, who have convictions that they ought to do something to directly forward the glorious and important cause in which we are engaged. To this end, they want immediately to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the teaching of the Bible in reference to those great truths which pertain to this time." At the same time, the committee noted, those people needed instruction in general knowledge so that they would be more effective in speaking and writing. As a result, the denomination was establishing a school in Battle Creek so that church members could be "prepared to wield those weapons for the advancement of the cause."<sup>6</sup>

There was no doubt in the minds of the denomination's leadership in 1872 that the purpose of the school they were establishing was to train people to spread the gospel. Ellen White, writing her first major state-

ment on education ("Proper Education") for the new school, was in full harmony with that aim. "We need a school," she penned, "where those who are just entering the ministry may be taught at least the common branches of education, and where they may also learn more perfectly the truths of God's word for this time."<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, by 1873 James White and other denominational leaders were realizing that the 1872 school was inadequate and that "there is no branch of this work that suffers so much at the present time as the proper education of men and women to proclaim the third angel's message." He noted that the church needed to prepare "young men and women . . . to become printers, editors, and teachers." In addition, they needed to be taught the "living languages" (rather than the dead classical languages), since we have "a message . . . that is to be proclaimed before many nations and tongues and peoples."<sup>8</sup>

By early 1873, the recognition that the denomination needed to send men and women overseas also was becoming intense. Thus, in April 1873, John Nevins Andrews could editorialize in the *Review and Herald* that "the calls that come from every quarter, from men speaking other languages, must be answered by us. We cannot do this in our present circumstances. But we can do it if the Lord bless our effort in the establishment of our proposed school. We have delayed this effort too long."<sup>9</sup>

The year 1874 witnessed a major shift in Adventist history. In that year the denomination sent its first official missionary—J. N. Andrews—to a foreign land and opened its first collegiate institution—Battle Creek College. Those two events must not be seen as two separate events, but as one. After all, the foremost purpose of the denomination's early educational enterprise was to train men and women to spread the three angels' messages.

The year 1874 with both its sending of Adventism's first foreign mis-

sionary and the opening of its first college indicate the close tie between mission and education. The strength of that unity would be reinforced in the 1890s. That decade would witness two parallel explosions in the dynamics of the development of Adventism. The first related to mission and the second to education. And, as in the 1870s, the two moved together.

It is important to realize from the outset that the mission enthusiasm of the 1890s was not restricted to the Adventist Church. Sydney Ahlstrom, a leading student of American church history, has noted that “the closing two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the climactic phase of the foreign missions movement in American Protestantism.”<sup>10</sup> One of the main stimulants of that interest was the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, which grew out of an appeal by Dwight L. Moody in 1886 for college students to devote their lives to mission service. One hundred took their stand. That number increased to 2,200 in 1887, and within a few years, many thousands of evangelical Protestant young people had pledged their lives to mission service. Their Matthew 24:14-inspired motto was: “The evangelization of the world in this generation.”<sup>11</sup>

The foremost educational result of that mission thrust was the rise of the missionary college and Bible institute movement among American evangelicals. The aim of those schools was to prepare large numbers of workers in a short period of time to staff mission outposts both at home and overseas. The schools focused on providing practical training and Bible knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

Events within the Seventh-day Adventist Church paralleled both the mission explosion of evangelical Protestantism and its educational extension. Signs of new life in Adventist missions began to surface in the mid-1880s. In 1886, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*—a book that did much to promote a missionary spirit among Adventists—

was published in Basel, Switzerland. *Historical Sketches* was the first book on foreign missions published by the denomination. It was followed in 1889 by S. N. Haskell’s two-year itinerary around the world, during which he surveyed the possibilities for opening mission work in various places. By 1890, the stage was set for what Richard Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf have called the era of “Mission Advance” in the Adventist denomination.<sup>13</sup>

In 1880, Adventists had only eight missions with five evangelistic workers outside the United States. In 1890, they still had only eight missions, even though the number of workers had risen to 56. By 1900, however, the number of missions had risen to 42, and the number of evangelistic mission workers to 481. The last decade of the 19th century initiated an accelerating trend that remained unabated throughout the first 30 years of the 20th century. By 1930, the church was supporting 8,479 evangelistic workers outside of North America, representing 270 missions.<sup>14</sup>

That outreach had transformed the very nature of Adventism.

Note that in the 1890s the statistical curve related to Advent mission shoots straight up. At last the denomination realized that it truly had a message of warning that must go to all the world—to Asia, India, Africa, the nations of South America, and the Islands of the sea—rather than merely the Christianized nations of Europe, Australia, and South Africa.

Mission outreach had a direct effect on the expansion of Seventh-day Adventist schooling. The denomination looked to its schools to supply the ever-increasing number of workers for its rapidly expanding worldwide work, just as the evangelical Protestant expansion of missions had stimulated the Bible institute and missionary college movement to train large numbers of missionaries.

John Harvey Kellogg, who appears to have been the Adventist in closest touch with evangelical educational

**T**he spread of Adventist education during the 1890s was directly related to the spiritual revival in the denomination’s theology in 1888 and to an enlarged vision of the church’s mission to the world.

ideas,<sup>15</sup> was probably the first to develop a missionary school within the denomination. His Sanitarium Training School for Medical Missionaries was established in 1889, followed by the American Medical Missionary College in 1895. Meanwhile, the Avondale School for Christian Workers in Australia (1894), the training schools stimulated by Edward Alexander Sutherland and Percy T. Magan, and the Adventist missionary colleges, such as Stanborough Park Missionary College (England), Washington Missionary College, Emmanuel Missionary College, and Southern Missionary College (U.S.A.), soon were dotting the Adventist landscape.

Mission expansion affected Adventist educational expansion in at least two identifiable ways. First, it greatly increased the number of schools and students in North America, since most of the denomination's early workers came from the United States. Second, Adventists began to establish schools around the world so that workers could be trained in their home fields. By 1900, therefore, not only had Adventist educational institutions greatly expanded in number, but the system also had been internationalized.

The magnitude of that whole process was compounded by unprecedented institutional development during the 1890s. Besides churches and schools, Adventists developed hospitals, publishing houses, and eventually (to a lesser extent) health-food factories in the United States and overseas. Thus the schools were called upon to supply ever-larger numbers of institutional employees, in addition to evangelistic workers.

One result of the Adventist mission explosion in the 1890s was a similar dynamic development in Adventist education. As with missions, during the 1890s the educational expansion graph goes straight up. In 1880, the denomination had two schools. By 1890, the number had increased to 16. But by 1900, it was 245. And, as with mission, that dynamic expansion would continue, with more than 600 schools

in 1910 and more than 2,000 by 1930.<sup>16</sup>

We need to recognize that, from its inception, 19th-century Adventist education had been inextricably connected with foreign missions. Thus the spread of Adventist education during the 1890s was directly related to the spiritual revival in the denomination's theology in 1888 and to an enlarged vision of the church's mission to the world. It is important to note that those were positive motivators. Negative motivators such as the need to escape from incipient Darwinism and religious skepticism played a minor role. Adventist education at its best stands for something of great importance, rather than representing an escape from the non-Christian world.

With the lessons of the 1870s and 1890s in mind, we can conclude that Adventist education and Adventist mission are two essential parts of the same whole. Adventist education is a dynamic force in a world in need of redemptive healing. *Adventism's educational system is obviously dependent on church support. But the denomination's mission to the world is dependent upon its ability to train the next generation in the ideals and mission goals of Adventism.* Without its educational system, Adventism would flounder and lose its way as the older leaders pass on. *The plain fact is that success in world mission and success in Adventist education go hand in hand. Both are essential. They stand or fall together.*

### The Crucial Role of Education in Mission

But the unity of mission and education is not unique to Adventism. George S. Counts helps us see that relationship in its larger historical context. Although he was a thoroughgoing secularist, Counts understood the intimate relationship between the goals of any society and education shaped to meet those goals. Nearly a century ago, he wrote that "to shape educational policy is to guard the path that leads from the present to the future. . . . Throughout the centuries since special educational

agencies were first established, the strategic position of the school has been appreciated by kings, emperors, and popes, by rebels, reformers, and prophets. Hence, among those opposing forces found in all complex societies, a struggle for the control of the school is always evident. Every group or sect endeavors to pass on to its own children and to the children of others that culture which it happens to esteem; and every privileged class seeks to perpetuate its favored position in society by means of education."<sup>17</sup>

In another connection, Counts observed, in discussing the challenge of Soviet education in the early 1930s, that the failure of revolutions has been a record of the failure to bring education into the service of the revolutionary cause. Revolutionary bodies will possess no more permanence, he pointed out, than the small bands of idealists who conceived them if the children of the next generation cannot be persuaded to carry the revolution to its logical conclusion. As a result, the history of the Soviets, Germany's Nazi Party, and other successful revolutionary movements has demonstrated that one of the first measures taken by revolutionary governments is to place all educational agencies under the direct control of the state and to give the schools a central hand in building the new society.<sup>18</sup>

The same might also be said of the heirs of democratic revolutions or even of religious movements. Thus, we find the rise of vernacular education as an integral part of the Lutheran Reformation. After all, individuals needed to be able to read the all-important Bible for themselves if they were to maintain their faith independent of an influential priesthood. In a similar vein, one of the first moves of the Puritans after their arrival in the wilderness of North America was to found Harvard College in 1636. That was followed in 1642 and 1647 by legislation pointing toward compulsory education at the elementary and secondary levels. The Puritans realized that their mission was doomed without both civil and religious leaders educated in biblical prin-

ciples and a populace that could read their Bibles.

Late 19th-century Adventists were inspired by similar insights. Thus, it was no accident that Ellen White framed her educational thought within the context of the great controversy struggle between Christ and Satan and their respective principles. The greatest of all the world's culture wars is for the minds and hearts of the coming generations. And the epicenter of the struggle is for the control of schooling; control of the institution that has so much to do with shaping minds and hearts, goals and aspirations, values and direction.

And at this point, I should note that biblical Christianity is in a very real sense a revolutionary movement. But, as such, it is not out to control the kingdoms of this world but to put an end to the current confusion and usher in the fullness of Christ's kingdom at His second advent. In that sense, Christianity in general and Adventism in particular are revolutionary forces of the first order.<sup>19</sup> Thus the importance of a clear understanding of the goals of Adventist education.

I trust that you have grasped the point: Education stands at the very center of the Great Controversy. Education stands at the center of the struggle for the future of all missiological movements—whether they be secular ideologies or religious. Hitler understood that fact, as did Stalin, the founders of American democracy, and Roman Catholicism. I trust that we as Adventists can realize that Adventist education is not a mere sideshow in the denomination's mission, just another institutional entity that has to somehow be given a hesitant nod of approval and haltingly funded as the church goes about its important work of winning souls. No!! Education is central to Adventism's mission to the world. It is not an option. It is essential, *the most essential aspect of the church's mission* as it moves out of the past and into the future and to-

ward the Second Advent. To repeat: *Education stands at the very center of the Great Controversy.*

That thought naturally leads to the essentials of that education. But before we go there, we need to see the rest of the Adventist educational mission. We have examined one aspect at some length; namely, the education of future leaders. But there is a second aspect of Adventist education just as crucial. Namely, its evangelistic impact on the developing youth of the church who we hope will give their hearts and minds to Christ and devoted ministry in both the professional sense and as dedicated laypeople.

As the great controversy between Christ and Satan plays out in the macrocosmic world order, there is at the same time a microcosmic struggle that is continually taking place in the battle for the allegiance of the hearts and minds of individual children and youth.

Ellen White caught the importance of that truth when she wrote that "by a misconception of the true nature and object of education, many have been led into serious and even fatal errors." And here she meant fatal not merely for this earth but also eternally fatal. She went on to note that "such a mistake is made when the regulation of the heart or the establishment of principles is neglected in the effort to secure intellectual culture, or when eternal interests are overlooked in the eager desire for temporal advantage."<sup>20</sup>

Again, she wrote, "the necessity of establishing Christian schools is urged upon me very strongly. In the schools of today, many things are taught that are a hindrance rather than a blessing. Schools are needed where the word of God is made the basis of education. Satan is the great enemy of God, and it is his constant aim to lead souls away from their allegiance to the King of heaven. He would have minds so trained that men and women will exert their influence on the side of error and moral corruption instead of using their talents in the service of God. *His object is effectually gained, when, by perverting their ideas of edu-*

*cation*, he succeeds in enlisting parents and teachers on his side; for a wrong education often starts the mind on the road to infidelity."<sup>21</sup>

It is no accident that Adventists have developed more than 8,000 elementary and secondary schools around the world. To the contrary, urged by Ellen White, they came to see Adventist education for every Adventist child as an essential in the denomination's mission.

It is significant that the development of Adventist elementary education finds its major turning point in the mission excitement and dynamics of the 1890s during Ellen White's own foreign mission service in Australia. While there, she noted that parents were compelled by law to send their children to school. That situation agitated the issue of elementary education in her mind. She wrote to her son Willie in May 1897 that this subject had "long been neglected" in spite of the fact that "the first seven or ten years of a child's life is the time when lasting impressions for good or evil are made."<sup>22</sup> Speaking to the Australian situation, she wrote that "in some countries parents are compelled by law to send their children to school. In these countries, in localities where there is a church, *schools should be established if there are no more than six children to attend. . . .* We are far behind our duty in this important matter. In many places schools should have been in operation years ago."<sup>23</sup> Those were perhaps the most immediately influential words she ever spoke. They almost instantly began to change the Adventist world.

Such men as Edward Alexander Sutherland and Percy T. Magan, the reform leaders who would move Battle Creek College into the country in 1901, took this counsel to heart. They developed a program for training teachers and did much to stimulate both local congregations and promising young people to get involved in elementary education.<sup>24</sup> The phenomenal growth of Adventist elementary education



**E**ducation for excellence in this life and success in this world is an essential aspect of Adventist education. But if that is all it achieves, it has failed. After all, that is the function of the public or government schools.

started immediately. As a result, while the denomination reported 18 schools in 1895, it had 220 five years later.<sup>25</sup>

By 1900, the place of the local elementary school was firmly established in Adventist congregations. And most of those schools had only one teacher. The church had taken seriously the counsel that it should establish a school if there were only six students.

The 1890s was the decade of advancement in Adventist education. The church had entered the nineties with a handful of schools and a poorly perceived, and even more poorly executed, philosophy of education. The turn of the century found Adventists with a rapidly expanding international system of education at all levels with a sound philosophy that had been experimentally validated. Ellen White had been a key personality in stimulating that accomplishment. By 1900, Seventh-day Adventism was taking both mission to *all* the world and the education of every child seriously. Those two universals were linked. Big ideas of mission and education have

always gone together in Adventism. Education is the engine that has thrust forward the mission. What is most surprising is not that they go together but that it took the church 50 years to finally grasp the need for both world mission and the evangelistic mission of education.

#### **Adventist Educational Essentials**

That thought brings us to the three essential goals of Adventist education. The first is to prepare young people to function successfully in this present world. Education for excellence in this life and success in this world is an essential aspect of Adventist education. But if that is all it achieves, it has failed. After all, that is the function of the public or government schools. And they often do an excellent job in accomplishing that goal.

That thought brings us to the second great goal of Adventist education, which Ellen White hinted at in the opening paragraph of her book

*Education*. “True education,” she wrote, “means more than the pursuit of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, Adventist education is for this earth. But it is more. It is also education for eternity.

That goal comes into sharp focus in *Education*’s first chapter and again its fourth as Ellen White repeatedly set forth education as a “work of redemption” that is to counter the effects of the Genesis Fall. “The teacher’s first effort and his constant aim,” she wrote, “is to help students come into a saving relationship with Christ.”<sup>27</sup>

With those forceful ideas Ellen White set forth education as evangelism. And with that fact she placed education at the center of the Great Controversy and viewed teachers as God’s agents or ministers in the struggle over the hearts, minds, and souls of the coming generation. Adventist education is not at the edge of the church’s mission to the world, but rather one of its most crucial elements. From Ellen White’s perspective, the redemptive goal of education must shape every aspect of a school’s program, including not only the formal course of studies, but also the so-called extracurricular and social.

But even if a particular Adventist school did provide the highest intellectual and vocational education, did introduce young people to Jesus as Lord and Savior, and did place the Bible at the center of education; still, I would argue, it has fallen short if that is all it has accomplished. After all, those are functions that every evangelical Christian school should be accomplishing. And if we only manage to accomplish what other Christian schools are already doing, then there is no pressing justification for duplicating their activities in yet one more Christian school.

That conclusion brings me to the third aspect of the Adventist educational commission. That third aspect

relates to the teaching of its unique doctrinal package and especially the denomination's apocalyptic understanding and the implications of that understanding for worldwide mission and the Second Advent.

Adventism's unique task is to preach God's end-time apocalyptic message found in Revelation 14:6 to 12 to all the world. That understanding has led generations of Adventist young people to give their lives in obscure mission fields and has prompted older church members to sacrifice not only the nearness of their children, but also their financial means to fulfill the prophetic imperative in the Apocalypse of John. It has also placed education at the center of the denomination's agenda.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that Adventist schools are unique institutions that fill a special place in the great end-time controversy between Christ and Satan. As such, they not only prepare students for life in this world and introduce young people to Jesus as Lord and Savior, but they also inspire the coming generation with an understanding of God's end-time apocalyptic vision that leads them to dedicate their lives to that vision and the advent of their Lord.

Adventist educational identity and mission include all three of those factors in proper relationship. And Adventist education, we must never forget, stands at the center of the Great Controversy. Schools are about evangelism and mission. Schools are about not only preserving the ideas and mission of Adventism, but also bringing about the long-awaited eschaton. And only with that thought in mind can we grasp the importance of understanding Adventism's educational purpose. After all, we as Adventists have not one but two Great Commissions.

- The first commission is to spread the full teachings of Jesus to the ends of the earth.

- The second is an educational

commission to establish and support a system of schools to not only evangelize the church's young people but also to prepare the next generations of leaders to enable the church to accomplish its worldwide mission. ✍

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*Plenary 1 presentation from the LEAD Conference on "Educating for Eternity" held at the General Conference World Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 5-7, 2016.*

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An hourglass graphic with a gold top and bottom bulb and a green-to-white gradient neck, centered at the top of the page.

# THE STATE OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION REPORT

**T**his report about the state of Seventh-day Adventist education has the same aim as that of Nehemiah, when with trusted colleagues, he set out during the night on an inspection of the walls and burned gates of Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> The assessment was done so that they would know how to proceed in rebuilding. That's the purpose of inspecting the state of Adventist education. A well-known quotation states: "Without data, you're just another person with an opinion."<sup>2</sup> This report is based on our own data trends. As of December 31, 2015, the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide operated 5,705 primary schools, 2,336 secondary schools, 53 training schools—such as hospital-based nursing programs and some non-degree ministerial training schools—and 114 tertiary colleges and universities. In our 8,208 schools around the world, 102,779 teachers educated nearly two million students (1,922,990). Analysis of that data reveals areas of concern, but let us first consider mission.

## **Discrepancy Between Purpose of Seventh-day Adventist Education and Enrollment**

"Education for What?" asks Adventist Church historian George Knight.<sup>3</sup> Both he and Ellen White before him have stated unequivocally: To fulfill the apocalyptic mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to all the world.<sup>4</sup> Of course, our education must develop students mentally, socially, physically, and vocationally, but this goal is shared by all schools, whether religious or not. Ellen White emphasized that to restore the image of God in students and to prepare them for service in this life and the next means returning to God's original purpose in creating humans.<sup>5</sup> However, this spiritual and redemptive goal is shared by other Christian schools. It is a third aspect—the denomination's apocalyptic mission to the world—that is unique to Seventh-day Adventist education. Pointing to statistics, George Knight observes that "While the denomination had two schools in 1880 and 16 in 1890, it rapidly expanded to 245 in 1900, more than

BY LISA M. BEARDSLEY-HARDY

600 in 1910 and 2,178 by 1930.

“What is important here is that the growth in Adventist mission shows exactly the same growth curve as that for education . . . a growth curve that goes nearly straight up beginning in the 1890s . . . stimulated by the explosive fuel of apocalyptic mission as the denomination sought to educate the coming generation of young people not only about that apocalyptic mission but also to dedicate their lives to it.”<sup>6</sup> The pace of growth in mission outreach and the educational work soared together. At its best, he continued, it will “inspire the coming generation with an understanding of God’s end-time apocalyptic vision that leads them to dedicate their lives to that vision and the advent of their Lord.”<sup>7</sup>

If, more than 140 years after the initial development of a denominational education system in the 1870s,<sup>8</sup> we still believe that mission and education are one, that the work of redemption and education are one, and that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a movement of prophecy with an end-time mission to all the world, we would expect enrollment patterns to support that belief. How does enrollment in Seventh-day Adventist schools relate to church membership? As of December 31, 2015, membership stood at more than 19 million members.<sup>9</sup> But a global survey<sup>10</sup> revealed that less than half of church membership had some Adventist education (47 percent), and 52 percent had none. More than half of the membership have not attended a Seventh-day Adventist school. The data display a significant discrepancy between what we say about the significance of education and actual enrollment.

The data also show that enrollment in Adventist schools varies by division. The North American Division has the highest percentage of enrollment by membership, with only 29 percent having none. Other divisions have a high percentage of members who have never attended Adventist schools. For example, in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (76 percent), and the Inter-American and West

**To foster academic excellence, focusing on continued improvement with measurable goals for quality culture is not enough. Mission must be integrated with traditional measures of academic excellence.**

Central Africa divisions (66 percent) of the members report having never attended Adventist schools. One explanation is that there has been a lot of growth in those areas. Even if it is too late for adult converts, their children should benefit from and be enrolled in Adventist education to prepare them for service and mission. This is an opportunity for enrollment growth.

How are we doing with pastoral enrollment in Adventist education? In 2011-2013, 36 percent of Seventh-day Adventist pastors reported having only five to eight years of Seventh-day Adventist education, and presumably that included their theological and ministerial training. Twenty-six percent of pastors had completed one to four years in a Seventh-day Adventist school. Eight percent had NO Adventist education, which raises the question of where they obtained their

ministerial education. Were there that many pastors of other denominations who became Seventh-day Adventists? Sixteen percent of pastors said they had completed nine to 12 years in an Adventist school, while only 14 percent reported having completed 13 or more years of Adventist education. These data show that the majority of Seventh-day Adventist pastors have less than eight years of Adventist education. No wonder a global survey reveals an increasing diversity of views regarding the church’s fundamental beliefs, with so many pastors not having benefited from a distinctively Seventh-day Adventist education.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Strengthening the Gates: Mission, Access, Teachers, and Leadership**

Based on these data and the work of the General Conference Department of Education throughout the world field, we have established four priorities for Adventist education for this quinquennium (2015-2020),<sup>12</sup> starting with Adventist identity and mission. These priorities are the gates that safeguard the mission focus of education. By “Adventist mission and identity,” we mean both capacity and evidence that Ad-

ventist education functions within a biblical worldview and that it pursues a meaningful integration of faith and learning in all disciplines and at all levels. It means that teachers and administrators give the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy a foundational role in the operation of the school, and that we are truly educating the whole person—not just the mind, but the whole person within the framework of a balanced, redemptive education that develops the ability to think, to act, and to do. Its goal is to restore in students the image of their Creator.

We hold ourselves accountable for Adventist mission and identity through processes such as the ones used by the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (AAA), where AAA performs audits of schools, provides recommendations for improvement, and gives commendations for what is going well. Through the functions of the International Board of Education (IBE), we establish general guidelines and direction of the education program of the church. The International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE) cooperates with divisions to provide overall guidance and standards to the professional training of pastors, theologians, teachers of Bible and religion, chaplains, and other denominational employees involved in ministerial and religious training.

While we promote and guard Adventist essentials in all levels of education, more recently the focus has moved to graduate and professional programs because that's where there is growth. Three medical schools and two dental schools opened in the past quinquennium (2010-2015) in Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Argentina, and Brazil, respectively.

Education has also expanded through technology; and here, the challenge is to adhere to Adventist philosophy of education in distance learning. How do we do Adventist education when we never see our students? When they live in their own homes and communities and rarely if ever set foot on campus? How do we do it when they only come for an intensive, participate in a cohort, or attend an urban campus while they're living at home? To foster academic excellence, focusing on continued improvement with measurable goals for quality culture is not enough. Mission must be integrated with traditional measures of academic excellence. Andrews University (Michigan, U.S.A.) is at the forefront of developing distance education that is distinctly Adventist; but in every school, technology needs to be baptized for our purposes.

Each school is assessed on its implementation of a spiritual master plan appropriate for the level and type of students. Key performance indicators include evidence that students are studying their Bible, and that the institution uses textbooks in harmony with Adventist philosophy of education. If we are using the same textbooks as every other educational institution, we are not carrying out our purposes. Textbooks need to integrate with and be based

on a biblical worldview. These are some examples of what it means to strengthen Adventist identity and mission in education today.

The second priority is to increase student access to Adventist education. Parents agree that Adventist education is desirable, but many struggle to afford it. How can we enroll more Seventh-day Adventist students? We need to partner with other departments to work with the divisions to increase student access to our schools. Barriers to enrollment need to be identified and removed or lowered. More work is needed to develop sustainable models of affordable education. No margin, no mission. But how can mission be balanced with the need for margin? How can we increase access?

With respect to students who are church members and attending tertiary higher education, the data are not encouraging. Using the earlier 18 million membership figure, about 30 percent of our membership are estimated to be between the ages of 16 and 30. This yields a total of six million potential tertiary students. Of that number, only 74,000 are attending a Seventh-day Adventist tertiary institution. That means that only one percent of Seventh-day Adventists in this age range are attending one of our colleges or universities. We have a problem.

Of course, not everybody in that age group is in school. Some are working, some are at home, and others are in rural populations where they are planting crops or caring for family. If the UNESCO higher education enrollment rate of 26 percent<sup>13</sup> is applied to that six million, there are an estimated 1.5 million young people who could be in Adventist higher education but who are studying somewhere else. Applying the UNESCO ratio improves the estimate so that of all of those Seventh-day Adventists who are studying in higher education, five percent could potentially attend one of our schools, instead of the one percent currently enrolled. Our schools cannot offer every degree, but we still could do better to enroll more in the large number of programs that we do offer.

The third priority is mission-focused teachers. Employment data from the annual statistical reports compiled by the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research show that this is the area of greatest concern. All teachers need to develop their capacity to achieve the redemptive purpose of Adventist education and to model Adventist values and lifestyle. The data show that we also need systematic and deliberate effort to increase where needed the percentage of Seventh-day Adventist teachers who work in the system. How are we doing with regard to the percentage of Seventh-day Adventist teachers in our schools?

Let us analyze the trend for the past 14 years—during the watch of many of us who have been in office. There is a clear downward trend for primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Increasingly, we are employing people of other faiths or no faith at all. As of 2014, almost 30 percent of the teachers in our schools were not Seventh-day Adventists. The an-

nual decrease is on average one percent per year, sometimes more. To put this into perspective—of a hundred thousand teachers (the approximate number worldwide)—what’s one percent? All good Seventh-day Adventists know how to tithe. So, what would 10 percent be? It would be ten thousand. And one percent per year represents the hiring every year of one thousand teachers who have not made a personal commitment to Adventism. Dr. George Knight asks: “What is Christian education without Christian teachers?” “What is Adventist education without Adventist teachers?” Teaching is an incarnational process. It’s not just teaching how to add numbers, but also how to live a life of faith and carry out the unique mission of Seventh-day Adventist education.

Over time, the percentage of Seventh-day Adventist students has declined so that in 2014, fewer than half of our student enrollment was Seventh-day Adventist. We might celebrate this because it offers an excellent evangelism opportunity! But the two trends (percentage of Adventist teachers and percentage of Adventist students) are going down together. Critics will say that some of these teachers are more caring or better role models than some Seventh-day Adventist teachers. They may indeed have superior academic qualifications and be effective educators in their discipline. They may even be warm Christians who share the love of Christ with students. But how can these teachers share the unique vision and mission of Seventh-day Adventist education if they do not subscribe to it themselves?

There has been a proliferation of graduate and professional degrees offered by our institutions—a whole alphabet soup just at the graduate level, including medicine, pharmacy, doctors of theology, PhDs in a variety of areas, and more. The expansive proliferation of degrees has required the employment of professors with specialized degrees. There have not been enough Seventh-day Adventists to fill these slots, which has resulted in increased hiring of people of other faiths or no faith at all.

The Adventist Professional Network (APN) is one initiative to monitor the preparation of future teachers and a tool to recruit teachers and other personnel. Every Seventh-day Adventist with at least a bachelor’s degree is invited to register in the database (<http://APN.adventist.org>)—it will take only 10 minutes to do so. APN is one way that we can track those who have at least a bachelor’s degree or higher and track their progress toward professional development in order to be better able to recruit them.

Lack of mission-focused teachers is an area where the walls are broken and the gates have burned. We need to redouble our efforts if Adventist education is to achieve its unique purpose.

The fourth and final priority is to strengthen educational leadership. Our principals, presidents of colleges and universities, and boards carry the local responsibility for overseeing more than 8,000 schools, colleges, and universities around the world. In a hand-poll of the 2016 General Conference Executive Committee, about 20 percent were new to

their positions. For that reason, an annual leadership conference is held to equip new officers for the responsibilities they must carry out in the field.

At the institutional level, demonstrating accountability and effective governance requires robust institutional decision-making processes and structures. Support for this is given in various ways: journal articles, board training, the 2016 General Conference Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) Conference on education, and board retreats. Graduate training for church leadership is provided at a number of universities—especially at Andrews University (U.S.A.), Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (Philippines), and the Adventist University of Africa (Kenya). Over the past year, the IBMTE Handbook was updated to strengthen ministerial and theological education. Regional LEAD conferences on education are scheduled for 2017. However, more needs to be done to develop leadership, particularly for the preschool/kindergarten, primary, and secondary levels.

### Reaching Cities Through Education

A final consideration is the role of education as a means of reaching big cities with the gospel. As of June 30, 2013, the global population was more than seven billion, and the population-to-member ratio was 396 to every Seventh-day Adventist. Analysis of the world’s urban population shows that for the approximate 1.7 billion people living in cities, there are three million Seventh-day Adventists. Here the ratio changes dramatically. In the cities, there are 547 people for every Seventh-day Adventist.<sup>14</sup>

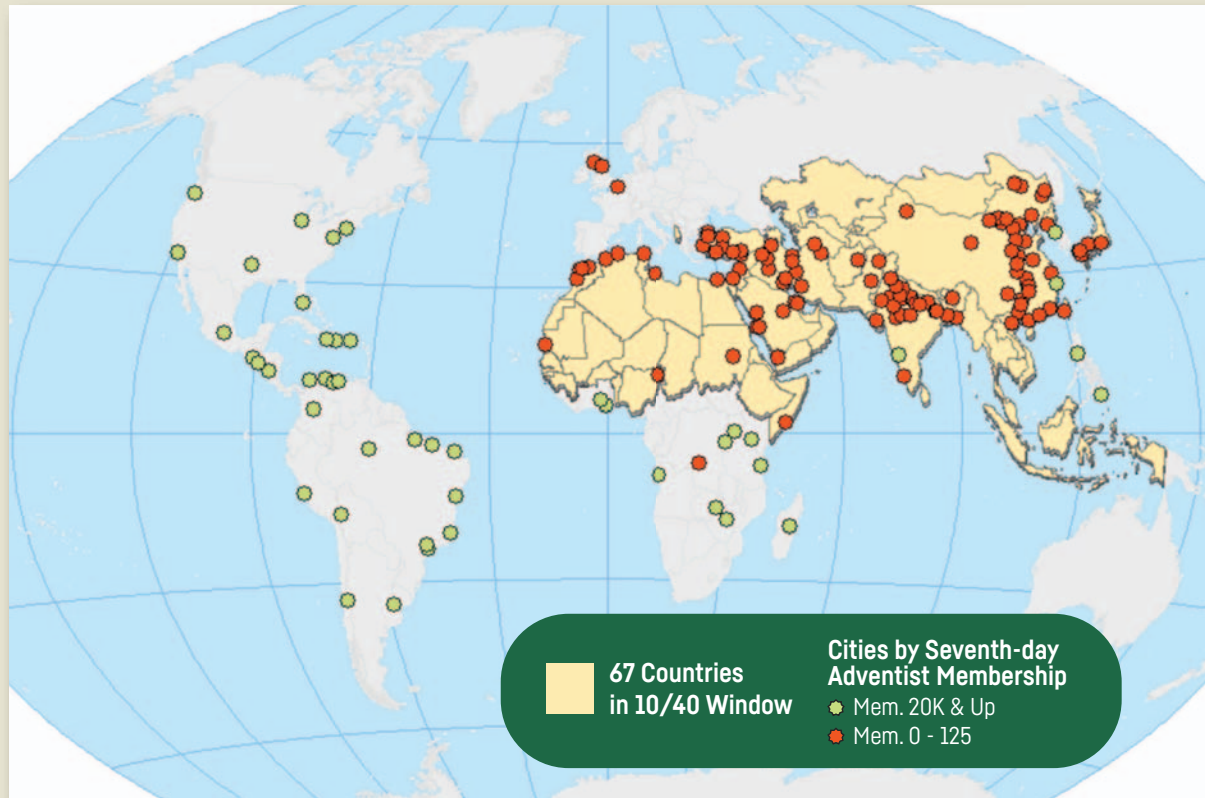
Viewed on a map, there is a correlation between educational institutions and where the membership is at least twenty thousand. Two features are important to note in the demographic distribution of membership. The larger concentrations are located along coastlines, reflecting the early efforts of pioneering missionaries who went out not by airplanes, but by ships, and established the work in coastal areas. Where the educational work was established, the church is strong. Local memberships of twenty thousand or more are virtually a map of our educational system. Education has proved to be a stable foundation on which Seventh-day Adventist work has grown from strength to strength. (See Figure 1 on page 15.)

Indicating on a map those regions of the world where the church has fewer than 125 members (0-125) highlights the 10/40 Window,<sup>15</sup> along with Europe. Our own historical success indicates that education should be a major approach for work in these challenging areas. In doing so, we continue the work of the Master Teacher and seek to carry out the gospel commission. ✍

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*Plenary 2 presentation at the LEAD Conference on “Educating for Eternity” held at the General Conference World Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A., October 5-7, 2016.*

**Figure 1. Seventh-day Adventist Membership in 10/40 Window Countries**



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# COGNITIVE GENESIS:

## Cognitive and Non-cognitive Factors Contributing to Academic Success in Adventist Education

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*Following is an adaptation of Dr. Elissa Kido's oral presentation to attendees at the LEAD Conference held October 5-7, 2016, in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A. Her presentation explained the results of the CognitiveGenesis project—a longitudinal study conducted from 2006-2009—and highlighted specific key findings that were shown to contribute to the academic success of students attending Adventist schools in North America.*

**C**ognitiveGenesis,<sup>1</sup> subtitled “Moving Hearts and Minds Upward,” an independent research study initiated by researchers at La Sierra University (Riverside, California, U.S.A.) and Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.), was designed to provide answers to three vital questions:

- What is the academic achievement of students in NAD K-12 Adventist schools?
- How do students in NAD Adventist schools compare to the national norms?

• What student, home, and school factors are associated with achievement?<sup>2</sup>

Given that no such empirical study of this length and magnitude had ever been done on Adventist education, this was quite a significant undertaking. By its conclusion, the *CognitiveGenesis* researchers had gathered four years' worth of data from more than 51,000 students, the parents of those students, and the teachers and principals of some 800 participating schools.

*CognitiveGenesis* analyzed the standardized achievement test scores of students in Adventist schools in the

U.S. (the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for grades 3-8 and the Iowa Test of Educational Development for grades 9 and 11) and their scores on the Cognitive Abilities Test. This allowed researchers to identify differences between students' aptitude (their predicted academic achievement based on ability) and their actual level of achievement.

### Key Findings

- *Students in the Adventist schools studied outperformed the national average on standardized tests.*

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BY ELISSA KIDO



In 2014, the high school graduation rate in the United States was 82 percent.<sup>3</sup> In the same year, the high school graduation rate for Adventist academies in the United States was 98.4 percent.<sup>4</sup> That statistic alone speaks volumes for the quality of education in Adventist schools. However, *CognitiveGenesis* dug much deeper in its analysis and, by comparing test scores, revealed that students in Adventist schools in the United States consistently performed well above the national average. Regardless of subject, grade level, or school size, students in these schools came out ahead. Two significant factors need to be noted with these results. One, the Iowa Tests are achievement tests taken all over the United States by more than three million students annually.<sup>5</sup> This was not an Adventist test or a test created by the research team for *CognitiveGenesis*; it was a standardized, national test.

Second, it is worth a reminder that the Adventist educational system in the North American Division is an open admission system. Any child who wants to attend an Adventist school can—regardless of ability or previous test scores. Unlike other college preparatory schools, Adventist schools do not have high admissions criteria. They are open to everybody, resulting in a highly diverse community of learners.

- *Students in Adventist schools “overachieved” beyond what their ability predicted.*

In the best sense of the word, *CognitiveGenesis* found that students in U.S. Adventist schools were over-achievers. They scored above their predicted achievement or expected achievement in all subjects, in all grades, for all school sizes, regardless of ability level. Let’s take an example of a hypothetical student named Joe. Joe’s parents know that he is a bright child; they see it in his interactions, his conversations, and his curiosity. However, Joe’s teacher tells a different story. Joe is often disruptive in class,

he forgets to turn in his homework, and he has a hard time staying on task. Joe would most likely score lower on the achievement tests than his aptitude tests (which measure ability) would suggest. Sadly, this is the case for many students in schools around the world. For a myriad of reasons—including poor learning environments at home and school, disengaged parents and teachers, convoluted policies—students’ achievement scores often do not accurately reflect their ability. Therefore, a *good* situation would have students’ achievement scores being approximately equivalent



to their ability (or aptitude) scores. This understanding makes the results from *CognitiveGenesis* even more astounding: Students in U.S. Adventist schools achieved *more* or higher than their aptitude scores predicted.

This finding was so remarkable that it left the two statisticians working for *CognitiveGenesis* shaking their heads and double checking the numbers. “The higher achievement scores than expected . . . that’s not the usual thing that happens,” one remarked. But not only did they see that difference the first year; but also, achievement scores were higher than aptitude scores for all four years of the study.

- *Students in U.S. Adventist schools increased in ability.*

Ellen G. White states: “It is the work of true education to train the youth to be thinkers and not mere reflectors of other people’s thoughts.”<sup>6</sup> In essence, one of the underlying goals of Adventist education is to increase students’ ability, not simply their test-taking skills. The results from *CognitiveGenesis* substantiated their success by giving evidence to increases not only in achievement scores, but also in ability scores.

- *The longer students were in Adventist schools, the more their scores increased.*

Dubbed the “the Adventist School Effect,” *CognitiveGenesis* researchers found that the longer students stayed in Adventist schools, the greater the increase in *both* achievement and ability.

- *School size had negligible effects.*

Now, what about school size?

Many Adventists in the U.S. are concerned about school size because 60 percent of our schools are considered small. What do we think of as small? Three or fewer teachers. That’s small. OK, so what about school size? Well, guess what? *CognitiveGenesis* revealed small differences between smaller and larger schools in both achievement and ability, but when there was a difference, it was consistently in favor of the smaller school.

### Non-cognitive Findings

One of the foundational beliefs in Adventist education is the commitment to a wholistic education. This means that rather than “teaching to the test” or doing away with fine-arts programs in order to dedicate more time to core subjects, Adventist education combines the physical, the mental, the spiritual, the social, and the emotional. Secular educational systems may subscribe to this idea of wholistic education, but Adventist education takes it a step further by infusing a spiritual component into every aspect of the curriculum and climate.

Few researchers have tackled the topic of religion and its correlation with academic achievement, but Marianne Gilbert, an Adventist doctoral student, did just that. She used *CognitiveGenesis* data for her dissertation, which was titled *An Analysis of Spiritual Factors and Academic Achievement in Seventh-day Adventist Schools*.<sup>7</sup>

By identifying several factors that involve spirituality, including religion or spirituality emphasized at school, teachers' spirituality, and mothers' spirituality, Gilbert divided students' academic gains into months and found small gains, moderate gains, and large gains in academic achievement. That means when all three factors are aligned, students were up to 8.5 months ahead of where standardized tests predicted they should be.

In his latest book, *Outliers*, renowned sociologist Malcolm Gladwell<sup>8</sup> studied the phenomenon of success by looking for patterns and themes in individuals who had achieved great success. He defined success as a group project—noting that extraordinary people always had help along the way.

As Gilbert's study demonstrated, Adventist education is indeed also a group project—one that can achieve tremendous success with the support and collaboration of three key partners—the school, the church, and the home.

*CognitiveGenesis* data also sheds light on non-cognitive factors such as the church and the home, both of which can also contribute to higher academic achievement. For instance, it found that higher achievement was associated with harmonious and spiritual homes where there was good family communications as well as discipline. Parents were actively involved with the school and had high expectations for their children. In regard to the church's contribution, higher-achieving schools had pastors and church members who provided good support. When pastors had a visible presence on campus, played basketball with the students, and provided chapels and weeks of prayer, this connection correlated with higher-achieving schools.

**The development of a child's worldview is critical because it helps determine the kind of character children will develop and the type of God they will worship and proclaim. This worldview, this character, is developed and molded by what children see, what they hear, what they are exposed to every day.**

#### **Other Significant Factors**

But the mission of Adventist education wouldn't be complete if it simply produced high-achieving students. Rather, additional significant factors result from having students in an Adventist school—factors that actually have far more value than test scores and ability levels. Ellen G. White wrote that “in the highest sense, the work of education and the work of redemption are one.”<sup>9</sup> Where these two tasks intersect, we find our worldview. A worldview is like a set of glasses that allows a person to look at reality or life in a way that governs thoughts, decisions, and actions. Would you not say that worldview is important?

The story of the Prodigal Son pro-

vides an excellent example of three basic and distinct worldviews—those of the father and the two sons (Luke 15:11-32).<sup>10</sup> Primarily concerned with his own desires and needs, the prodigal son has a “me first” worldview. The elder son, on the other hand, clings to a “rules” worldview. Rules come first, which makes it difficult for him to understand why—since he stayed home and followed all the rules and did all the right things—his father did not kill a fatted calf for him. Finally, there is the father. He is not concerned about himself at all, but rather about his sons and their growth and development and well-being—an “others first” worldview.

Research has shown that by age 13, young persons have already developed their worldview.<sup>11</sup> It may not be fully formed, but the foundation is set.

Which worldview do you want your child, your grandchild, your niece, your nephew, the children in our church to have? “Me first,” “rules first,” or “others first”? Eighty-one percent of the students surveyed by ValueGenesis<sup>3</sup> said that attending an Adventist school was the most important thing that had helped them develop their religious faith.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, a survey of 10,000 middle and high school students in the United States over 10 years found that only 22 percent thought that caring for others was more important than their own personal happiness or individual achievement.<sup>13</sup>

The development of a child’s worldview is critical because it helps determine the kind of character children will develop and the type of God they will worship and proclaim. This worldview, this character, is developed and molded by what children see, what they hear, what they are exposed to every day.

A discovery in the field of neuroscience really underlines the importance of this daily exposure in a child’s life. Mirror neurons are neurons in the brain that fire when they observe someone doing something. They fire in a way that creates a mirror in the brain of the observation that has been made, which allows the observer to re-create or imitate that behavior later. For example, as a toddler sees her parents walking around in the house, mirror neurons fire. This lays the groundwork for the toddler to eventually pull herself up and start walking, too.<sup>14</sup>

With this context, one has an even greater realization of the importance of our children’s environment, the behaviors they see, and the words they hear. A teacher in an Adventist school recently said: “Teaching in an Adventist school is participating in the longest evangelistic event that the church holds every year.” When that is the belief of our teachers, when that is the mission of our teachers,

parents can be confident that the mirror neurons in their children’s brains are firing likenesses of Jesus.

Do Adventist schools do a good job of educating our students academically? Absolutely! But they also do so, so much more than that. They educate children for eternity—developing characters fit for heaven. ✍

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*Adaptation of oral presentation at the 2016 LEAD Conference held October 5-7, 2016, at Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.*

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Education at La Sierra University in Riverside, California, U.S.A. The CognitiveGenesis Project was launched during Dr. Kido’s tenure as Dean of the School of Education at La Sierra University, and she served as the Project Director.

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# THE DIVINE BLUEPRINT FOR EDUCATION

## A Devotional

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Ours is a distinct privilege to think through foundational truths for a few minutes. A word is in order lest you look for a textual study of Scripture or possibly Ellen G. White quotations. All of us are quite familiar with these. This is a time for worship, not analysis. It is an occasion for looking past the unquestioned value of technical studies into the beyond, for the scope of education, especially Christian education, stretches across a vast plane of thought, intellectual and spiritual, where our path toward heaven sometimes leads us through thorns and thistles. We dare not underestimate the importance of this journey, for its consequences will impact millions.

Christian education is nothing new to Seventh-day Adventists. As an introduction, look at our masterfully crafted document titled “A Statement of Seventh-day Adventist Educational Philosophy,”<sup>1</sup> a vision of our goals. This document is worthy of thoughtful examination, for it clarifies objectives, and to a degree methods, that will be useful to us in this Heaven-sent assignment.

But let us begin our pilgrimage with what we acknowledge as inevitable truths that underlie all else, truths that the Latins described as *sine qua non*. It focuses on the divine element of our worship. We look first to God, especially as He reveals

Himself in the Scriptures, but even further in our contact with His works. We marvel at His immeasurable power and wisdom, stretching far beyond our feeble ability to understand these things to the full. Here He is above us, Creator of all things, Maker of a universe of majestic proportions, where in space He hangs millions of heavenly bodies, fixed or rotating, sustaining them moment by moment in courses of His design.

Such complexity lies beyond our imagination but, by special revelation, God traces in great detail His profound concern for our tiny planet. He has personally placed us here as humans made in His image, originally perfect in form and living in a perfect environment. Here is the Almighty One, the Eternal Father, Son, and Spirit functioning in matchless harmony, bent on rescuing us from the eternal loss that befell us. God is the source of all understanding and of life itself, Lord of space, time, and all sensory encounter. It is He who initiates our education by revealing His nature and intention for us. And it is our privilege to represent our Creator not only as a Being of power, but also filled with love, compassion, grace, and indeed all things to our benefit. Christian education extols God with all His works.

Beyond all this, we marvel as we consider His incredible intimacy with us and personal affection toward each of us. With all the universe under His command, how can this be possible?

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BY GEORGE W. REID

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He guides us, calls us toward His righteousness, listens to our prayers, is at our side in every joyful moment or disappointment we encounter. Can we imagine better news than this and the privilege of sharing it in every contact with others? To introduce this to our companions and students is the pinnacle of privilege.

But this pristine picture is not all. The Scriptures describe something unthinkable but true: revolt in heaven. All of us know the story. Into the Lord's paradise Lucifer introduced cosmic conflict. This brought to all of us the infection of sin, with its terminus in death. How would the Lord deal with this? Our parents, blessed with the ability to make choices, fell to deception in the very Garden of Eden, spreading evil through the human family. God's perfect character was distorted and misrepresented entirely. Heaven's response: Father and Son in consultation would make the unthinkable decision.

As Jesus told us, He was sent by the Father to take human flesh, reveal the character of God in a manner all could see, participate in the human experience, and conclude the issue by taking to the Cross the terminal event of sin. There He erased the scheme of Lucifer and provided eternal life, a gift to all who sincerely believe. The appeal from Christ is to serve Him with our hearts, for His is the only way to life eternal. The Bible traces the sorry story of this planet, a mixture of good and evil, and a sorry mess it is. Into this matrix the heavenly Father sends us to lead His children to the outworking of His plan. Humanity, described symbolically in the Scripture as the product of God's fingers, makes its decisions in a spoiled environment and must understand what is involved, and this calls for a Christian education, one that addresses the practical elements of living as well as how we should respond to God. This becomes the goal of Adventist education.

Ideal education opens every option to examination and interpretation, where it becomes the guide to making choices. Secular education will make all this the product of accident and survival of the fittest, the very existence of all things attributed to a massive random explosion in unmeasured antiquity. The biblical picture is vastly different, and this imposes a huge responsibility on Adventist education, not simply in organized institutions, but also from the beginning of cognition, starting with mother's caress and father's knee. True education reaches for the truth of our past, an understanding of the present in which we dwell, and our destiny. True education includes everything we can know about ourselves, our world, and the consequences that follow from our choices, correctly envisioned. It is a ministry of vital importance, spanning worship, judgment, and discovery in the laboratories of experience.

As we have seen, the fullest revelation of God came when the Son took on the garb of humanity and in our own setting taught us valuable lessons and challenged us to search the depth of the divine message. All this is teaching. How could the heavenly Father have spoken to us in a better way? We beheld Him, the only begotten of the Father, whose repeated message was, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30, NIV).<sup>2</sup> Jesus was an emissary of truth, tasting the final wages of sin in death. He went where He passed through the consequences

of our sin. What greater revelation could we see than this?

But in glory He arose from the tomb, leaving Lucifer's scheme in shambles, and promised to return for those who honor Him. For Adventists, this promise is in the heart of our faith that must not be reduced to a liturgical dogma. God's purpose for us is full restoration.

Today, we look at the structure of Adventist education, its progress to a worldwide chain of institutions, but beyond that, a vision of God's plan for education. Does such a plan exist? Beyond question, the answer is Yes. It reaches from the home and church to formal education, both as a practical preparation for life today and as the experience of spiritual growth that fulfills the church's great commission. Where the educational world around us minimizes the idea of any divine involvement, we rise to challenge their idea and inculcate knowledge that reaches from eternity past to eternity to come.

Can anyone imagine a plan more comprehensive? As educators, we occupy a cherished and profoundly influential place in life as well as the church. Here in classrooms and labs, people entrust their precious youth into our hands. What will we give them? A rehashed version of what is socially in vogue today, even if flavored with religious language here and there? Or will it present real leadership, demonstrating how God's purposes can guide not only in our curricula but through our example as well? Our youth will proceed from our hands into an essentially God-free world and must be prepared to make wise decisions. God has entrusted them with free choice and us with influence. He has brought the two together, entrusting the young to the old. Will we be faithful in preparing our young people for life here and in eternity? We ask this question of ourselves, but God poses the same question and will require an accounting for our stewardship. Let us be found worthy of this enormous trust. ✍

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*A devotional presented at the 2016 LEAD Conference on "Educating for Eternity" held at the General Conference World Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 5-7, 2016.*

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**George W. Reid, ThD**, served as Director of the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from 1984 to 2001. Among his many books are *Seventh-day Adventists and Life Insurance* and *Another Look at Adventist Hermeneutics*.

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2. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

An hourglass graphic with a gold top and bottom bulb and a white central column, set against a green background with a white gradient. The top bulb is partially filled with gold liquid.

# INCREASING STUDENT ACCESS IN K TO 12 EDUCATION:

## A Challenge for Adventist Schools in the 21st Century

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*The following is an adaptation of Dr. David Williams' oral presentation to attendees at the LEAD Conference held October 5-7, 2016, in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A. His presentation addressed the need to increase student access to Adventist education, and issued a call to action and an appeal for innovative thinking about funding, teacher quality, visionary leadership, and collaboration among all levels of Adventist education.*

**I**t's truly an honor and privilege for me to talk about some of the challenges we face in Adventist Christian education and some of the opportunities we have to make a difference. I want to begin with a great *Thank you* for what Christian education has done for me.

I am a product of Christian education. I began my educational journey in the Inter-American Division,<sup>1</sup>

where I attended elementary and high school on the island of St. Lucia, graduated from Caribbean Union College (now the University of the Southern Caribbean), and later became an alumnus of Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.) and Loma Linda University (Loma Linda, California, U.S.A.). God blessed me with that preparation so that I was accepted into one of the top three departments in my field for doctoral studies, and for the past 30

years to work at three of the best universities of the world—Yale University, the University of Michigan, and Harvard University, to be a co-author of more than 400 scientific papers, and to enable me to become one of the most highly ranked social scientists in the world, by objective criteria.<sup>2</sup> So, I really want to begin with what Christian education can do and how God can also fulfill His promises. He can do exceeding abundantly

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BY DAVID R. WILLIAMS

dantly, above what we can ask or think.<sup>3</sup>

I want to talk about three major themes this morning: (1) the challenge of youth retention in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the role that Christian education can play; (2) the challenge we face of providing high-quality education; and (3) the challenge of making Adventist education affordable for our constituency.

### The Challenge of Retention

First, the challenge of youth retention. You are probably all familiar with the statistics that reveal the large loss that the church is experiencing globally, as has been shown by the membership audits<sup>4</sup> that have been done by the General Conference in recent years (see Figure 1).<sup>5</sup> I want to focus not just on the global loss, but also on what is happening to our youth.<sup>6</sup>

In 1987, Roger Dudley conducted a study in which he selected a probability sample of 15- and 16-year-old baptized Seventh-day Adventists across the North American Division.<sup>7</sup> Dudley attempted to interview each person in the survey population every year for 10 years, and finally at ages 25 and 26. How many of those teenagers who were baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church had we lost? Half. One half. We are losing one-half of our youth in the North American Division.<sup>8</sup> This is not one lost coin. This is half of the coins. This is a crisis if we don't take steps to be more effective in retaining our youth and connecting them to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As we think of Christian education, let us consider the organizational structure that God has given us. Every day, we all are engaged in Christian education—which is more than schools, curriculum, or institutions. Christian education is what we, through our lives, are doing as role models for our young people. I'm

going to read a statement from Ellen White that I would never have the courage to say myself: "It is because so many parents and teachers profess to believe the word of God while their lives deny its power, that the teaching of Scripture has no greater effect upon the youth."<sup>9</sup>

These are not the factors we usually point to when we talk about the church's loss of young people, but the Spirit of Prophecy says we need to begin by taking a look at ourselves. As Ellen White wrote in the book *Education*: "It is one thing to treat the Bible as a book of good moral instruction to be heeded, so far as it is consistent with the spirit of the times and our position in the world; it is another thing to regard it as it really is, the word of the living God, the word that is our life, the word that is to mold our actions, our words and our thoughts. To hold God's word as anything less than this is to reject it, and this rejection by those who profess to believe it, is foremost among the causes of skepticism and infidelity in the youth."<sup>10</sup>

We all have work to do in faithfully modeling what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The time has come for us as leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to reaf-

firm the central role of Christian education as part of the evangelistic mission of the church. I emphasize the evangelistic mission of the church because Christian education is a part of that.

I believe, having worked 30 years in secular education, that the need for Adventist education has never been greater than it is right now. We are counseled that there should be schools established wherever there is a church or company of believers, and teachers should be employed to educate children of Sabbath keepers. We have work to do.<sup>11</sup>

What are three predictors that Roger Dudley found in the youth who were 10 years later committed to the Adventist Church in his study of North American Division young people?

1. Youth who saw the church as relevant to their lives were still committed 10 years later. That is, youth who regarded Sabbath sermons in their church as interesting and felt that their church met their spiritual and social needs.

2. Youth who had a grace orientation regarding salvation also remained committed. Someone with a grace orientation believes that salvation is based on what Jesus has done

Figure 1. Seventh-day Adventist World Church Membership Audit



Chart created by John Wesley Taylor V.

for us, not on what we do for ourselves.

3. Enrollment in a Seventh-day Adventist college was another predictor of those young people who remained actively involved in the Adventist Church.

### The Challenges of Providing High-quality Education

We also have a challenge of providing high-quality education. Years ago, if you opened a Seventh-day Adventist school, Adventist parents sent their kids to that school without question. Today, Seventh-day Adventists have come of age. Like those before us, we want the best for our children. I know many Seventh-day Adventists who are products of Christian education and who now believe that Christian education is not good enough for their children. I encounter these parents, and they want to know how they can get their children into the Harvards and Yales of the world. They believe that Adventist schools do not provide the academic rigor that will make their children competitive in today's world.

One challenge, I believe, is that many Seventh-day Adventist parents are using secular criteria to determine what is best for their children. And I would say to them, "What shall it profit someone to gain the finest education the world has to offer and lose his or her own soul?"<sup>12</sup> We have a pastoral responsibility, as a church, to educate our members about the value of Christian education.

At the same time, I honestly believe there's another side to that coin. At many of our Adventist schools, there is room for improvement. Too many of our schools are run by administrators who lack vision. Our constituencies have changed. Today, parents are looking for excellence, and I believe that we shouldn't criticize these parents. They are looking for exactly what God is looking for.

He wants our schools to be the best! He is also looking for excellence. God wants us to be the head and not the tail, and He places no premium on mediocrity.

What are some of the challenges of addressing equality and access in Adventist education? One challenge is the cost of Adventist education, and the low socioeconomic status profile of many Adventist households. I have data only for the North American Division, but I think these are common issues around the world. In 2008, the median household income in the United States was \$50,000, and the poverty line was \$22,000. Forty percent of Seventh-day Adventists in the North American Division in 2008 had incomes close to the poverty level, and 70 percent (seven out of 10 Adventist families) had incomes below the median level of the country<sup>13</sup> (see Figure 2).

We are facing a constituency that is not rich with economic resources, and we have to figure out ways to make Adventist education affordable and within their reach. Historically, Adventists have recruited the majority of its new members from the lower socioeconomic status groups in our society, but with our emphasis on education, the second generation of Adventists has typically transitioned into the middle class.<sup>14</sup> The bottom line is that around the world, many Adventists, especially recent converts, come from the poorer sectors of our society, and we need to think of what can be done to make education available to them.

What are some of the implications of the economic demographics of our constituency? We know that children from low-income U.S. households receive less cognitive stimulation and enrichment at home. They are less likely to have their parents read aloud to them or take them to a library. Low-income parents spend less time in face-to-face interaction talking to their children. Low-income homes have fewer educational resources. Children in low-income homes watch

more television and get less parental monitoring.<sup>15</sup>

In the United States, one of the aptitude tests students take at the end of high school is the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), which many observers refer to as "The Student Affluence Test" because of this graded, straight-line relationship between levels of family income in America and SAT scores. National data for SAT scores in the United States in 2014 revealed that higher family income was associated with higher academic performance.<sup>16</sup> So, academic performance is directly linked to the economic resources of the household (see Figures 3 and 4).

### Keys to Excellence

#### • *Money Alone Is Not Enough.*

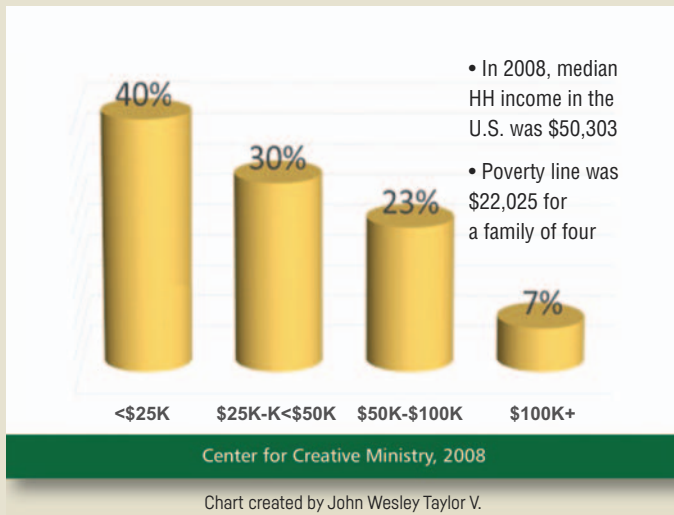
What do we do? How do we move forward facing these challenges? The first point I want to make is that money alone is not enough, and this is based on studies that have looked at what happens in secular education when local and state governments just give additional money to struggling schools. The research indicates that simply giving more money does not have a big impact on academic performance.<sup>17</sup> States in the U.S. that have equalized finance among schools have reduced the gap in academic scores between high-income and low-income students by five percent. This is a very tiny amount of reduction. Purchasing computers and other upgrades for school facilities has had either no effect on academic performance, and in some cases, a negative effect on performance. So, it's not just about technology, and it's not just about money.<sup>18</sup>

#### • *The Primacy of Teacher Quality.*

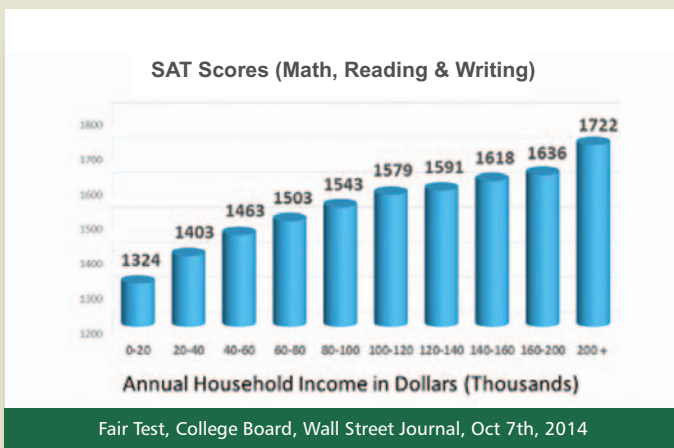
Based on the existing scientific research, what is the key to academic success? Excellence is not produced by chance. The single biggest predictor of superior student educational performance in the United States



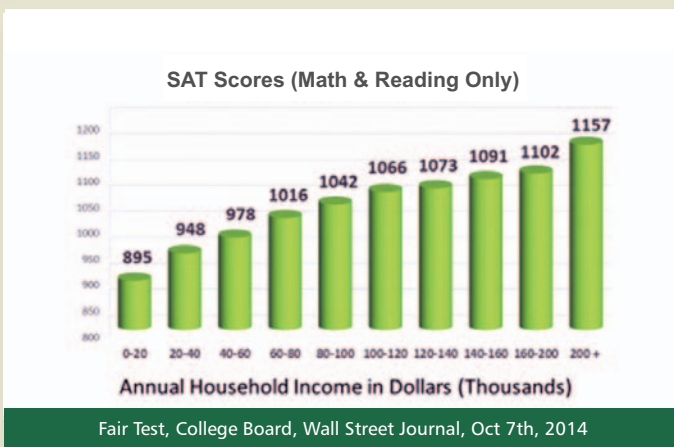
**Figure 2. Socioeconomic Profile of U.S. Adventist Households**



**Figure 3. U.S. Math, Reading, and Writing SAT Scores by Family Income**



**Figure 4. U.S. Math and Reading SAT Scores by Family Income**



(where these studies have been done) is the quality of instruction provided by their teachers. Research shows even economically disadvantaged children who are taught at high levels achieve at high levels. Given the right teacher, the right classes, the right support, all of our students, regardless of their economic background, can perform well.<sup>19</sup> So, this is a call to excellence in the way we prepare our teachers, in the way we prepare our principals. And this is simply following the example of Jesus.

Ellen White in *The Desire of Ages* says: “Jesus sought to do the best work in every line. He was not willing to be defective, even in the handling of tools. He was perfect as a workman, as He was perfect in character. By His own example He taught that it is our duty to be industrious, that our work should be performed with exactness and thoroughness, and that such labor is honorable.”<sup>20</sup> God is calling us to a renewed commitment to excellence in Adventist education. Excellence in how we represent Him; excellence in how we teach; excellence in how we prepare our students for the joy of service in this world, and for the greater joy of wider service in the world to come.<sup>21</sup>

God is calling for our teachers to be a key part of the gospel commission—a calling as important as that of pastors.<sup>22</sup> Teachers are preparing God’s children to sit on thrones (Matthew 19:28 and Luke 22:30). Imagine how teachers in your division would approach their job if they knew that Jesus, the majesty of heaven, was going to be a student in their class. Jesus is, indeed, in their classes, because He said: “Inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me” (Matthew 25:40, NKJV).<sup>23</sup> We need to create a new vision of the opportunities we have to educate His children.

- *Leadership Matters.* High-quality principals have a large impact on

student academic performance.<sup>24</sup> The central factor in quality schools, and in schools that turn around and produce quality, is the leadership. It starts with a vision. We need to ask ourselves: “What are we doing to train our principals and educational leaders to be high-quality administrators who hire high-quality teachers, and recommend the firing of underperforming ones?” I believe that one of the challenges in Adventist education is the need for “blessed subtractions.” What does this mean? There is a story about an evangelist who went out and conducted a revival series. When he returned, he was asked: “How did things go?” He said: “It was great—the Holy Spirit was poured out. We were blessed.” And he was asked: “How many additions were there as a result of your ministry in this place?” He said: “There were no additions, only blessed subtractions.”

We need continuous quality improvement. We need to make a long-term and tangible commitment to improve the quality of teaching in Seventh-day Adventist elementary and secondary schools. We need a systematic plan to evaluate, nurture, and to monitor our primary and secondary teachers, and to enhance their skills. And local conferences that desire to have schools of excellence must have the courage and the backbone to remove teachers who are still not doing an outstanding job of teaching after having provided them with all of the resources to improve. We will never have a quality system if we are not willing to make tough decisions.

- *The Role of Universities.* Seventh-day Adventist institutions of higher learning have a role to play in strengthening teacher quality. Many teachers in elementary and secondary schools are being asked to provide instruction in subjects for which they are not adequately trained. In all of our divisions, we have institutions of higher learning, and we need to build

## Box 1. Programs That Support Teachers and Students

### 1. Loma Linda's EXSEED Program

<http://home.llu.edu/academics/academic-resources/educational-effectiveness/exseed>

Loma Linda University, in collaboration with six other Adventist institutions, started the Excellence in STEM Experimental Education Program (EXSEED). This one-week summer program brings selected K-12 educators from Adventist schools to the Loma Linda, California, campus to enhance their skills and their teaching of math and science.

### 2. Apprenticeship Bridge to College (ABC) Program

<http://medicine.llu.edu/chdmm/education-and-training/high-school-students>

The Apprenticeship Bridge to College program, established by Dr. Marino De Leon, is a high school summer research program at Loma Linda University. Funded by the National Institutes of Health, this eight-week summer internship program provides high school students with hands-on research experiences in the biomedical field, enrichment in areas that will strengthen their performance in the biomedical sciences—math, English, analytical thinking, and scientific communication, and seminars on health disparities in underserved populations. The program prepares young people, Adventist and non-Adventist, from the San Bernardino, California, community and nationwide, and gives them exposure to learning experiences they did not have in high school. As a result of this program, 80 percent of past participants are pursuing degrees in a scientific discipline.

### 3. Loma Linda University's Undergraduate Training Program (UTP)

<http://medicine.llu.edu/chdmm/education-and-training/undergraduate-training-program>

Loma Linda University's Undergraduate Training Program (UTP) is a nine-week summer research internship for undergraduate college and university students. The goal is to increase the number of biomedical and physician scientists from diverse backgrounds involved in research to help eliminate health disparities. Participants receive practical lab research experience under supervision of a faculty mentor, and present their findings at the Health Disparities Research Symposium, which takes place at the end of the session. The program is funded by the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. Participants in the UTP program are selected from colleges and universities nationwide.

### 4. Southwestern Adventist University's Summer Bridge Program

<http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae201678053307.pdf>

Summer Bridge at Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas, is an intensive three-week session designed to help at-risk students prepare for college. All invited students meet one, but not both, of the two academic entrance requirements for regular admission (GPA and SAT/ACT scores). The program is designed to help close the gap between current skills and those necessary for college success in the areas of reading, writing, math, and study skills. Participating students receive one unit of academic credit (in kinesiology) for the three-week program.

programs that support K-12 teachers (see Box 1). We need to strengthen and expand globally so that we can enhance the quality of instruction of all of our teachers.

The quality of our academic programs varies. We need to design and test new strategies. We need science-based and principles-based innovation that can lead to dramatic improvement in the impact of our work. Without innovation, we will not achieve our ambitious goals. Someone wrote a book some time ago saying the seven last words of the church are “We’ve never done it that way before.” We need to mobilize the creative talents of Seventh-day Adventists within and outside of our system. We need new ways of thinking, new ways of working; we need a commitment to research-based innovations so we can provide our best to all of God’s children.

• *Revival and Reformation.* This is a call for revival and reformation. We need revival—a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of powers of mind, a resurrection from spiritual death. We often stop there, but Ellen White goes on to say what reformation is—and most of us are uncomfortable with the definition: “Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices.”<sup>25</sup> When reformation comes, we’ll be doing a whole lot of things differently because we will be doing that which best brings honor and glory to God. She also says: “Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed. . . . God and Heaven alone are infallible. . . . We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn.”<sup>26</sup> So a whole new openness of mind is needed as we approach keeping to our principles and providing quality.

### The Challenge of Making Adventist Education Affordable

Finally, the challenge of making Adventist education affordable. According to the 2007-2008 *Demographic Survey of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America*,<sup>27</sup> the low socioeconomic status of many of our Seventh-day Adventist households in the North American Division (NAD) meant that many parents who wanted to send their children to Adventist schools were unable to afford the tuition payments and desperately needed financial assistance. The

ing arrangements, a large and growing percentage of our church membership will be unable to financially afford Adventist education. We need to think of ways we can make Adventist education affordable. The changing demographics of North American Division Adventism highlight this challenge: the decline in membership, trends in ethnicity—a decline in white membership and a growing minority membership. Why is this of relevance?

National data for the United States in 2013 revealed differences in in-

**W**e need to design and test new strategies. We need science-based and principles-based innovation that can lead to dramatic improvement in the impact of our work.

same can be said for parents in other parts of the world.

Compared to an earlier survey, Seventh-day Adventist membership in the North American Division had increased among the lower-middle and middle class, but declined among households above the national median income. The membership is growing primarily among poorer segments of the population. As a result, under the current fund-

come in the United States based on race and ethnicity. In the U.S., for every dollar of income white households earned, black households earned 59 cents, Latino households 70 cents, and Asian households \$1.15. Asians had the highest levels of education of any group the U.S., and 70 percent of them were immigrants.<sup>28</sup>

The 59-cents figure for the black population in the U.S. in 2013 is identical to the racial gap in income that existed in 1978. Data on income understate data on wealth and economic

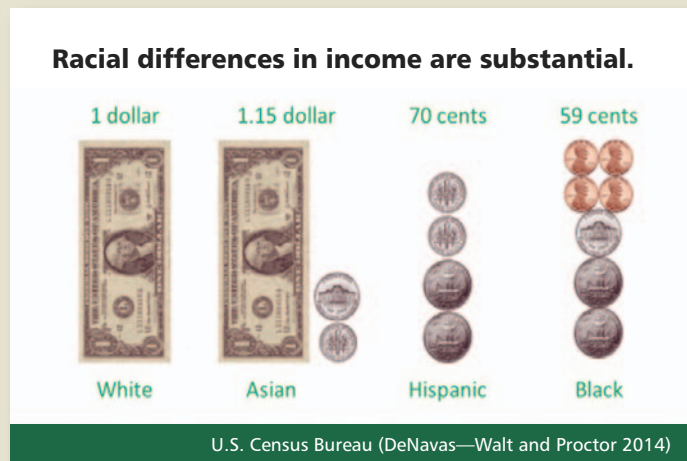
resources of households. Wealth includes assets or economic resources (inclusive of property, investments, and economic reserves) that households have. The data show for every dollar of wealth that white households have, black households have six pennies, and Latino households have seven pennies. When we talk about our growing minority membership, we're talking about populations that lack the traditional economic resources we think about when considering how to pay for Adventist education (see Figures 5 and 6).

The U.S. is not alone in having income disparities between whites and minorities. Data from the United Kingdom (U.K.) show that for every pound (100 pence) of income the white majority earns, immigrants earn much less: Other white groups earn 79 pence, Indians earn 86 pence, Pakistanis earn 57 pence, Bangladeshis earn 56 pence, Chinese earn 76 pence, blacks from the Caribbean earn 77 pence, and black Africans earn 60 pence. So we see striking differences in wealth, as well, in the U.K. Caribbean blacks have 34 pence for every pound of wealth (earnings combined with assets such as property and investments) whites have, with African blacks having 7 pence for every pound of wealth owned by whites. As we look at our world division fields, and we look at our constituencies, we need to acknowledge the economic challenges they face<sup>29</sup> (see Figures 7-9).

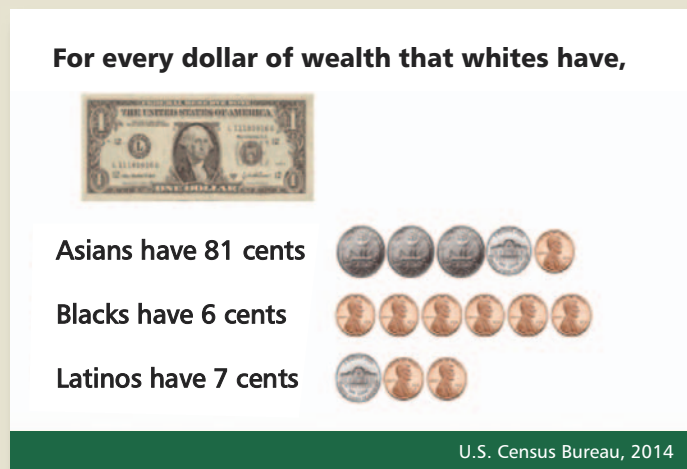
### What Can We Do?

What does the Spirit of Prophecy tell us? It says: "Worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty [and we are in difficulty in Adventist education] He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our Heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. [A thousand ways to provide funding for tuition in our institutions, of which we know nothing!] Those

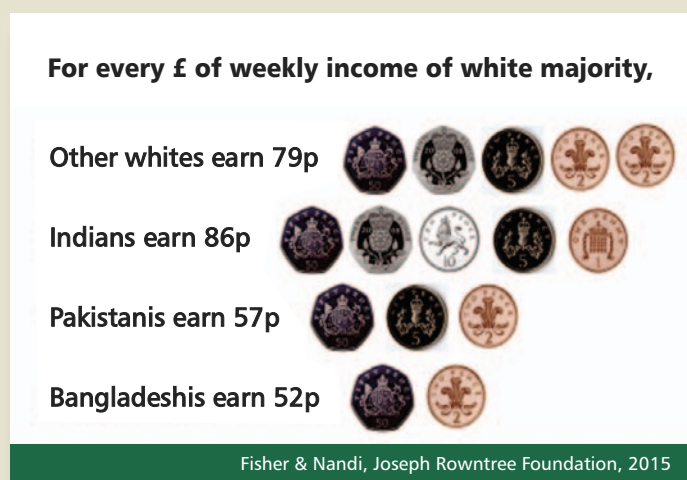
**Figure 5. U.S. Median Household Income and Race, 2013**



**Figure 6. U.S. Median Wealth and Race, 2013**



**Figure 7. U.K. Median Household Income, 2009/2010-2012/2013**



who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet."<sup>30</sup> We need to find ways to rethink what we do.

There are alternative approaches to funding that Adventist education may wish to consider: The Five-Percent Solution; The Phaedrus Initiative; The College of the Ozarks/free-tuition model; and the school change model.

1. *The Five-Percent Solution.*<sup>31</sup> Thambi Thomas, formerly associate director of education for the Pacific

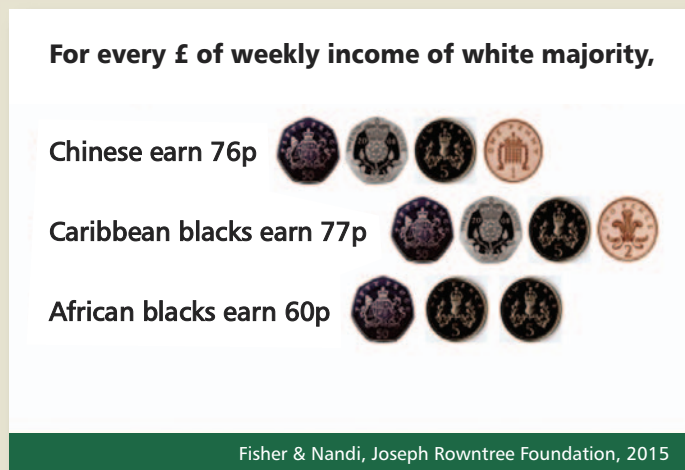
Union Conference, proposed the five-percent solution and called for an update to the formulas used to support education. He proposed that the church increase its commitment to funding primary and secondary education by allocating an additional five percent of tithe income in every conference in the North American Division to support church school education. While this may not be the right solution for every division, it is an example of the kind of thinking in which we need to engage. He showed that if the Pacific Union had done this

in 2009, the plan would have generated an additional \$8 million for K-12 Adventist education in that union. This proposal is fully consistent with regarding Christian education as an essential evangelistic ministry of the church.

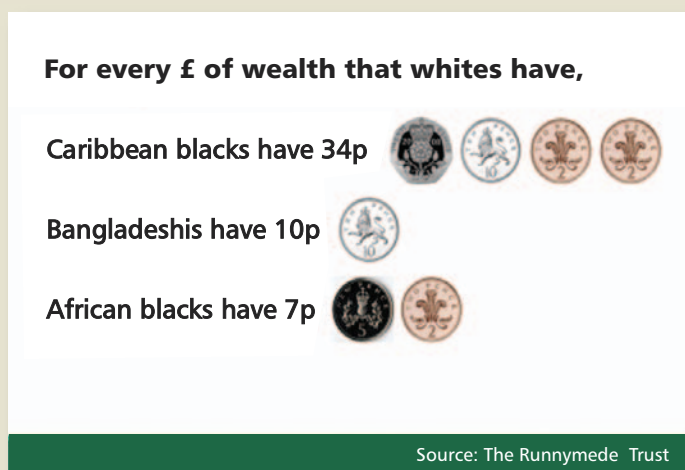
2. *College of the Ozarks/Free Tuition Model.*<sup>32</sup> The College of the Ozarks in Point Lookout, Missouri, is a Christian liberal-arts college with 1,500 students that provides free tuition. Instead of paying tuition, all students must work on campus, performing jobs ranging from dairy farming to custodial services, which covers the cost of their tuition. If students work 15 hours a week and two 40-hour weeks while on school breaks, the school guarantees to cover tuition expenses that exceed what is paid by other scholarships and grants. Seventy percent of college revenue comes from gifts and earnings from the school's endowment, and a constituency that is committed to education.

3. *The Phaedrus Initiative and Blended Learning.*<sup>33</sup> Urban Catholic schools, like many Adventist schools, have been facing declines in enrollment. They, too, have closed a large number of schools in the U.S. Seton Educational Partners developed the Phaedrus Initiative, which has successfully increased student enrollment, decreased staff, reduced per-pupil costs by 20 to 25 percent, and improved academic achievement. The Phaedrus Initiative uses a combination of blended learning and implementation of best practices in education. The blended-learning model combines computer-based learning in small groups with traditional classroom instruction. In this model, a classroom is divided into two groups and for the first half of the class period, a teacher works with half of the students, while the other half use classroom computers to get their instruction. For the second half of the class period, the students switch places: The students who began the

**Figure 8. Median U.K. Household Income, 2009/10-2012/13**



**Figure 9. Race and Wealth, U.K., 2009**



class period with the teacher move to the computers, and those who used the computers work with the teacher. Both groups of students, then, have time with the teacher and with computer-aided instruction. The teacher thus is able to capitalize on the learning and the challenges faced by both groups of students. The combination of this approach, along with revamping their entire curriculum to include best practices in education and strategies that have proved successful, has led to a dramatic transformation of education.

4. *School Change Models*.<sup>34</sup> Purpose Built Communities is a national model for revitalizing communities and changing schools. The first turn-around school was in East Lake Meadows, Atlanta, Georgia. In 1995, East Lake Meadows was a public housing project with high crime. Ninety percent of the residents in that housing project were a victim of a felony every year. The crime rate was 18 times higher than the national crime rate, and only 13 percent of adults were employed. The public school in the community was one of the worst-performing schools in the entire state of Georgia.

By 2016, compared to 1995, East Lake had a 90 percent reduction in violent crime, and all of the residents were in high-quality housing. While 50 percent of the residents still qualify for public housing, every able-bodied person in that community is employed. And they have developed an educational model that transformed the worst-performing school to the best-performing school in the state of Georgia through the use of project-based learning and teaching-and-learning strategies based on critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, innovation, and problem-solving. East Lake adopted a rigorous process that they use in hiring every new teacher. Every potential teacher is interviewed by two of their existing teachers, and has to teach a class as part of the interview process. They are not trying to identify the prob-

lems the teacher has in teaching the course, but the willingness of that teacher to receive feedback and improve his or her teaching practices. East Lake is also part of the New Tech Network, the leading design partner for comprehensive school change. New Tech uses a project-based learning platform and powerful professional development.

Why couldn't we, as Seventh-day Adventists, offer a model of innovative education? As Adventist educators, we must begin to think of ways to effectively fund denominational education and utilize proven school improvement models that will strengthen the quality of our schools.

### Conclusion

Every time we use the lack of money as the reason not to do what God has asked us to do, we sin: "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin."<sup>35</sup> In the life of the Christian and in the life of Christian workers, our problem is not money. Our problem is to ask: "What does God want us to do?" And once we align ourselves with God's priorities, money becomes God's problem, not ours. So we shouldn't make decisions based on money. This does not mean being haphazard with our planning or careless about stewardship; but in terms of deciding what is the right thing to do, money should not be the first barrier. We need to ask: "What is God calling us to do?" And when we step out in faith, we will say: "Lord, we will be obedient, and we will do what You ask us to do," and then we will say: "Lord, You own the cattle upon a thousand hills. It's time to sell some cows, so that we can do what You want us to do."

We know that God has a thousand ways to accomplish His objectives. Adventism started with sacrifice. We are told that as we face the end, there will be greater calls for sacrifice.<sup>36</sup> We need to think of what our priorities are and make the sacrifices so that God's work can be completed. Advent-

ist schools have an enormous opportunity to become centers of excellence that specialize in ensuring academic success for students from low-income backgrounds. Our Adventist institutions have an opportunity to become national and global models for other schools in how to effectively nurture, support, and ensure academic excellence for students who come to us with less-than-optimal academic preparation. God has brought us to this moment. He has a plan for us to move forward, and I pray that we will commit our lives to making the education of His children our priority so that we can accomplish what He wants us to accomplish. Because, who knows, perhaps we have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. ✍

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*This is adapted from a transcript of the presentation by David R. Williams at the 2016 LEAD Conference, held October 5-7 in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.*

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## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. David R. Williams: <http://scholar.harvard.edu/davidrwilliams/home>.
3. Ephesians 3:20. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in this article are taken from the *New International Version* (NIV). Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
4. Membership audits are processes for identifying and removing from membership lists the names of people who have died or left the church. For example, during the prior 15 years predating the recent round of thorough audits, for every 100 new members baptized, 48 people left the church. See “To Every Nation: A Report From the General Conference Secretary,” *Adventist Review* 2015 General Conference Bulletin 2 (July 2015) by G. T. Ng: <http://www.adventistreview.org/1515-18>.
5. In one recent five-year period, 2010-2014, 6.2 million members were welcomed into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. During the same period, 3.7 million members left the church. Excluding death, the net loss rate for the quinquennium was 60 per 100 new members. This stunningly high loss rate was revealed after membership audits. See “To Every Nation: A Report From the General Conference Secretary,” *ibid*.
6. See presentation to the 2016 Annual Council by David Trim, Director of General Conference Archives, Statistics, and Research, titled “Data on Youth Retention, Non-retention, and Connectedness to the Church”: <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/Annual%20Council%202016%20Presentation%20on%20Youth%20Retention%2C%20David%20Trim.pdf>.
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8. Trim, “Data on Youth Retention, Non-retention, and Connectedness to the Church.”
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# STRENGTHENING ADVENTIST EDUCATION IN THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION— Recommendations for Educators

Choosing where their child will go to school is arguably one of the most important decisions parents make. This decision is bound not only with considerations for their children’s academic education, but also heavily complicated by factors such as worldview, peer influence, safety, and a myriad of other concerns that affect the child’s success in school. We have seen many parents overwhelmed by the responsibility of this choice, turning from friends to family members to colleagues to certified professionals to help them decide what school, what system, what option would be best for their child.

Those of us who are passionate about Adventist education believe that Adventist schools make this decision easy, don’t we? We believe that Adventist education provides a quality academic foundation through a curriculum informed by biblical principles and infused with Christ’s profound love and grace. We believe that our schools offer environments in which children can thrive wholistically,

growing physically, mentally, and spiritually—a clear “win” for parents.

And yet, the enrollment decline in Adventist K-12 schools across North America suggests that many families are *not* making that choice anymore—that the decision is not so simple and that in the end, many are opting for a different educational system for their children.

North American Division (NAD) leaders have been concerned about this issue for some time as they have witnessed schools closing and enrollment numbers dwindling; and so, in May 2014, the NAD Administrative Summit appointed a NAD Education Task Force (NADET), chaired by Elissa Kido from La Sierra University with Larry Blackmer, NAD vice president for education, as secretary, to critically assess the current state of Seventh-day Adventist education in the division and, based on that analysis, make recommendations to strengthen the educational system.

In early 2015, two Andrews University professors, Anneris

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BY JEROME THAYER, ANNERIS CORIA-NAVIA, AIMEE LEUKERT, ELISSA KIDO, and LARRY BLACKMER

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Coria-Navia and Jerome Thayer, began a Strengthening Adventist Education (SAE) research project with NAD support to study the same issues concurrently. They collected data from 27 interviews (about half with educators and half with non-educators), 16 focus groups (with 184 K-12 educators and 108 conference and union officers), and online surveys (95 K-12 educators and 52 officers).

The NADET, with its team of 19 educators, lay persons, and administrative officers, worked for two years, discussing the myriad of factors affecting Adventist education, drawing perspectives from a think tank comprised of more than 40 individuals both within and outside of education, and working in subcommittees to further focus on specific issues.

Both groups functioned independently and came up with many recommendations for strengthening Adventist education, which, upon closer analysis, revealed many similar findings.

The NADET presented their report at the NAD Year-end Meeting in October 2016. All recommendations in the report were discussed and approved by a strong majority of the attendees.

As stakeholders in Adventist education, we believe that this journal's readership should not only be informed about these recommendations, but also equally inspired and concerned by the findings of the two studies. The recommendations shed great insight on the current state of Adventist schools in the North American Division and make clear suggestions regarding the direction the NAD needs to take in order to build a stronger educational system.

The recommendations in the next eight sections are based on the consensus of the members of the NADET and the conference and union educators and officers in the SAE focus groups. The full 63-page NADET report<sup>1</sup> and the full 77-page SAE report<sup>2</sup> can be obtained online.

### **Importance and Mission of Adventist Education**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded on firm biblical principles, such as an unwavering belief in the Second Coming and the all-encompassing saving grace of Jesus. These tenets directed the formation of the Adventist educational system, as early church members built schools that would academically educate and spiritually nurture their children. The desire for quality education met with the conviction to share Adventist beliefs and in that intersection, Adventist education was born.

As time has passed, however, there has been a notable change among NAD members as to the value of belonging to and supporting the Adventist Church, which has led to a distinctly different perspective on the place and necessity of the Adventist educational system. Adventist education should be rich with strong academics, yet there are ingredients unique to successful Adventist schools that demand focus. These elements are centered in religion/spirituality, service and caring, and also include the extent to which the constituency values an Adventist education.<sup>3</sup>

### **Recommendations**

We recommend more attention to increasing denominational loyalty and stewardship, specifically as it relates to the importance and mission of Adventist education.

At every level (local church to General Conference), there needs to be a renewed focus on the value of belonging to and supporting the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Without denominational loyalty, parents are less likely to support Adventist education.

Since many members and pastors have not attended Seventh-day Adventist schools, there needs to be increased focus on the importance of Adventist education to the mission of the church. Many members who become Adventists as adults are unlikely to embrace the value of Adventist education unless effort is made to facilitate their understanding in this area. This is particularly important for pastors who joined the church as adults and did not attend Adventist schools.

When selecting teachers and principals, their commitment to the church and to Adventist education and their ability to articulate the unique mission of both need to be considered.

### **Collaboration Between Teachers and Pastors**

Although it is common for those who engage in the church's evangelistic ministries (pastors) and educational ministries (teachers and educational administrators) to function somewhat independently, both ministries are crucial to the development of children, and therefore collaboration between them can facilitate the success of mutually held objectives. The results of a study exploring the qualities of exceptional partnerships between teachers and pastors demonstrate that such partnerships yield varied streams of financial support, a meaningful pastoral presence among students and faculty, spiritual support, mutual accountability, and church-based promotion of the school such as regular student and school staff participation in worship services.<sup>4</sup>

A healthy church-school relationship can exist only if the teachers and principal of the Adventist school realize the value and importance of their involvement in the local Adventist church, and likewise the pastor realizes the value and importance of involvement in the local Adventist school. The teachers, principal, and pastor need to value one another's work and collaborate in their ministry to the children of the church.

### **Recommendations**

We recommend that those who engage in the church's evangelistic ministries and educational ministries collaborate effectively for the spiritual nurture of children and their families connected to the church and/or school. This will require more communication between educators, pastors, and officers, and greater intentionality at the conference, union, and division levels, as well as at the local level. Both parties should collaborate in developing a plan that articulates how teachers should work with pastors in the church and how pastors should work with the teachers in the school. Barriers

that make it difficult for pastors and educators to cooperate, such as not involving evangelistic and educational ministries in each others' strategic planning, need to be eliminated.

### Finances

The matter of cost and affordability of sending a child to an Adventist school is a recurring theme in the literature. Mainda<sup>5</sup> found that parents, regardless of school choice for or against Adventist education, have indicated that the cost of tuition is unaffordable, requiring financial sacrifice and/or financial aid. In the absence of either or both of these, parents are more inclined to select public education. In a study by Marshall,<sup>6</sup> high tuition cost was the most common reason given by parents for not enrolling their children in Adventist schools.

The pricing model for Adventist education must be brought into focus and properly examined, given current conditions. Mainda<sup>7</sup> highlights the need for a pricing restructure in light of the effect on enrollment of an increasing number of parents who find that Adventist education is unaffordable.

Financing Adventist education should be the responsibility of the whole church, as it is an important part of our denominational mission and a practical expression of both stewardship and evangelism. To deal with increasingly higher tuition, lower average income levels, and societal changes, a new model for financing Adventist education is needed.

### Recommendations

We believe that the problem of low enrollment can only be addressed if there is less reliance on tuition and more emphasis on other sources of revenue. In particular, we recommend that more of the financial burden should be shifted from parents of children in Adventist schools who are members of a constituent church to *all* members in *all* churches.

For greater transparency and increased accountability, we recommend that all schools be required to adopt and implement a financial dashboard, use a standard accounting/financial reporting system, require yearly assessment of school sustainability and viability, and include financial accountability in the accreditation evaluation process.

We also recommend the development of a comprehensive plan for strategic placement of boarding academies to address whether certain schools should be consolidated or closed.

### School Quality and Accountability

Adventist schools should be held to high academic standards. In order to achieve academic excellence, there must be quality educational offerings, excellent teachers, adequate facilities, and a process of accountability for what the school delivers and what its students achieve. The primary way that high standards can be maintained is through a rigorous accreditation process.

### Recommendations

We recommend that a comprehensive plan be developed

to ensure that all Adventist schools provide quality educational offerings, have adequate facilities, and that rigorous accreditation standards are applied consistently. We specifically suggest the following:

- Ensure that the membership of the NAD Commission on Accreditation includes persons who are not involved in Adventist education, including lay persons and other impartial members committed to education;
- Evaluate adherence to standards using objective measures in order to reduce subjective bias;
- Institute accountability for adherence to standards across organizational boundaries within the NAD;
- Apply rigorous accreditation standards consistently;
- Restructure the evaluation process for elementary schools to align with the current secondary/junior academy model.

### Leadership Development

Leadership has been likened to a “silver bullet” in enrollment growth.<sup>8</sup> Osborn<sup>9</sup> embraced the assertion that “the way a school is operated” ultimately impacts the school’s success. Effective school leaders must master and employ good management and leadership skills.<sup>10</sup> They must be empowered to carry out a clear vision and mission; uphold high academic expectations; and cultivate mutually supportive connections between the school, the home, and the church.<sup>11</sup> This vision must convey to everyone that a high standard is “expected, facilitated, and celebrated.”<sup>12</sup>

Good leadership is an essential component of a quality school. The development of Adventist school leadership must be a top priority for the Adventist Church. This development process must include attracting good leaders, training them before they assume a leadership position, continual professional development, and supporting and affirming them.

### Recommendations

We recommend the following to enhance the quality of leaders for Adventist schools:

- Develop a recruitment plan to attract educational leaders.
- Develop a plan to address the following areas to help retain quality educational leaders:
  - Address educator burnout, especially for teachers in small schools, principals of boarding academies, and teaching principals;
  - Give adequate support that would include necessary support staff, additional conference assistance, and fostering networking with other educational leaders;
  - Provide an improved compensation package.
- To improve the quality of leaders, we recommend the following:
  - Develop a training program for new principals in which they would participate before beginning their leadership role;
  - Establish a network of collegiality among principals;
  - Develop a network of leadership coaching and mentorship;

**The NAD Adventist educational system is uniquely positioned to both academically educate and spiritually nurture the children of our church. The complexity of this task rests on the shoulders of our educators, who must be provided with adequate training and resources to effectively fulfill this responsibility.**

- Develop a well-defined, high-quality, educational leadership institute—an intensive program that includes practical training, a competency-based path to administrative certification, and a formal mentorship/coaching program.

#### **School Personnel and Accountability**

A prevalent challenge to Adventist education worldwide is attracting, retaining, and professionally developing teachers and academic leaders.<sup>13</sup> While part of this challenge is financial in nature, it is not an impossible barrier to overcome. The approach taken by the Inter-American Division to devise financial initiatives geared toward teacher training, increasing teacher salaries, implementing a bonus for top elementary teachers, alongside other non-personnel initiatives is evidence of this.<sup>14</sup> An investment in securing and further developing quality educators has the potential to yield significant dividends. In addition, recruitment, training, and mentorship deserve considerable attention in order to improve the quality of teachers who are hired and retained.

The NAD Adventist educational system is uniquely positioned to both academically educate and spiritually nurture the children of our church. The complexity of this task rests on the shoulders of our educators, who must be provided with adequate training and resources to effectively fulfill this responsibility.

#### **Recommendations**

To develop a system-wide framework that supports educators, upholds high standards, and strengthens schools, the following are recommended:

- Develop a plan to identify, recruit, and groom quality persons (teachers and principals) who can be placed in a prospective candidate pool from which to draw when vacancies arise. This would include attracting quality undergraduates to the teaching profession, perhaps by providing tuition loan repayment when they are officially employed by a conference.
- Include in the teacher-training curriculum the unique mission and value of Adventist education, skills needed to teach in small schools, and more emphasis on practical skills.
- Devote more attention to teacher quality in employment decisions, both for initial hiring and for continuing employment.
- Enhance financial and curriculum resources (especially online) to facilitate professional growth. Continual professional growth should be expected for all teachers.
- Address teacher burnout, especially for teachers in small schools and for boarding academy and teaching principals.

#### **Distance Learning**

Collaboration is a key to strengthening schools at all levels.<sup>16</sup> But since most K-12 Adventist schools in the NAD are small schools with few teachers and are not close to other Adventist schools, it is difficult to have face-to-face collaboration with other Adventist teachers. Given the growing technologies increasingly available, the ability to make global resources accessible to teachers and students is an effective way to bring teachers and students together. However, Haerich<sup>17</sup> found great resistance to the idea of adopting a particular brand of online education because conferences and unions do not want their constituents to pay an entity outside their territory for education. Open-mindedness toward cooperation has great potential to increase enrollment opportunities, enabling students to be educated in Adventist schools even if they live outside a school's particular territory. Beverly<sup>18</sup> advances the concept of partnership by proposing the engagement of distance-learning opportunities, with other institutions providing "advanced placement courses" and even "institutional interfaces and programs outside of the Seventhday Adventist world."

The potential and attractiveness of distance-learning opportunities suggest a need for additional development and coordination in this area.

### Recommendations

We recommend increased funding for and development of distance-learning resources through the NAD's Adventist Learning Community (ALC). Additional materials and courses can be developed for students—whether or not they are enrolled in Adventist schools—and to promote the professional growth of teachers, pastors, and school board members.

Currently, there are several division-wide approved distance-education providers, such as Atlanta Adventist Academy and Griggs International Academy, which offer a wide range of services to both schools and families. It is important to coordinate the development of these programs in order to maintain and uphold the mission of Adventist education.

Cooperation between schools, especially small schools, using videoconferencing should be encouraged.

### Marketing and Public Relations

Studies suggest that parental perceptions are important in overcoming financial and other barriers that typically challenge school choice.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, parents who choose to enroll their children, and who continue to send their children to Adventist schools must have both the “money *and* the desire” to do so.<sup>20</sup> Beyond this, parental satisfaction is a key factor in retention.<sup>21</sup>

More attention and support need to be allocated to marketing and public relations for Adventist education. There needs to be a shift to include both “quality” and “purpose” in the content of marketing materials. While the quality of education is a significant factor in a family's choice of a school for their child, belief in the purpose and mission of the school is equally important.

### Recommendations

We recommend that each school develop a comprehensive marketing and public-relations plan. This plan must include cooperation between teachers, the principal, and the pastor as they work in an intentional way to both convey important, accurate, and timely information to parents and constituents, and receive helpful feedback from them. Since most educators and pastors are not trained in marketing and public relations, the conference, union, or division should provide extensive support resources in these areas.

Market research is needed to determine the level of satisfaction and accuracy of perceptions of parents and constituents. Each school should have access to an accurate database that includes information about all students living in Adventist homes in the community.

Each school should compile relevant data that can be used to communicate the quality of the school to parents and constituents. Teachers and pastors must be able to clearly communicate the value and uniqueness of Adventist education.

Schools need to have a strategy for creating positive first impressions and a plan for maintaining a visible and positive community presence.

**T**here should be no price too high or obstacle too difficult to ensure that enrolling their child in Adventist education is an easy decision for every parent.

### Conclusion

Clearly, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed by educators, pastors, and conference and union officers in order to strengthen NAD Adventist K-12 education. The list is daunting and the task monumental, but we find the alternative—the continued decline of enrollment—unacceptable.

The strong approval of the NADET recommendations at the Year-end Meetings as well as the administrative support given to the SAE study provided an excellent first step in effecting change in the educational system, but it will take a commitment and investment from all stakeholders in Adventist education to ensure continued progress.

These recommendations call for teachers and pastors to invest extra effort to collaborate as a ministry team, and for leadership at the division, union, and conference levels to make necessary changes in the system to more fully support Adventist schools. A number of areas are begging for attention—distance learning, marketing, finances, and leadership development—each of which must be addressed in order for our educational system to thrive.

We strongly believe that Adventist schools have a unique role to play in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its future. They have the opportunity to provide children with a quality education alongside lessons in growing a deep relationship with their Savior—and there should be no price too high or obstacle too difficult to ensure that enrolling their child in Adventist education is an easy decision for every parent. ✍

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*This article has been peer reviewed.*

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A companion article with recommendations for pastors and church administrators will be published in the June 2017 issue of Ministry magazine.



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An hourglass graphic with a white top bulb, a thin stem, and a white bottom bulb, set against a green background. The top bulb is partially filled with a gold liquid, and the bottom bulb is also partially filled with gold liquid. The entire graphic is centered at the top of the page.

# JOINING AND REMAINING: A Look at the Data on the Role of Adventist Education

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**G**iven the effort and the costs involved, Seventh-day Adventist parents sometimes wonder: “Does Adventist education truly make a difference? Do the benefits gained outweigh the expenditure? Is sending my child to the Adventist school an expense or an investment?”

Pastors and other church leaders also ponder: “Is Adventist education truly evangelism? Does it justify the resources that we invest? If so, how can we present a persuasive case for Adventist education to parents and other church members?”

Writing to church leaders and educators, Ellen White declared that the all-important issue in Adventist education is the conversion of the student.<sup>1</sup> While there have been studies,

such as the *CognitiveGenesis* research,<sup>2</sup> which have examined the academic performance of students in Adventist schools, this article will focus on two key outcomes: accession and retention—joining the Adventist Church and remaining in the denomination.

So what do we know about access and retention, and the role of Seventh-day Adventist education? In short, there is a consistent and important relationship between attending an Adventist school and the likelihood that a child or youth will join the Adventist Church and then choose to remain a member. We’ll take a look at the evidence.

## Joining the Church

In the biblical model, conversion is expressed through baptism.<sup>3</sup> Baptism, in turn, is a public statement of one’s desire to formally join the church. Is there support for the role of Adventist education in accession to the church?

Adventist education is the longest and largest evangelistic event held by the Adventist Church. It is also one of the most effective.

Depending on the country and the educational system, the duration of a school day can range from five to nine hours, and a school year can range from 160 to 260 days.<sup>4</sup> An individual student could attend an Adventist school from a single year to perhaps 16 years or more. At mini-

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BY JOHN WESLEY TAYLOR V

mum, if a student attends an Adventist school for just a single year, this represents an evangelistic opportunity of at least 800 hours. To use evangelistic terminology, this equates to a person attending an evangelistic series two hours per night for 400 nights. If a student, however, continues in Adventist education from 1st grade through university studies, the evangelistic potential could increase to more than 37,000 hours.

In Adventist education, 5,705 evangelistic sites specialize in children 5-12 years old, with 51,965 evangelists and 1,188,910 persons attending each day. Also, 2,336 evangelistic sites focus on adolescents 13-16 years old, with 36,711 evangelists and 583,946 in attendance. For youth and young adults, there are 167 evangelistic venues, with 14,103 evangelists and 142,530 attending. All told, Adventist education represents more than 8,000 evangelistic sites, with more than 100,000 evangelists involved and nearly 2 million in attendance each day.<sup>5</sup> Certainly, it is the largest evangelistic endeavor of the church.

Is it effective? Each year for the past 10 years, there have been at least 30,000 and in some years, more than 50,000 students in Adventist schools baptized during the school year, primarily in culminating events such as a Week of Prayer. The total for the 2006-2015 period was 427,313 baptisms.<sup>6</sup> To look at it another way, this is equivalent to a typical-size conference being established each year through the evangelistic ministry of Adventist education.

While only a few studies have compared attendance at Adventist schools with the baptismal rate of children from Adventist families, the ones that have examined this connection concluded that Adventist education does make a significant difference in terms of children and youth joining the church.

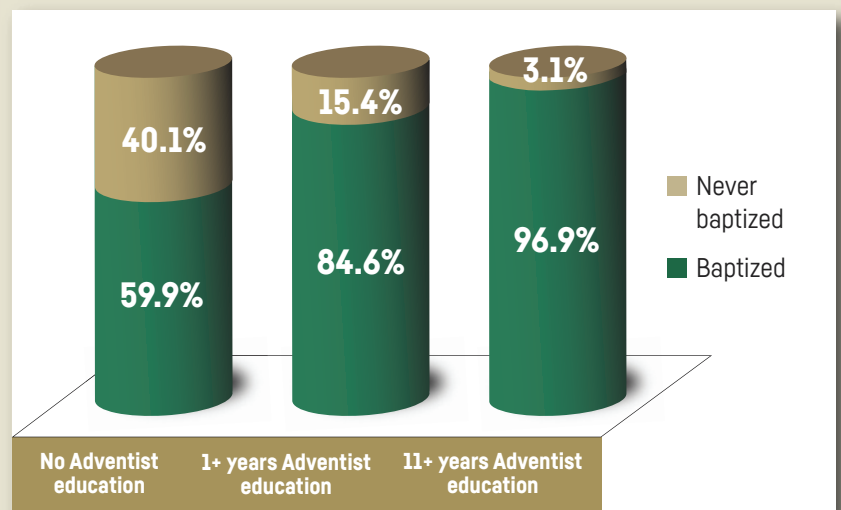
A 1990 study, for example, analyzed 844 children and youth from Adventist families in the Southern Union Conference of the North American Division.<sup>7</sup> Of those children and youth who had no Adventist education, 40.1 percent were never baptized. Of those with one or more years of Adventist education, 15.4 percent were never baptized; while in the group with 11 or more years of Adventist education,

only 3.1 percent were never baptized (see Figure 1).

Another study conducted in 1985 of 807 children and youth from Adventist families in the Lake Union Conference of the North American Division found similar results.<sup>8</sup> Of those children and youth with no Adventist education, 38.3 percent never joined the church. In the group with some Adventist educa-

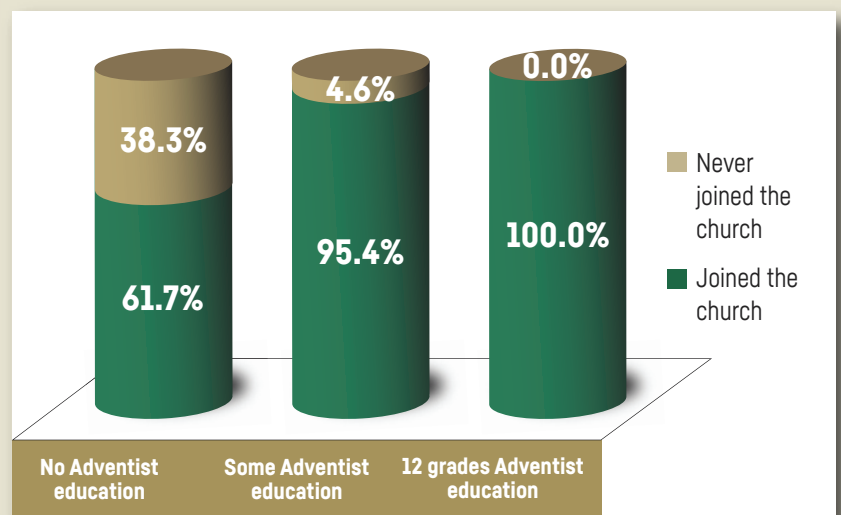
**Figure 1. School Attendance and Baptism**

Source: Kenneth James Epperson study



**Figure 2. School Attendance and Church Membership**

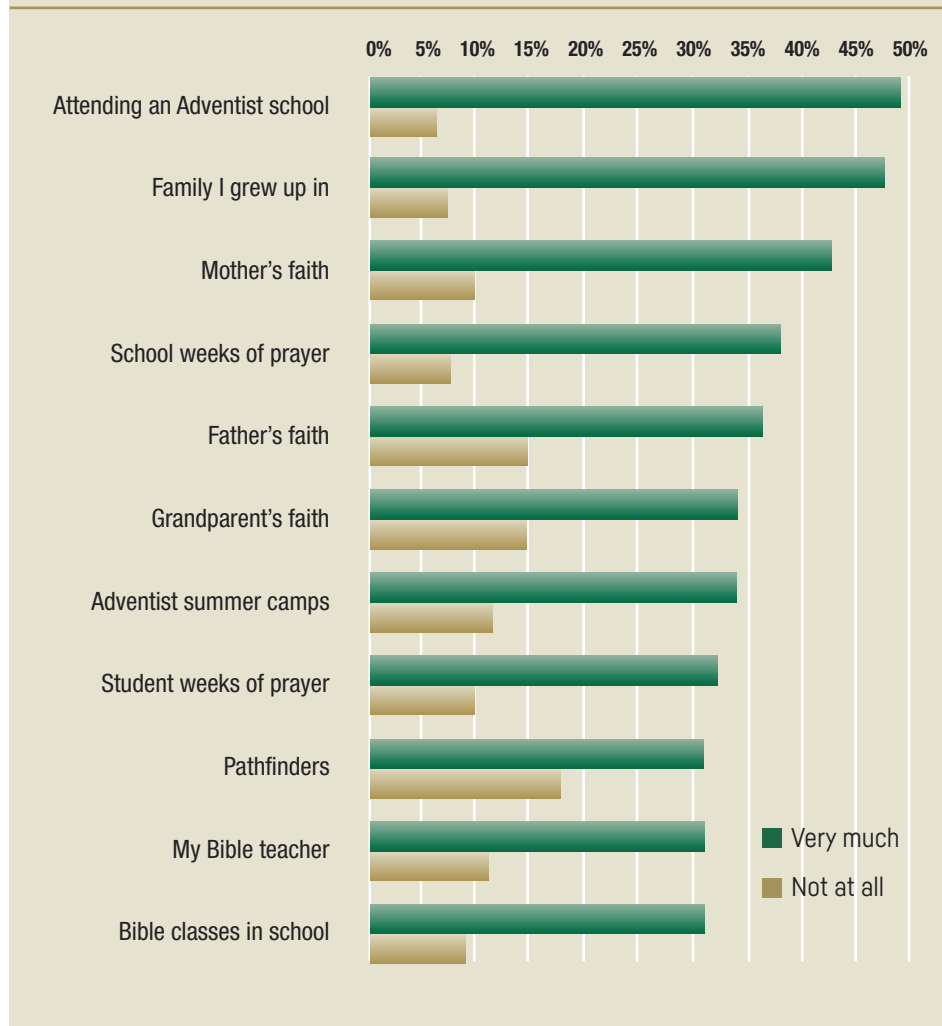
Source: Warren Minder study





**Figure 3. Faith Development Factors**

Source: V. Bailey Gillespie, Valuegenesis<sup>3</sup>



tion, 4.6 percent never joined the church, while 100 percent of those in the sample who studied all 12 grades in Adventist education joined the church (see Figure 2).

### Remaining in the Church

While joining the church is foundational, retention is equally important. Sadly, many of those who join the Adventist Church subsequently leave the denomination. Over the past 50 years (1965-2015), for example, there have been 34,385,004 accessions in the Adventist Church worldwide. During the same period, 13,737,205 people left the church.<sup>9</sup> This represents a net loss of 39.95 percent. In effect, for every 10 people who joined the church, four have slipped away.

The ratios are no better for young people. In the Youth Retention study that attempted to track more than 1,500 baptized 15- and 16-year-olds in the North American Division for 10 years (1988-1998), results indicated that in most of the demographic groups, at least 40 to 50 percent had left the church by their mid-20s.<sup>10</sup> Tragically, we are not just losing one of 10 coins, as described in Jesus' parable.<sup>11</sup> We are losing half of the coins! The question posed by the prophet Jeremiah becomes increasingly poignant: "Where is the flock entrusted to you, your beautiful flock?"<sup>12</sup>

We turn now to the matter of the retention of children and youth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Over a span of some 25 years, at least seven studies have examined the role of Adventist education in retention, with the most recent research reported in 2014. Some of these studies have focused on specific regional populations, while others are more global in nature. Some present a snapshot in time, while others have taken a longitudinal approach. While each has inherent limitations, as do all studies, together they present a picture that is consistent and clear.

One of the largest studies was the set of Valuegenesis surveys, conducted over a 20-year period, from 1990 to 2010.<sup>13</sup> Valuegenesis<sup>1</sup> data from 2,267 12th-grade Adventist students in Adventist schools in the North American Division, for example, showed that the more years of Adventist schooling, the greater the person's reported loyalty to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, his or her belief in the fundamental teachings of the church, and his or her intention to remain an Adventist at age 40. In the 2010 Valuegenesis<sup>3</sup> survey, 81 percent of all students indicated that attending an Adventist school was the most important fac-

tor that had helped them develop their religious faith, with the Adventist school ranking more highly than any other factor (see Figure 3). Across all three Valuegenesis studies (1990-2010), a full 75 percent of Adventist students in Adventist schools believed that the chances of their remaining in the Adventist Church at age 40 were good to excellent.

We have noted the Youth Retention study, which endeavored to follow high school students for 10 years, utilizing a sample about evenly divided between students in Adventist schools and in non-Adventist schools in the U.S. and Canada. One of the key findings of this research was that the number of years in an Adventist school was positively related to commitment to Jesus Christ and to com-

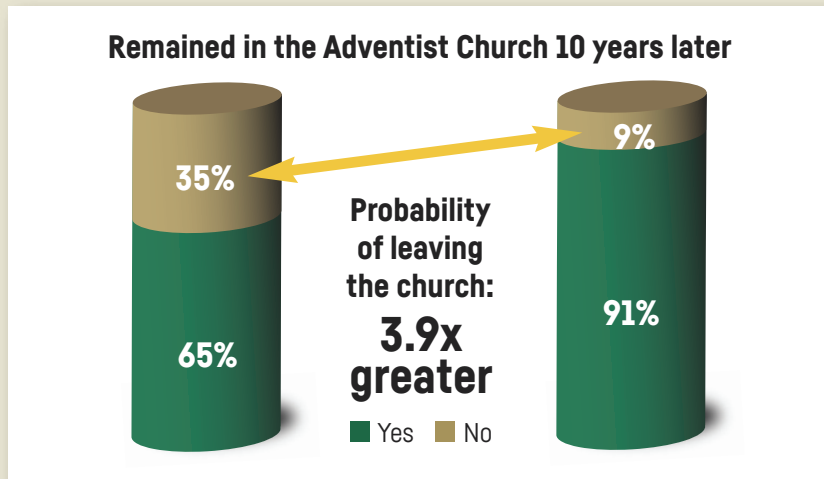
mitment to personal Bible study, as well as to the statements “My relationship with Christ is stronger now” and “Religion is important in my life.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, intention to marry an Adventist in students who attended an Adventist school was nearly twice the proportion of those who had not attended an Adventist school (83 percent vs. 46 percent, respectively). At the 10-year mark, the probability of leaving the Adventist Church was 3.9 times greater for those who had attended non-Adventist schools, compared to those who had attended Seventh-day Adventist schools (see Figure 4).

Several doctoral dissertations have studied retention in the context of Adventist education. In Kenneth James Epperson’s study, children of Adventist families in the Southern Union Conference who had no Adventist education were 4.5 times more likely to have infrequent or no church attendance, compared to those who had 11 or more years of Adventist education (see Figure 5).<sup>15</sup> This is a significant finding, given that a lack of active involvement in the church is often a precursor to leaving the church.<sup>16</sup>

In 1990, Robert Rice carried out a longitudinal study in which he compared baptized Adventist youth in southern California who graduated from public high schools and those who graduated from Adventist academies.<sup>17</sup> Thirteen years after graduation, 37 percent of those who had graduated from public high schools remained in the church, compared with 77 percent of those who had graduated from Adventist academies (see Figure 6). Rice also found that those who had graduated from Adventist academies were twice as likely to pay tithe (50 percent vs. 26 percent), twice as likely to attend an Adventist church service regularly (59 percent vs. 32 percent), twice as inclined to educate their own children in an Adventist school (59 percent vs. 29 percent), and nearly three times more likely to have married an Ad-

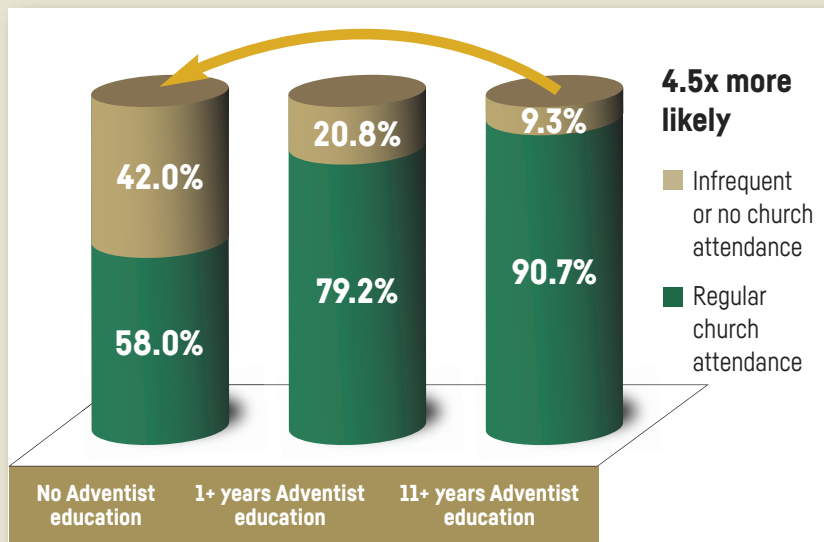
**Figure 4. Youth Retention Study**

Source: Roger L. Dudley study



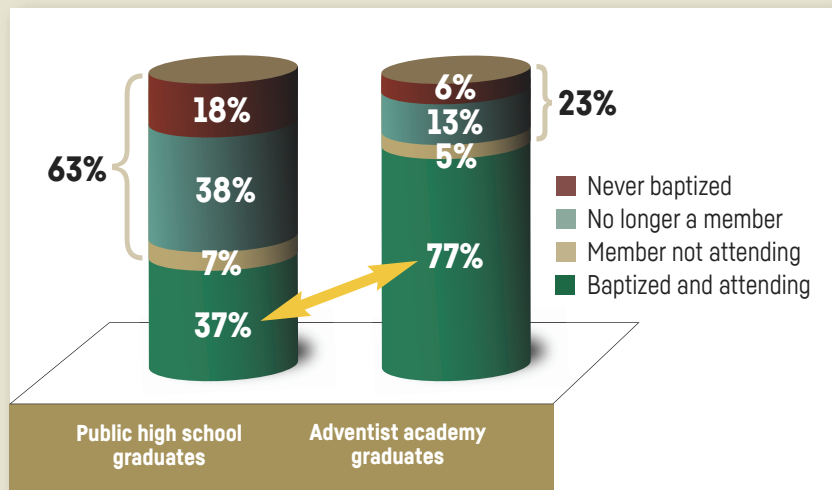
**Figure 5. Church Attendance**

Source: Kenneth James Epperson study



**Figure 6. Retention and Baptism**

Source: Robert Rice study



ventist spouse (78 percent vs. 27 percent), compared to those who graduated from a public high school.<sup>18</sup>

Warren Minder's study, conducted in the Lake Union Conference, also considered retention, identifying those who joined and remained, and those who joined but subsequently left the church.<sup>19</sup> In sum, only 50.8 percent of those youth from Adventist families who had not experienced Adventist education joined and remained in the church, compared to 98.2 percent of those who had studied all 12 grades in Adventist schools (see Figure 7).

The Center for Creative Ministry recently conducted a global qualitative study in which 925 former or inactive church members were interviewed. Findings indicate that only 17 percent of lapsed and ex-members had received any form of Adventist education, compared to 56 percent of those who were current members.<sup>20</sup> This threefold difference provides evidence that those who have not experienced Adventist education are disproportionately more likely to become inactive or leave (see Figure 8). The study concluded that one of the greatest retention issues for the Adventist Church relates to young adults rising into the middle class. These were individuals who joined the church when they were younger and had less education. As their education, predominantly in non-Adventist institutions, progressed, however, they quit attending regularly and eventually left the Adventist Church.

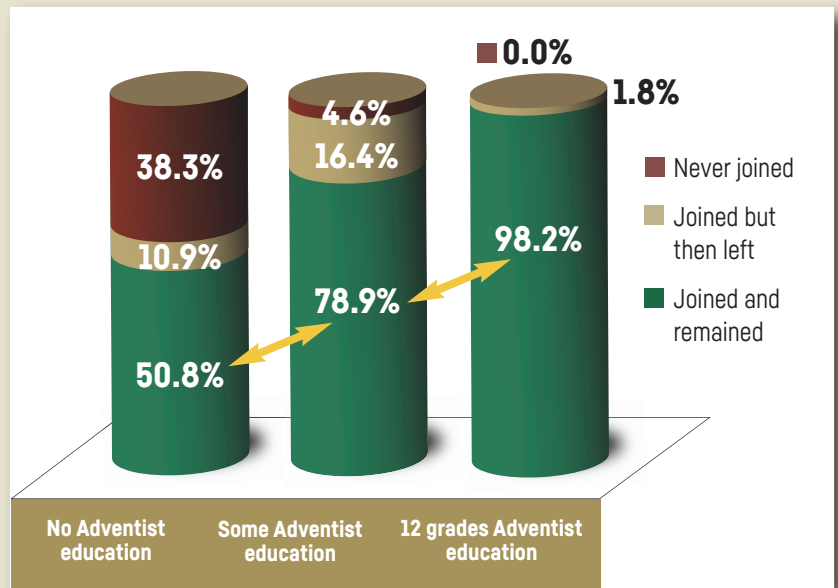
Global studies conducted by the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research in 2013 and 2014 have also revealed key differences between ex-members and current members in terms of the proportion who have attended Adventist schools.<sup>21</sup> Current members were twice as likely to have Seventh-day Adventist tertiary education compared to ex-members who had

studied at the tertiary level. Current members who had secondary education as their highest education were 2.5 times as likely to have studied in an Adventist school, compared to ex-members who had secondary education as their highest level of studies. Finally, current members who had elementary education as

their highest education were three times as likely to have studied in an Adventist elementary school, compared to ex-members who had elementary education as their highest level of studies (see Figure 9). This may suggest that early Adventist education is an especially powerful factor in retention.

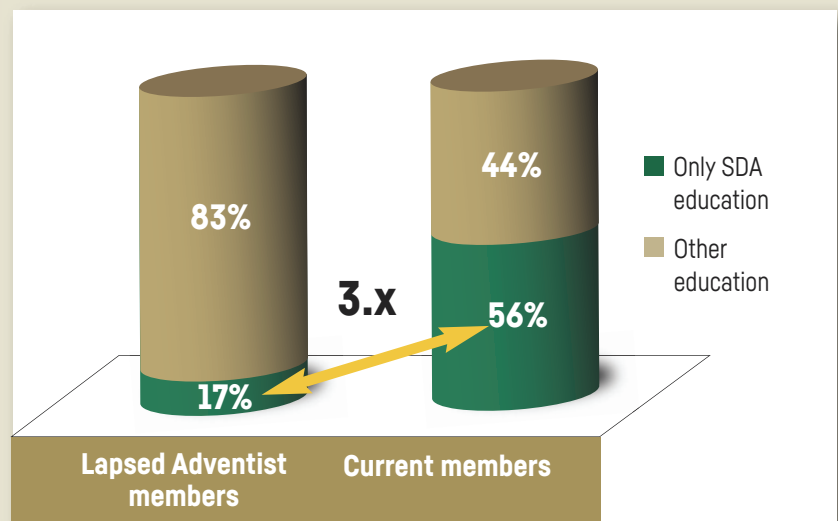
**Figure 7. Retention and Membership**

Source: Warren Minder study



**Figure 8. School Attendance of Former and Inactive Members**

Source: Center for Creative Ministry study



## Conclusion

Although further research, particularly in specific populations around the world, would be beneficial, the research that we have presents a persuasive conclusion: Adventist education is a consistent and important predictor of children and youth joining and remaining in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As Ellen White observed: “In the highest sense, the work of education and the work of redemption are one.”<sup>22</sup>

In essence, Adventist education is mission. Through Adventist education, children and youth experience accession and retention, for the ulti-

mate purpose of redemption (see Figure 10). Consequently, the Seventh-day Adventist Church must reaffirm and uplift the central role of Adventist education in the evangelistic mission of the church.

The prophet Isaiah wrote: “All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.”<sup>23</sup> The Hebrew word translated “peace” in this passage is *shâlôm*. While *shâlôm* does include the concept of peace, it incorporates much more—safety, well-being, health, prosperity, and happiness. *Shâlôm* is what we want for our children and youth. There is a condition,

however. In order to experience *shâlôm*, our children and youth must be taught by God.

Taught by God. Through Seventh-day Adventist education. ✍

*Adapted from a presentation at the 2017 Pan-African LEAD Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, February 15-19, 2017.*

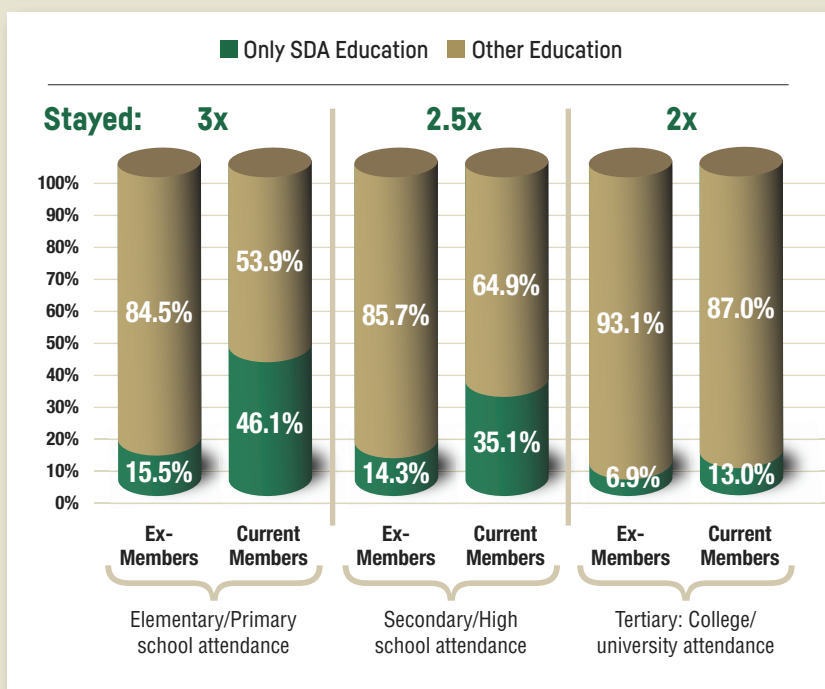


**John Wesley Taylor V, EdD, PhD**, serves as an Associate Director of Education in the General Conference Department of Education in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A. His grandfather, John Wesley Taylor III, joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church while attending an Adventist academy, and later, as a physician, served as a missionary in South America and in Inter-America. Since that time, three generations have been educated in Adventist schools, have remained in the Adventist Church, and together have provided more than a century of service to the church.

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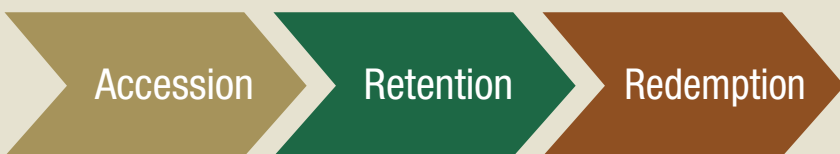
**Figure 9. School Attendance of Current Members**

Source: General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research



**Figure 10.**

In Adventist education, children and youth experience...



## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing, 1923), 436.

2. *CognitiveGenesis* was a longitudinal study conducted from 2006 to 2009, involving more than 800 Adventist schools in the United States, Canada, and Bermuda, with approximately 52,000 participating students in grades 3-9 and grade 11. Standardized achievement test results indicated that students in Adventist schools in the U.S. outperformed the national average in all subjects; for all grade levels, school sizes, and ethnic groups; and regardless of ability level. Furthermore, the more years a student attended an Adventist school, the greater the improvement in performance. This “Adventist advantage” in education became the subject of a PBS documentary *The Blueprint* by award-winning producer Martin Doblmeier. Further information on

the *CognitiveGenesis* study may be found in “*CognitiveGenesis* (CG): Assessing Academic Achievement and Cognitive Ability in Adventist Schools,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 21:2 (2012): 99-115 by J. Thayer and E. Kido. A summary is also available at [http://adventisteducation.org/assessment/cognitive\\_genesis/overview](http://adventisteducation.org/assessment/cognitive_genesis/overview).

3. Matthew 3:6, 11; 28:19; Mark 1:5; 16:16; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 13, 36-38; 13:24; 16:31-33; 18:8. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in this article are taken from the *New International Version* (NIV). Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

4. “School Days Around the World”: <https://norberthaupt.com/2012/04/20/school-days-around-the-world/>; “School Days Around the World” (June 2015) Infographic: <http://elearninginfographics.com/school-days-around-world-infographic/>. Total number of hours in school can range from 15,200 in Finland to 37,400 in China, which holds the record for both highest number of hours per day and highest number of days per year, at 9 and 260 respectively.

5. General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, *2016 Annual Statistical Report: 152nd Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists® for 2015*: <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2016.pdf>.

6. Statistics provided by the Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

7. Kenneth James Epperson, *The Relationship of Seventh-day Adventist School Attendance to Seventh-day Adventist Church Membership in the Southern Union Conference*. EdD dissertation, Loma Linda University, 1990. In this study, 300 family units were randomly selected from the Southern Union Conference of the North American Division, and 210 families responded, representing a return rate of 70 percent. Of the individuals in the study, 40 percent had never attended an Adventist school. Children and youth from Adventist families who were baptized into the Adventist Church had attended an Adventist school for 8.06 years on average, while those children and youth who were never baptized into the Adventist Church had attended Adventist schools for an average of only 2.42 years, yielding a significant relationship ( $p < 0.000$ ) between the number of years in Adventist schools and baptism. The study also indicated that of those who were baptized, 2.6 percent were baptized prior to the age of 8 years old, 63.7 percent were baptized between the ages of 8 and 15, while 14.2 percent were baptized be-

tween the ages of 16-23. The 7th grade was the most frequent grade level at which children were baptized, with 61.0 percent of those baptized having been baptized between grades 5 and 8.

8. Warren E. Minder, *A Study of the Relationship Between Church-sponsored K-12 Education and Church Membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. EdD dissertation, Western Michigan University, 1985. In this study, 400 family units were randomly selected from the Lake Union Conference in the North American Division. The study reported a return rate of 71.8 percent and a sampling error of approximately 3.25 percent. The study found a significant relationship ( $p < .001$ ) between the number of years in grades 1 to 12 that a person attended an Adventist school and whether or not the person was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. There was also a significant relationship ( $p < .001$ ) between the church membership of each parent and baptism of the child, as well as between parental active involvement in the church and baptism of the child ( $p = .0011$  for the mother;  $p = .0191$  for the father). Minder also cited results from an earlier study, “A Study of Seventh-day Adventist Church Members,” conducted in the Pacific Union Conference in 1962 ( $N = 83,662$ ; 68 percent return rate). That study reported that for young people who had attended all 12 grades at an Adventist school, 97 percent had joined the church, as opposed to 32 percent of the young people from Adventist families who did not attend any Adventist school during elementary and secondary schooling. Further, it was reported that in the group that had received some K-12 schooling in Adventist schools, 57 percent joined the church.

9. Figures provided by the Secretariat of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

10. Roger L. Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories From a 10-year Study* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000), 35. “At least 40 percent to 50 percent of Seventh-day Adventist teenagers in North America are essentially leaving the church by their middle 20s.”

11. Luke 15:8-10.

12. Jeremiah 13:20 (CEB). Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible.

13. Roger L. Dudley and V. Bailey Gillespie, *Valuegenesis<sup>1</sup>: Faith in the Balance* (Riverside, Calif.: La Sierra University Press, 1992); Roger L. Dudley and Janet Leigh Kangas, “Valuegenesis<sup>1</sup>: How Does Advent-

ist Education Affect Youth Attitudes?” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 52:4 (April-May 1990): 24-29, 45, 46; Jerome Thayer, “The Impact of Adventist Schools on Students.” Paper presented at the 4th Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship, Riviera Maya, Estado Quintana Roo, Mexico, March 16-22, 2008: [http://fae.adventist.org/essays/iv\\_Thayer\\_Jerry.pdf](http://fae.adventist.org/essays/iv_Thayer_Jerry.pdf). The Valuegenesis<sup>1</sup> survey (1990) received responses from 10,641 Adventist students in Adventist schools and 457 Adventist students in non-Adventist schools in North America. Thayer subsequently analyzed a sub-sample consisting of 2,267 12th-grade Adventist students in Adventist schools. The report of a replication of the Valuegenesis<sup>1</sup> survey in the South Pacific Division in 1993 is available at <http://circle.adventist.org/files/download/VGCORERE.pdf>. A further replication of the Valuegenesis<sup>1</sup> survey was conducted in Puerto Rico in 1995, with reports available at <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1184&context=dissertations> and <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1468&context=dissertations>. See V. Bailey Gillespie, Michael J. Donahue, Ed Boyatt, and Barry Gane, *Ten Years Later: A Study of Two Generations* (Riverside, Calif.: La Sierra University Press, 2003); and V. Bailey Gillespie, “Valuegenesis<sup>2</sup>: Adventist Schools Do Make a Difference,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 65:1 (October/November 2002): 12-16. More than 16,000 Adventist students in grades 6 through 12 completed the second Valuegenesis questionnaire. The Valuegenesis<sup>3</sup> survey (2010) received responses from more than 18,000 students in grades 6 through 12 in Adventist schools throughout North America (Bailey Gillespie, “Valuegenesis<sup>3</sup> Update: Research Information Summary,” Issues 1-5. Published by the John Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, Riverside, California).

14. Roger L. Dudley, “Understanding the Spiritual Development and the Faith Experience of College and University Students on Christian Campuses,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 8:1 (Spring 1999): 5-28; \_\_\_\_\_, “Youth Religious Commitment Over Time: A Longitudinal Study of Retention,” *Review of Religious Research*, 41:1 (1999): 110-121; \_\_\_\_\_, “Christian Education and Youth Retention in the SDA Church,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 62:3 (February/March 2000): 8-13; \_\_\_\_\_, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories From a 10-year Study* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000); Jerome Thayer, “The Impact of Adventist Schools on Students” (Unpublished paper, 2008). This paper included a re-analy-

sis of the Youth Retention Study data. The Youth Retention study (Roger Dudley) began in 1988 with 1,523 baptized Adventist youth ages 15 and 16 in the United States and Canada. These individuals were surveyed each year in order to determine what factors were related to staying or leaving the church. When the study ended 10 years later, 783 (51.4 percent) of the original group, now young adults, completed the survey. Dudley speculated that many of the young people who dropped out of the study were no longer church members.

15. Kenneth James Epperson, *The Relationship of Seventh-day Adventist School Attendance to Seventh-day Adventist Church Membership in the Southern Union Conference*. EdD dissertation, Loma Linda University, 1990. Further analysis yielded a positive relationship ( $p < 0.021$ ) between Adventist school attendance and regular attendance at a Seventh-day Adventist church. Epperson also reported that children who had both parents as members of the Adventist Church averaged an attendance of 8.4 years in Adventist schools, compared to 1.19 years when only one parent was a member of the Adventist Church, representing a significant difference ( $p < 0.000$ ). For 53.6 percent of those who

no longer regularly attended an Adventist church, neither parent was a member of the church.

16. Paul Richardson, "Survey of Former and Inactive Adventist Church Members." Center for Creative Ministry, Milton Free-water, Oregon, 2013: <https://www.adventistarchives.org/2013-retention-study.pdf>.

17. Robert W. Rice, *A Survey of the Relationship Between Attending Seventh-day Adventist Academies 9-12 and Subsequent Commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. PhD dissertation, University of Denver, 1990. There were 264 participants in the North American Division study, representing a 70 percent return rate (65 percent for the public high school graduates and 75 percent for the Adventist academy graduates). In the study, 93 percent of those who graduated from an Adventist academy had spent the 9th grade in an Adventist school, whereas only 71 percent of those from Adventist families who graduated from a public school had spent the 9th grade in a public school. These statistics may indicate a tendency for certain Adventist families, whose children may begin high school in an Adventist academy, to shift enrollment to a public high school at some point during secondary education.

18. Data from the Youth Retention study yielded complementary findings in regard to tithing.

19. Warren E. Minder, *A Study of the Relationship Between Church-sponsored K-12 Education and Church Membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. EdD dissertation, Western Michigan University, 1985. In the sample ( $N = 807$ ), 215 individuals (26.6 percent) were not Seventh-day Adventists. This group was comprised of 138 individuals (64.2 percent) from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin, who had never joined the church and 77 individuals (35.8 percent) who left the church after joining. The study found a strong positive relationship ( $p < .001$ ) between Adventist schooling and church retention, wherein increased years of Adventist schooling were associated with an increased probability of the person remaining in the church.

20. Paul Richardson, "Survey of Former and Inactive Adventist Church Members." ASTR Publication produced by the Center for Creative Ministry, 2013. Of the 17 percent of lapsed and ex-Adventists who had attended Adventist schools, 6 percent had attended an Adventist primary or elementary school at some point in their life, 7 percent had attended an Adventist secondary school, and 8 percent had attended an Adventist college or university. Participants were from Africa, South America, Europe, and North America.


21. Data for the school attendance of ex-members are based on the ASTR report "Leaving the Church: Why Some Seventh-day Adventist Members Leave the Church, and Why Some Come Back" (2014), a study which was conducted in all divisions of the church. Data for members are from the ASTR report "Global Church Member Survey" (2013), conducted in 9 out of the 13 world divisions. The category "Other Education" for ex-members includes attendance at both Adventist and non-Adventist educational institutions, albeit these percentages were low: 7 percent primary, 7 percent secondary, and 5 percent tertiary (based on data presented by D. J. B. Trim at the LEAD Conference "Educating for Eternity" on October 6, 2016, in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.).

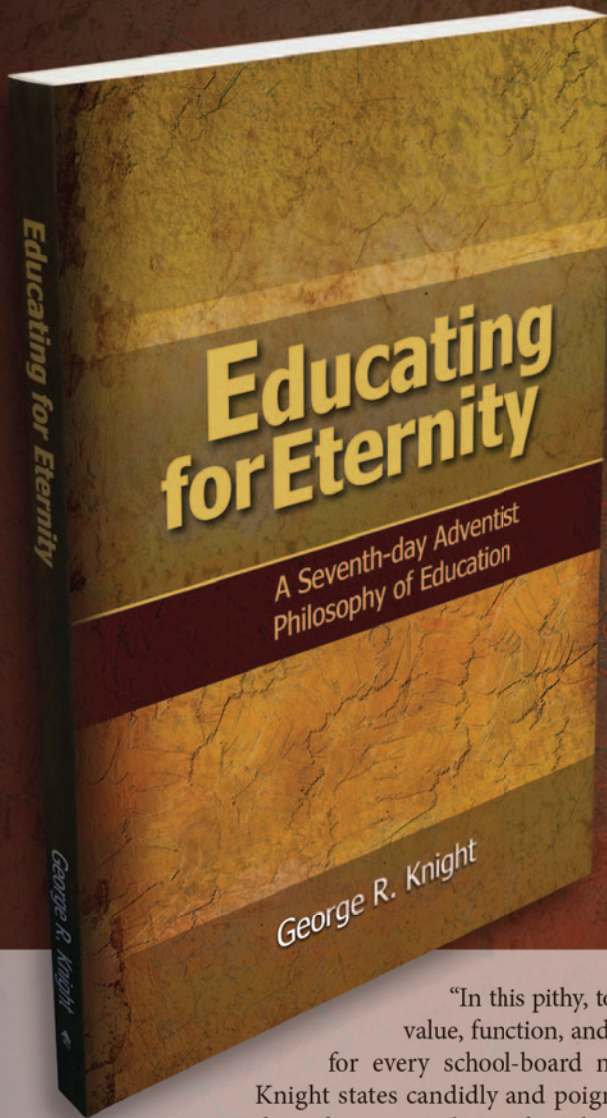
22. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 30. This redemptive purpose perhaps led Ellen White to urge, "There should be schools established wherever there is a church or company of believers" ("Special Testimony to the Battle Creek Church," [1897], 40).

23. Isaiah 54:13, NKJV. New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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