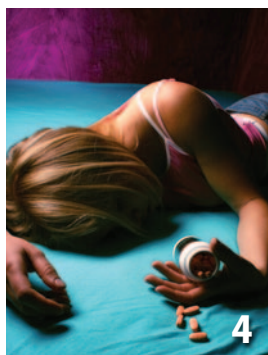


# ADVENTIST EDUCATION



Culturally Responsive  
Teaching in  
Adventist Schools

S P E C I A L S E C T I O N



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Charline Barnes Rowland

As of December 2017, the Seventh-day Adventist education system worldwide had 8,539 schools, 106,976 teachers, and 1,935,898 students.<sup>1</sup> These statistics indicate that the denomination operates one of the largest Protestant school systems. While many of these students are of the Adventist faith, some of them come from non-Adventist backgrounds due to parents and guardians valuing quality Christian education that focuses on more than academic knowledge.

Adventist education is about preparing learners for responsible citizenship in this world and in the world to come. Walter Douglas, emeritus professor of Adventist Church history at Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.), wrote that “many nations are being transformed from insulated societies with one dominant race and culture to ones that are racially and culturally diverse.”<sup>2</sup> He also noted that the future of Seventh-day Adventist education requires boards, administrators, and faculty not to “ignore nor escape the inevitability of the effect of these shifts on their educational mission and practice, institutional culture, pedagogy, and curriculum.”<sup>3</sup> To accomplish this goal, Adventist schools must recognize and respect that their student and teaching populations come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Schools need to promote a nurturing and safe environment that not only celebrates diversity, but also utilizes instructional methods that are sensitive and cohesive, in order to foster the balanced development of the whole person as God’s creation.<sup>4</sup> Such an environment will require all educators in Adventist schools—administrators and teachers—to work on intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual aspects of learning through intentional, engaging, and inclusive best practices.<sup>5</sup>

### What is Culturally Responsive Pedagogy?

The theme section of this issue of the JOURNAL promotes intentional, harmonious development of all stu-

dents in Adventist schools through a framework called *culturally responsive pedagogy*. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), also known as Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT),<sup>6</sup> recognizes the importance of including students’ cultural references in all aspects of learning. CRP is a structural curriculum framework with three dimensions: (1) academic achievement, (2) cultural competence, and (3) sociopolitical consciousness.<sup>7</sup> Academic achievement requires the integrated curriculum to be exciting and equitable with high standards. A culturally competent educator knows the various ranges of culturally and linguistically diverse students and can adjust instruction in the learning process. Sociopolitical consciousness expects teachers to deal with reality and equip students with critical lens and concrete skills to manage social and political challenges resulting from biases.

### How Does Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Fit Into Adventist Schools?

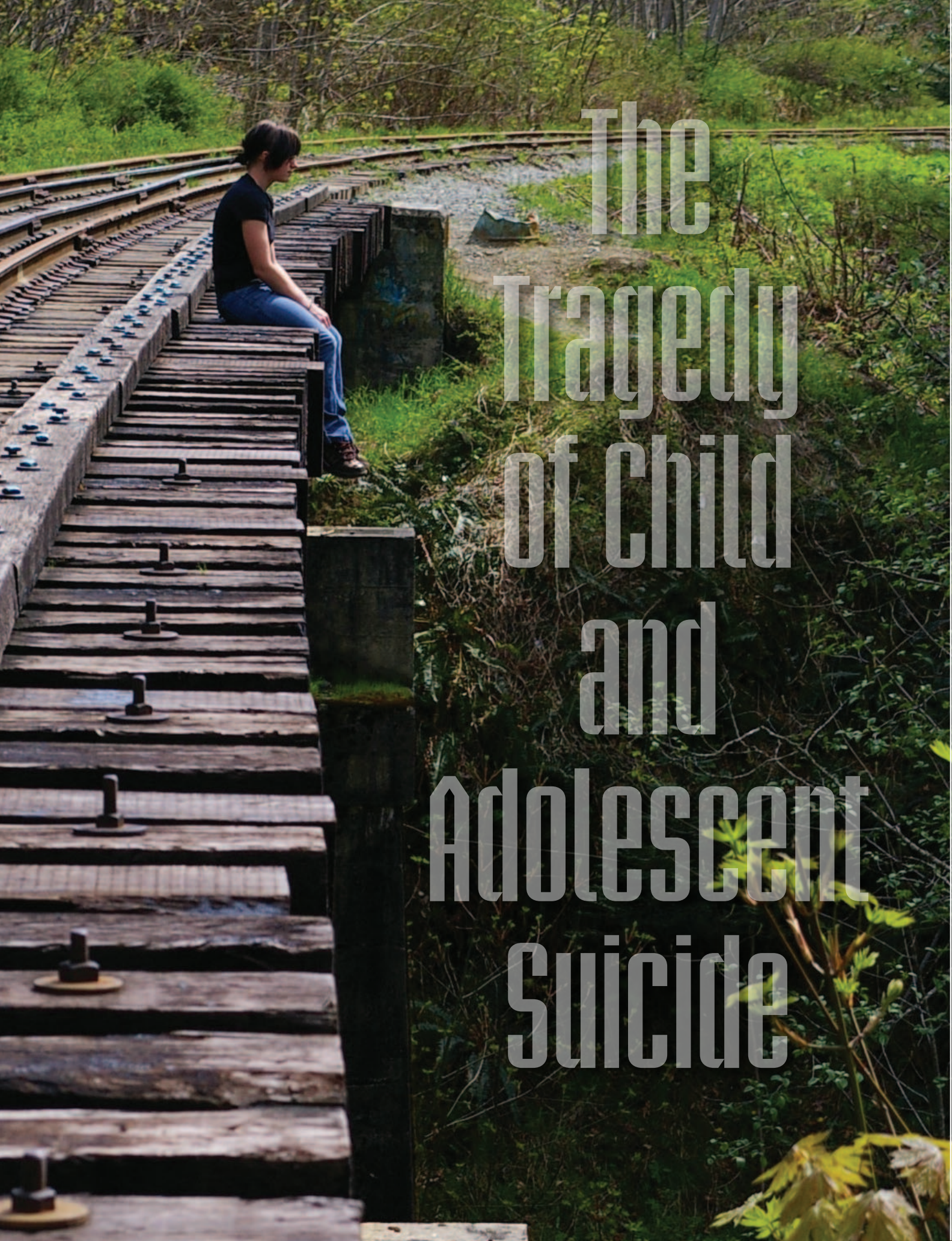
Many Christian educators have committed to teach values that are in conflict with the world so they choose to work in a religious school environment rather than in a secular one.<sup>8</sup> While all educators are challenged with teaching and learning tasks, including curriculum design, instructional techniques, and student-parent-teacher relationships, teachers in Adventist schools are also called to fulfill institutional mission. This is demonstrated in the classroom by the teacher’s beliefs, attitudes, and practices.<sup>9</sup> By focusing on restoration of human beings through the intersection of faith and learning, Adventist educators live out the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup> But what about the intersection of faith and learning with diversity and inclusion? Calling for more dialogue, peace, and social cohesion in intercultural education?

Adventist education is about intellectually engaging in a global society with a faith-based perspective. Having a God-centered curriculum will teach students to embrace diversity and seek solutions to societal inequities. However, it is not just about teaching content, but also about helping students and their families as-

## Culturally Responsive Pedagogy for Adventist Schools



*Continued on page 46*



# The Tragedy of Child and Adolescent Suicide



Emily was a typical tween, too old to be a child and too young to be a teenager. She was obsessed with Selena Gomez, Avril Lavigne, and Bruno Mars.<sup>1</sup> She loved to read, and she loved her friends. She hated her hair, her complexion, and her height. At age 12, she weighed 105 pounds and was 5'6" tall, which is roughly six inches taller than average for her age. Her height made her an easy target for bullying. Her coarse, curly hair and her acne elicited frequent taunts and attacks by bullies.

Emily was also an avid social media user. This gave the bullies virtually unlimited access to her through various accounts and allowed them to send her multiple messages and comments that were waiting for her when she woke up in the morning or got out of school in the afternoon—as well as all the other times that she checked her account each day. Emily completed suicide<sup>2</sup> 17 days before she turned 13. The day before she took her life, she posted a picture of herself to social media, which received 43 comments that Emily considered negative, most of them made by female classmates. Two of those comments suggested that she would be better off dead. Apparently Emily agreed. Her parents knew she was upset about the comments, but they had told her to ignore “those people” and cut back on her social media use. Emily was obsessed, though, with what people thought of her, who was interested in her, and any comment or “like” she received.

This story is a composite—an amalgamation of several true stories—and is used to illustrate the need for more attention to be paid to child and teen suicide, which is becoming a common narrative among young people today.

## Statistics

In 2015, the Centers for Disease Control and U.S. Department of Education reported that 20 to 28 percent of U.S. students in grades 6 to 12 have experienced bullying, 30 percent admitted to bullying others, and 70 percent witnessed bullying in some form. According to the report, children and young adults are affected by bullying and cyberbullying during their school-age years, and some even into adulthood.<sup>3</sup> “School violence and bullying occurs throughout the world and affects a significant proportion of children and adolescents. It is estimated that 246 million children and adolescents experience school violence and bullying in some form every year.”<sup>4</sup> This problem is real, and it will not go away without intervention.

The National Crime Prevention Council defines cyberbullying as “the process of using the Internet, cell phones, or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.”<sup>5</sup> The advent of portable Internet-capable devices, many of which can be held in the palm of the hand, has increased the incidence of children being bullied, making them easy targets for bullying behavior. Given the portability of these devices, people no longer have to wait until they are in front of a computer to vent their frustrations, or until their target is physically within range; cyberbullying can be implemented instantly, 24/7. Social media users no longer have to be face to face with bullies to suffer the effects of their taunting and threats, nor can they just avoid places where bullies hang out on their way home from school, although studies have shown that cyberbullying and hands-on bullying often occur simultaneously.<sup>6</sup>

Each year in the United States, ap-

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B Y B R A D H I N M A N

proximately 4,600 young people kill themselves. Fourteen percent of American high school students have thought about suicide, and 7 percent have attempted suicide during their high school years.<sup>7</sup> Specific to cyberbullying, the 2011 U.S. National Crime Victimization Survey, published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), reported that 9 percent (up from 6.2 percent two years earlier) of students reported being cyberbullied. The NCES also reported that more than 70 percent of American students said that they had been cyberbullied once or twice in a school year, with more than 3 percent reporting that this occurred almost every day.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Methods of Suicide Commonly Used by Children and Young Adults*

The preferred terminology for someone who dies from a self-inflicted wound or injury is “completed suicide” rather than “committed suicide” because committed denotes more stigma being placed on the individual—which likely contributed to his or her suicide in the first place. “Died by suicide” is also preferable to “committed suicide.” In 2017, the World Health Organization reported that suicide was the second most common cause of death globally among 15- to 29-year-olds,<sup>9</sup> and the third most common cause of death among 10- to 14-year olds in the United States.<sup>10</sup> This means that “more teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung disease, COMBINED.”<sup>11</sup> The sad part is that it is entirely possible that many young people who complete suicide may not have necessarily wanted to die; perhaps they just wanted the pain to stop.<sup>12</sup> Suicide is a permanent solution to what often turns out to be a very temporary problem. But for young people, the problems often seem to be omnipresent and omnipotent, relentless and overwhelming.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,<sup>13</sup> on average,

more than 88 young people complete suicide each week in the United States. Across gender and age the methods most commonly used for suicide are firearms or suffocation (which includes hanging). This is also true internationally, with the addition of ingestion of pesticides as another leading cause of death by suicide. Poisoning rates a distant third among the leading

**In terms of gender, females are about four times more likely to attempt suicide, but males are about four times more likely to complete suicide. One of the reasons this is true is because females tend to choose potentially less-lethal means such as pills or exsanguination (slowly bleeding out from a self-inflicted wound), whereas males tend to choose guns or hanging.**

methods in the United States. Internationally, 79 percent of suicides occur in low- or middle-income countries.<sup>14</sup> In terms of gender, females are about four times more likely to attempt suicide, but males are about four times more likely to complete suicide. One of the reasons this is true is because females tend to choose potentially less-lethal means such as pills or exsanguination (slowly bleeding out from a self-inflicted wound), whereas males

tend to choose guns or hanging.<sup>15</sup> Ethnically speaking, within the United States, Native American/Alaskan Natives are typically more likely to complete suicide, but Hispanic females are typically more likely to attempt suicide.<sup>16</sup> About 11 percent of American children will have attempted suicide by their 18th birthday, but many more have doubtless thought seriously about it long before that. In the U.S., almost 40 percent of the children who have attempted suicide made their first try in elementary or middle school.<sup>17</sup>

These statistics should concern everyone, but should be particularly alarming to Christians, who respect life as a gift from God and consider our children a particularly important gift.

#### **Risk Factors**

Suicide is a complicated concept with many possible causes and contributing factors. The connection between depression and other mental-health disorders is well known, but it is a myth to think that *all* suicides are related to depression or hopelessness, although some are. A further complicating factor is that many religions view suicide as a shameful act and even a sin. People in helping professions should continue to watch for signs of depression and language of hopelessness, but here are some other key risk factors:

- *Perfectionism.* For young people, perfectionistic tendencies are a recognized risk factor for suicide.<sup>18</sup> In today’s society, many students feel driven to succeed, and the bar for success is being pushed ever higher. Some students live in a near-constant state of panic that they are not going to get into the best colleges or receive the praise and admiration of their parents, teachers, and friends. This pressure builds as the child ages; and any mistake, even if seemingly minor, can be magnified in a child’s mind, dashing his or her hopes of future success. Christians can be particularly prone to perfectionism because they often view mistakes as sins, an



attitude that can quickly lead to perfectionism.

- *Emotion Regulation.* Students who have difficulty regulating their feelings (being aware of their emotions, accepting negative emotions, and having strategies to respond to strong emotions) are also at increased risk for suicide, especially if these students lack supportive and trusting adults at home and/or at school.<sup>19</sup> Reduced ability to regulate emotions can be accompanied by mental, emotional, and personality disorders, but even people without these disorders can struggle to regulate their emotions. Young people who become easily overwhelmed by emotions and who have difficulty getting help or trying to feel better often are susceptible to depression and anxiety, which, when coupled with a lack of support at home or school, can put them at increased risk for suicide.

Having a history of depression or other mental illness also increases the risk that a child might attempt suicide. Helping children recognize, label, and process their emotions can help ameliorate suicidal ideation.

- *Suicidal History.* If a child has a history of previous suicide attempts or a family history of suicide, this also puts him or her at greater risk for attempting and completing suicide. Having a family member who has completed suicide makes a child psychologically more vulnerable than the general population. An uncompleted attempt by a child should not be dismissed as just a cry for help or an indication that he or she did not want to die. Suicidal thoughts and behaviors should always be taken seriously to, if possible, prevent senseless

deaths. Previous suicide attempts and/or a family history of suicide could make the child more accepting of suicide as an option to deal with his or her problems, which have likely been exacerbated by the history of suicidal behaviors.<sup>20</sup>

- *Alcohol or Drug Abuse.* Abusing drugs or alcohol can not only increase risk for suicide, but also reduce impulse control, making young people more susceptible to act on a fleeting thought of harming themselves. Abusing drugs and alcohol can also lead to other problems that might increase the risk of suicide, such as having disciplinary problems or engaging in a variety of high-risk behaviors.<sup>21</sup>

- *Stressful Life Event or Loss.* Many youth lack a support network to deal effectively with life's stressors, especially the loss of someone close to them, like a friend or relative. The loss of a significant romantic relationship can produce a sense of helplessness, which can add to feelings of stress and loss. Healthy support networks, such as attentive parents, family friends, trusted religious leaders, teachers, peers, and others are important for youth to rely on when they need them. Unfortunately, Christians are not immune from significant negative life events or losses, such as divorce, separation, death, and abuse. Discipline problems, such as legal issues or incarceration, can also bring great stress on young people, who often lack the life experience to face these situations.<sup>22</sup>

### Warning Signs

In addition to the risk factors listed above, three other warning signs indicate that individuals are in danger, especially in combination with the above-listed factors:

1. Making verbal comments ranging from wanting to kill themselves to more general statements such as wanting to disappear, or saying that no one would miss them. Suicidal intent was disclosed before action was taken with time for intervention in 29 percent of deaths by suicide by children under 18 years of age, according to Dilillo's 2015 study.<sup>23</sup>

2. Researching online or in person to identify ways to end one's life, such as lethal doses of pills or other poisons, or buying knives or guns or other weapons.

3. Verbal or written comments (including those in social media) indicating hopelessness, purposelessness, anxiety, withdrawal, anger, or despair.

A person who exhibits these and other warning signs and risk factors is in a situation that requires immediate action. School administrators, educators, and staff need to be aware that they can do many things to help even though, in most cases, they are not licensed mental-health professionals.

- If your school employs a counselor, escort the individual to his or her office immediately. If not, consult with your administrator regarding your school's protocol for situations such as these. If you find your school does not have an emergency protocol for students at risk, this article may serve as impetus to develop one.

- Until the student can be under the care of a counselor, provide supervision or make sure he or she is with supportive, caring adults.

- Provide any additional helpful information to the counselor that will support the student's recovery from suicidal ideation.<sup>24</sup>

I have found in my work with clients who are actively suicidal that most do not actually want to die; they just want the pain to stop. If they can make it through the pain, the feeling of wanting to end their life often subsides.

### What to Do

In addition to the steps outlined above, there are other, more general, things that schools can do to help students feel safe, valuable, and an integral part of the school, which may help prevent emergencies.

- If you, or someone you know, are concerned about a student, consult with a trained professional to determine how best to help the student.

- Reach out and create a bond with

**Consider establishing a school-wide suicide-prevention program that includes protocols on how to craft a response for when a student suicide attempt or death occurs. This is something everyone hopes will not be necessary, but it is too late to create such a response when you actually need it.**

at-risk students. Sometimes students may be depressed or feel hopeless because of abusive or difficult home situations (homelessness, abuse, or divorce). Creating a bond with students you feel might be at risk may cause them to be less likely to resort to self-harm and more likely to disclose things that need to be reported to authorities. Listen, but do not judge or suggest that the student is "messed up" or is exaggerating the problems. Tell the student the things you have noticed that are of concern to you and encourage him or her to seek help.

- Pray for and with your students. Our students are under attack for their hearts, emotions, and thoughts from multiple points of entry such as mainstream media, social media, their peers, electronic devices, video games, and many more.

- Be open to being approached. We may never know that students are struggling if they don't feel safe to approach us to share their burdens. If

they fear they are going to be punished for talking to you about their struggles, or that you are going to judge them, you will never perceive the warning signs because they will not consider you someone they can trust with their deepest secrets.

- Consider establishing a school-wide suicide-prevention program that includes protocols on how to craft a response for when a student suicide attempt or death occurs. This is something everyone hopes will not be necessary, but it is too late to create such a response when you actually need it. This plan should include training for all school personnel to help them recognize warning signs, as well as what to do when they encounter these signs, to whom they should report, and obtaining appropriate documentation of what happened (whether creating the documentation or obtaining it from other sources). This school-wide plan should include training on cyberbullying as well as face-to-face bullying, and the steps to take when bullying is suspected or reported. In a number of countries, the school can be held legally responsible if personnel know that a student is being bullied but do nothing. Searching Google will produce a number of school-wide prevention programs. Here is one example: <http://www.starcenter.pitt.edu/Files/PDF/Suicide%20Prevention%20in%20Schools%209-26-13.pdf>.

### Conclusion

Suicide can be an overwhelming topic, and a scary one for both school personnel and the person who is having suicidal thoughts. The most important thing to do is to have a response prepared. Remind the person of God's unbounded love and concern. His estimation of our worth is much greater than our own. He knows everything about us: "And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30, NIV)<sup>25</sup> and loves us unconditionally. Remind students in distress that God is eager to hear our cries for help and ready to answer them. "Hear my prayer, Lord;



listen to my cry for mercy. When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me” (Psalm 86:6, 7). ✍

*This article has been peer reviewed.*



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#### Helpful Resources

For more information on suicide risks and how to help students deal with suicidal thoughts, please consult a local mental-health professional, the counselor at your school, or one of the links below.

- Information about bullying, cyberbullying, and prevention: <http://www.stopbullying.gov>.
- The Parent Resource Program [The Jason Foundation]: <http://jasonfoundation.com/get-involved/parent/parent-resource-program/>.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>.
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center: <http://www.sprc.org/>.



# Why Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters

*“A pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically . . . [uses] cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.”<sup>1</sup>*

One of the many things I admire about Jesus is the intentional and genuine connection He made with people. Regardless of their status, religion, cultural background, or other people’s opinions, nothing prevented Jesus from teaching and serving others, or interacting with each person with whom He came into contact.

According to Ellen White, Jesus’ first students, the disciples, differed “widely in natural characteristics, in training, and in habits of life [however] . . . He sought to bring them into unity with Himself.”<sup>2</sup> She also indicated that Jesus instructed the disciples and others using specific techniques: “the unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truths by earthly things with which the people were most familiar.”<sup>3</sup> Through the use of parables, Jesus tapped into the disciples’ experiences, or as scholars today would say, “funds of knowledge”<sup>4</sup>—their ways of life, occupations, skills, dis-

positions, and experiences—to reach and to teach them about the love His Father had for them.

This article will draw upon spiritual principles and lessons learned from Jesus, the **Master Teacher**, real-world examples, and educational research that supports wholistic pedagogical practices that connect teaching and learning with the education and culture of each child.

## Culture Defined

The basic definition of culture is *the way of life of a group of people*<sup>5</sup>; however, culture is more complex than that. In an educational context, culture includes students’ implicit and explicit funds of knowledge. Students’ *implicit funds of knowledge* include body language, unspoken rules of engagement, nonverbal communication, and rules of conduct. Their *explicit funds of knowledge* include language, traditions and celebrations, holidays and festivals, and tangible

BY KALISHA A. WALDON

elements of culture. Children and adolescents who interact with more than one cultural group in their home and community will encounter and have to navigate multiple sources or “funds of knowledge.” In this article, culture is operationally defined as “the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one [group] from another.”<sup>6</sup>

Scholars in the field of multicultural education, such as James and Cherry Banks, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, and Paul Gorski, have advocated for validating students through the inclusion of their cultural strengths, the development of a community of care, and the incorporation of students’ experiences and knowledge gained outside of school into the curriculum and classroom. In order to accomplish these goals, teachers must acknowledge that students’ cultural frames of reference have an effect on how they learn. Teachers must also re-evaluate their teaching philosophies and pedagogies in order to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all.

### What Is Culturally Responsive Teaching?

The phrase “culturally responsive teaching” (CRT) was coined by Geneva Gay and centers around the belief that students perform better when teaching is filtered through their cultural experiences. To address the needs of students, care is given to the creation of classroom communities that are sensitive and relevant to students’ backgrounds.<sup>7</sup> Gay posits that culturally responsive practices infused within classrooms and instruction are necessary for meaningful connections to exist between students’ home, school, and community experiences.<sup>8</sup> For schools that enroll a large number of students from dissimilar cultures, this can pose a challenge; however, these challenges are what CRT seeks to address by pointing to instructional approaches that can help educators narrow the distance between students from historically marginalized groups (based on their race, ethnicity, language, etc.), and those from mainstream populations.

CRT acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural backgrounds of different ethnic groups as content worthy of being integrated into the formal curriculum, uses a variety of instructional strategies to meet the learning needs of students, and teaches students to embrace their “funds of knowledge” while concurrently seeking to understand the uniqueness of their peers.<sup>9</sup> It also seeks to provide students with multiple pathways to reach academic goals.<sup>10</sup> Educators in Adventist schools must make sure that all cultural practices, even those found within majority cultures and religious subcultures, are evaluated through the lens of the gospel.

### Why Do Christian Teachers Need to Practice Culturally Responsive Instructional Practices?

Culturally responsive teachers have developed positive perspectives on families and communities, communicate high expectations for students, use culture as a context for learning, and redesign traditional curricula and instruction to meet students’ needs.<sup>11</sup> Adventist teachers are called to go

beyond these duties and to be representatives of Christ to *all* students, co-laboring with Him to impart a knowledge of the principles of His kingdom to *all* and to assist in molding them to more fully reflect the likeness of God in which they were created.<sup>12</sup>

While Adventist teachers generally recognize this duty, sometimes their perceptions of students, families, and the community may hinder them from fully exercising their Christian witness. To be culturally responsive, teachers must acknowledge that their own cultural identity, perceptions, and expectations of students affect the ways they relate to and engage students in the classroom. For example, if teachers believe that certain groups of students are likely to fail in school because they are lazy, unmotivated, linguistically deficient, or have parents who do not care about their education,<sup>13</sup> then their expectations for their students’ academic success will be negatively skewed.

Unfortunately, this ideological framework—deficit thinking—has impacted American education<sup>14</sup> and is not unique to public schools. Deficit thinking works counter to the values taught in Christian schools and the ministry of the Adventist teacher. If the principles set forth by the Master Teacher are followed, teachers will be less likely to become victims of deficit thinking. As a result, more students and families will want to attend Adventist schools and remain faithful to the church.

The “counter” to this deficit frame of thought is Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). CRT aligns with the Master Teacher’s example. Its strengths include its embrace of the ideal that all students can learn and should see their lives, cultures, histories, or ways of knowing mirrored in the curriculum, embraced in classrooms, and used to inform instructional practices. Teachers thus can use these pedagogical opportunities to validate and affirm students while focusing on the fundamental knowledge required for young people to become capable learners.<sup>15</sup> Regardless of their differences, students should be loved, nurtured, and valued, just as Jesus loves, nurtures, and values each human being.

### What Does Culturally Responsive Teaching Look Like in the Christian Classroom?

In the following paragraphs, the Curriculum Connections Instructional Model™ (CCIM)<sup>16</sup> will be used to illustrate what culturally responsive pedagogy looks like in the classroom. This model is grounded in the recognition that students are complex; therefore, a reciprocal relationship exists between instructional methods and the funds of knowledge students bring with them into the classroom. CCIM also recognizes the entities—home, school, church, and community—whose roles are fundamental to the harmonious development of the child. The six domains of the CCIM are: *connections, community, culture, character, content, and critical consciousness*. I will link biblical teachings and CRT examples to each domain and show how they function in culturally responsive schools and classrooms.

## Domain 1 – Connections

In this domain, the teacher begins the learning process by developing a mutually respectful partnership—a two-way, reciprocal relationship—with students. This parallels Jesus’ method of relationship building. According to Ellen White, personal connections were essential to His teaching. She wrote: “Christ in His teaching dealt with people individually. By personal contact and association He trained the Twelve. In private, often to but one listener, He gave His most precious instruction. . . . Even the crowd that so often thronged His steps was not to Christ an indiscriminate mass of human beings. He spoke directly to every mind and appealed to every heart. He watched the faces of His hearers, marked the lighting up of the countenance, the quick, responsive glance, which told that truth had reached the soul.”<sup>17</sup>

This personal connection reaches beyond the boundaries of race, class, and gender, and requires teachers to develop cross-cultural communication skills that begin with scrutinizing their own cultural assumptions, stereotypes, and value system. Teachers must move beyond “color blind” teaching, which ignores students’ cultural differences rather than embracing them as assets. This type of teaching can adversely affect relationships with students and their families. To honor who students are, educators must view them, both individually and collectively, through the eyes of Jesus, and show them care—by standing by the door to

greet them individually each morning, taking time to listen to their joys, praying with them when they express feelings of inadequacy, fear, and/or frustration, and celebrating milestones they have accomplished spiritually, academically, and physically.

In addition, teachers must familiarize themselves with students’ cultural backgrounds, their families, and the communities in which they reside; develop an understanding of the uniqueness of each student, and view students’ diverse cultures and ways of knowing as windows into their identity, perspectives, and values.<sup>18</sup> Terry-Ann Griffin, an Adventist curriculum coordinator, achieves this by doing the following:

“I ask teachers to consider using surveys and/or questionnaires. While building relationships with students, teachers can learn quite a bit about their . . . interests. Sending surveys/questionnaires to parents and students at the start of the school year is a meaningful way to begin planning a school year that is inclusive of students’ heritage, music, language, etc.”<sup>19</sup>

This mutually respectful partnership should include students as co-investigators of knowledge. Freire<sup>20</sup> believed that authentic dialogue occurs when the preconditions of (radical) love, humility, trust, and hope are present. Like Jesus, teachers’ actions and relationships in the classroom should reflect the care and concern that He showed for each person He met.



Children who develop meaningful relationships with their teachers have fewer behavior problems and demonstrate more engagement in the learning process. When teachers' actions communicate genuine care, students will want to please them, and to achieve the high expectations set for them. This preventive approach to discipline<sup>21</sup> can help produce behaviors that contribute to the development of Christlike characters.

### Domain 2 – Community

According to the CCIM framework, community is defined in two ways. The first type relates to the culture of care that can be created within a school and by individual teachers. Drawing on the work of Cavanaugh,<sup>22</sup> the culture-of-care theory stresses the importance of schools emphasizing relationships over curriculum when determining the purpose and goals of the institution.

Culturally responsive schools and classrooms are places where students' voices, experiences, and ideas are encouraged and valued, and where students are taught to be independent critical thinkers, rather than "mere reflectors of other people's thought."<sup>23</sup> Nurturing begins with cultivating an environment of respect, honesty, integrity, and empathy through the sharing of biblical lessons, daily modeling, hands-on experiences, and teachers implementing Christ's example. Caring teachers nurture a sense of community and safety in the classroom while supporting the social and academic engagement of students.<sup>24</sup> These classrooms move away from theories of traditional classroom management ("doing to" students) to classrooms of care ("working with" students). Table 1 illustrates some key differences between traditional classrooms and classrooms/schools of care.

In a culturally responsive classroom, management and discipline should be redemptive in nature. Taylor posited that "Redemptive discipline serves as a means by which teachers discipline their students and teach them that their obedience to the rules is the fruit of their salvation and that their obedience is only possible by God's grace."<sup>25</sup> Discipline must be grounded in love and mutual respect between teacher and student, with clear expectations and boundaries firmly established. Discipline should be so thoughtfully and

<b>"Doing to": Traditional Classrooms</b>	<b>"Working With": Culturally Relevant Classrooms</b>
Focus is on making students follow directions (conform).	Focus is on developing students' internal moral compass.
Uses a teacher-centered classroom model.	Uses a student-centered classroom model.
Compliance is important.	Environment supports questioning, critical thinking, and analyzing.
Standards drive curriculum, and knowledge is determined by school districts, curriculum planners, administrators, teachers, etc.	Learners' interests and needs impact/drive curriculum decisions.
Punishments/reward systems are the norm.	Positive self-value and love of learning are promoted.
Order and control are paramount.	Compassion and empathy are paramount.
*Adapted from Traci P. Baxley and Kalisha A. Waldon, "Culture Matters: Creating Classroom Communities That Mirror Students' Lives," in Waldon and Baxley, <i>Equity Pedagogy: Teaching Diverse Student Populations</i> (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt, 2017), 44.	

creatively integrated that it becomes the classroom norm, driving the rules of engagement.<sup>26</sup>

The second type of community emphasizes the need to partner with families, churches, and communities to nurture and develop the whole student. Culturally responsive teachers seek to engage school families in multiple ways by meeting parents where they are socially and spiritually, and recognizing that open dialogue is important. Examples of how the Master Teacher did this can be found throughout the Gospels, such as Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well (John 4:1-30). Jesus met the woman where she was. In connecting with her, He broke several Jewish taboos: (1) He spoke to a woman who was a Samaritan; and (2) He asked for a drink of water from her cup, which was considered unclean. This did not matter to Jesus because He was more interested in her receiving eternal life than following the customs and traditions of the time.

Some believe that interacting with students, families, and communities from another faith/religion or with unbelievers makes them less of a Christian or might threaten their faith. Christ said "You are the light of the world" and "let your light shine before others" (Matthew 5:16, NIV)<sup>27</sup> so that all may know Him (Matthew 28:19). How can the gospel commission be fulfilled if His followers do not interact with people from other faiths, and even with those who make no profession of religion?

Strong partnerships will open up access to more resources for the school, as well as opportunities to witness and evan-

gelize the community. Table 2 includes ideas on how to forge school-home-church-community partnerships.

### Domain 3 – Culture

The culture domain recognizes and celebrates the differences among learners (culture, race, ethnicity, social class, language, gender, etc.), thereby creating a culture of acceptance that promotes respect, equity, and affirmation. Yet, for Christians, not all aspects of culture can be celebrated—namely, those that stand in opposition to Christ and foster a love of the world and self, or that harm self or others. John 17:16 implies that while followers of Christ may be in the world, they are not of the world. So as Adventist schools incorporate this domain, they will reject those cultural elements—not the people—that run counter to the Word of God, whether in the majority or minority culture. Instead, they will introduce God’s teachings and emphasize His grace.

CRT involves student-focused teaching that regards students’ funds of knowledge as assets and not deficits; therefore, an important first step is to get to know the students’ cultures. These assets can be used to make the learning process relevant and meaningful. As teachers explore students’ cultures, they will come to know how students learn best and can then use this new knowledge to inform teaching practices.

The premise of this domain is not for teachers to find ways to include every culture in every lesson every day. The expectation is that teachers should develop personal relationships with their students and use what they know about them to address their needs and to engage them.

To ensure that students’ lives, cultures, and histories are represented in the curriculum, teachers should seek resources such as personal narratives, literature, parents or families from the community, Websites, and/or other counter narratives to supplement the traditional curriculum. For example, if there are students in a history class from a

**Table 2.**  
**School-Home-Church-Community Connections**

Strategy	Ideas for Engagement
Interest Inventory/Survey	Find out what the parents need; how they want to communicate with the school; what language they speak at home or prefer; what community events are important to them; etc.
Home and Church Engagement Sessions	Use the survey findings to plan events that support the needs of the community. Use these events as a time to listen to parents’ needs and cultivate trusting relationships.
Community Services	Connect with the church community-services leader. Discuss ways you can assist in organizing various services for the local community. For example: offering computer classes, allowing members of the community and parents to use the computers at the school to apply for jobs, helping people fill out governmental paperwork (social services, food services, etc.), offering legal assistance, offering diploma and language programs, etc.
Cultural/Community Liaison	Use the Home and School leaders as liaisons between the activities in the community and school events. This can include providing language translations and bringing events from the community to the attention of school personnel as well as informing the members of the community about ways they can be involved in the school.
Consistent Invitations	Invite parents to be a part of the classroom experience. This could include their involvement in field trips, class presentations, lunch dates, as guest speakers, or invitations to a special breakfast or dinner. Equally as important is the school administration accepting invitations from community organizations for the students to be involved (e.g., parades, festivals, etc.).
*Adapted from Baxley and Waldon, “Culture Matters: Creating Classroom Communities That Mirror Students’ Lives,” in Waldon and Baxley, <i>Equity Pedagogy: Teaching Diverse Student Populations</i> (ibid.), 44, 45.	

marginalized group whose narrative is missing from the textbook, the teacher can supplement the textbook authors’ perspective. Teachers can be creative about finding ways to highlight the historical contributions of groups that represent the cultures and voices of the students in their classroom as well as other marginalized groups. Every aspect of culture, both positive and negative, should be compared with God’s ideal and His ultimate plan for His children. When students’ cultures are included and honored, classrooms become places where students thrive. Students will then feel more comfortable being themselves and be more likely to view others in a positive light.

Some oppose the idea of embracing and celebrating the differences of all students, especially when students’ lifestyles are different from or stand in opposition to the culture or religious belief system of the school or a biblical standard. Christian teachers are to teach and model the principles of the Bible, and should be concerned with how various cultural influences affect students, their families, and society. However, it is the Holy Spirit’s job to convict. Following

God's leading, seeds of love and truth can be planted on the hearts and minds of students. Teachers are called to love as Jesus loves. Building on the character of Christ doesn't mean all have to agree, but it does mean showing respect, kindness, and compassion. Students should experience this love in words, in deeds, and in actions (1 John 3:18).

#### Domain 4 – Character

This domain focuses on character building. According to Ellen White: “The salvation of our pupils is the highest interest entrusted to the God-fearing teacher. He [the teacher] is Christ's worker, and his special and determined effort should be to save souls . . . and win them to Jesus Christ.”<sup>28</sup> Culturally responsive classrooms should be hopeful, joyful, kind, and visionary.<sup>29</sup> In these classrooms, opportunities are created for students to develop Christlike characters as teachers empower them to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Jesus, the Master Teacher, listened to the voices from the margins and was interested in those who were rejected; He sought to minister to every need of humanity no matter who the people were. “His compassion knew no limit”<sup>30</sup>; not only did He empathize with the least of them, Christ also took on their identities and stood in solidarity with them. This is expounded upon in the following quote: “It was I who was hungry and thirsty. It was I who was a stranger. It was I who was naked. It was I who was sick. It was I who was in prison. . . . When you closed your doors against Me, while your well-furnished rooms were unoccupied, I had nowhere to lay My head. . . . When you were enjoying health, I was sick.”<sup>31</sup>

In culturally responsive schools and classrooms, students should “Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause” (Isaiah 1:17, ESV).<sup>32</sup> This can be accomplished by sharing with students the many stories in the Bible that illustrate how Christ and other biblical characters were agents of change. Teachers should, however, go beyond merely talking about *The Change Agent* to creating opportunities for students to critically reflect and act on issues that continue to challenge this world such as racism, discrimination, and marginalization; to help them foster and embrace respect and love for others; and to encourage them to actively seek answers to societal injustices. Students should be taught empathy and how to put themselves in the shoes of others to envision how they would feel in the same situation.

Educators should seek to engage students in inquiry, critical thinking, and critical action, so that schools and classrooms become places of hope and promise. While many students will have the innate ability to show care for their peers and others, some will need to be taught, nurtured, or supported to do this. While teachers cannot singlehandedly transform all schools and communities, they can help shape characters for the kingdom and teach their students that together they can be instruments of Christ to make a positive difference in the world. These

are among the purposes for which Adventist schools and churches exist.

#### Domain 5 – Content

This domain sustains the connection between knowledge embodied in the curriculum and the learner. The “banking concept” of education, a term coined by Freire, describes students as empty vessels into which educators must deposit knowledge. Those who claim to have the authority to make these deposits are the ones to define the facts that must be acquired by students. According to this model, students are expected to be compliant and to passively store the deposits of “official knowledge.” This ignores students' funds of knowledge and their ability to be critical thinkers who participate actively in the learning process.

Domain 5 supports the view that students can learn from experiences, content, and instruction that are connected to their knowledge and cultures, and that expose them to multiple ways of knowing. Freire<sup>33</sup> recommended problem-posing as an alternative to banking education, abandoning the traditional dichotomy between the teacher and student and replacing it with an arrangement in which teacher and student are both active in the learning process and collaborate in constructing knowledge. Students are encouraged to ask questions, and meaningful connections are made between what they are learning and their lives outside of the classroom.

Learning that is personal and meaningful is rewarding for students of diverse backgrounds because it helps establish “a link between classroom experiences and the students' everyday lives.”<sup>34</sup> The Master Teacher's use of parables (Matthew 18:23-35, 25:14-30; Luke 15:3-7, 15:8-10; Mark 4:1-20; 26-29) demonstrated His preferred teaching method. The content of these parables was culturally responsive and provided a transformative intellectual curriculum.

Amber Willis, an Adventist math educator and mathematics research specialist, recognizes the importance of providing opportunities for learning that cross traditional classroom boundaries. For one of her geometry lessons, she took her students to the trendy, upscale art district of their urban community. During visits to several art galleries, her students were assigned to investigate the artists' use of mathematics. It was not hard for them to find connections between the artwork and the geometry content, such as the use of angles, symmetry, and patterns. What took her students' investigations to the next level were their interviews with the local artists, who explained the meaning of the art to them, as well as how mathematical ideas were intentionally incorporated within their creations.

This teacher used local geography, language, and culture to illustrate the intentional use of mathematics in artistic design and debunked the idea that only a few people or a certain kind of person had access to the content of artistic works. Amber knew that unless she incorporated learning opportunities that felt familiar and safe to her students, she could “never [create] a classroom culture that promotes cu-

riosity about mathematics nor could I create authentic bridges of relevance with the content.”<sup>35</sup>

### Domain 6 – Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness is the process by which individuals become aware of internal and external practices, systems, ideologies, and powers that seek to oppress or dehumanize human beings.<sup>36</sup> After achieving awareness, they use their newfound knowledge to identify what is oppressing them (or others around them), and transform their knowledge into a vehicle or catalyst for change. As was noted in Domain 4, Christ was a change agent; He had compassion and empathy for the disenfranchised. Recall how He interacted with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), the woman at the well (John 4:1-42), and the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). He provided “them with an emancipated realization of their own worthiness in God’s sight.”<sup>37</sup> This was a significant part of Christ’s mission on earth: to help His students understand their condition and to set them free.

Teachers who are committed to facilitating students’ awareness of inequities in society extend the compassion and empathy of Christ by intentionally engaging students in opportunities to change the world. Current societal issues that students can advocate for are shelters for the homeless, resources to end food insecurity, laws to protect victims and potential victims from bullies and abusers, enforcement of child labor laws, potable water, etc. Their awareness of these injustices is merely the tip of the iceberg. Awareness should be coupled with appropriate action. Educators must be willing to take a deep dive into unearthing the real culprits of these societal issues with students, and teach them how to connect and use what they are learning inside the classroom to combat the injustices and inequities that exist in their world.<sup>38</sup>

Harris and Baxley<sup>39</sup> tell a story that illustrates one facet of this domain. A teacher overheard several of her kindergartners discussing a homeless panhandler they encountered each morning on their way to school. She decided to explore the topic of homelessness with the goal of moving her students from a state of curiosity and confusion to empowering them through action.

First, she created time in the daily schedule to talk about homelessness. Each morning, the students were given an opportunity to share concerns and ask questions about the topic. Next, with the help of several teacher-education candidates assigned to her classroom as part of their field placement, she shared the kindergartners’ questions with their parents, compiled a list of informational books from the library on the topic, collected picture books that could be read during the class read-aloud time, and prepared to help the kindergartners turn their questions into an action plan.

Over a six-week period, the kindergarten students brought in spare change and began filling up a large “Give” jar. Once the jar was full, the teacher arranged an after-school family field trip to the neighborhood grocery store where the class

purchased groceries with the spare change they had collected. They delivered the purchased supplies to a community-out-reach program that served the homeless and hungry. The class left the center feeling both empowered and encouraged—convinced that one person *can* make a difference.

The students in this kindergarten class were the hands and feet of Jesus. Many of the classrooms in Adventist schools are participating in a variety of service-learning projects and other servant-leadership opportunities. The charge of Domain 6, however, is for teachers to urge students to achieve a level of true consciousness where sensitivity to human need becomes a way of life, not just a one-time-and-go event or project. It means authentically embracing the persona of Christ. This must be the message in every Adventist classroom and school. Making this the mission of Adventist schools will ensure that students achieve academic success and commit themselves to addressing the many forms of injustice in the world around them.<sup>40</sup>

### Conclusion

The Master Teacher looked for opportunities to provide equitable learning experiences for His students. His instruction was effective because it was anchored in the events of their everyday lives. Recognizing and honoring the cultural backgrounds, families, and home experiences of students is paramount in creating culturally responsive classrooms. The first step in implementing this type of classroom is to become aware of the impact of the hidden curriculum—the unexamined aspects of cultural expectations and perspectives—and to be deliberate about avoiding responses and behavior that negatively impact students.

Getting to know students and their families through needs assessments, surveys, home visits, etc., is the next step. As teachers and administrators get to know members of the community, they will discover a variety of resources that can be used in classrooms. Every effort should be made to infuse students’ funds of knowledge into the curriculum and instruction so that their learning experiences are relevant and authentic. Collectively, schools must be intentional about creating experiences that ensure that students are proficient on grade-level learning outcomes and have opportunities to grow into the likeness of the Master Teacher. ✍

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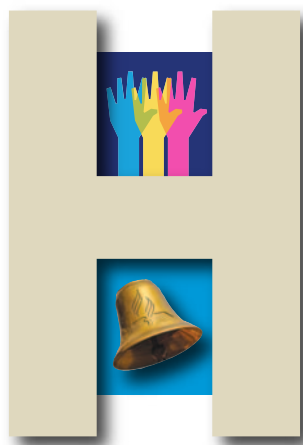
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## Culturally Responsive Christian Education at

# Holbrook

## Seventh-day Adventist Indian School

From the 1860s until the 1930s, the U.S. Government worked closely with religious organizations to establish off-reservation boarding schools with the intent of assimilating Native American children through language and religion—two components seen as necessary to complete the civilization process. Students came to the schools from a variety of tribes and by a variety of means—some recruited by men like Richard Pratt (who believed that eradication of all aspects of Native American culture was the only way to assimilation),<sup>1</sup> some brought by their parents, and others snatched out of their homes by police in order to fill quotas at government-funded schools.<sup>2</sup>

One commonality of all the schools involved their military-like regimen, with students receiving standardized haircuts and uniforms, marching to classes, and adhering to strict discipline—all seen as necessary measures to remove all remnants of Native culture, based on the motto

*“The hardest thing to learn about a people of another race is that they are just like you in all essential ways.”*

*Tony Hillerman, as quoted in Navajos Wear Nikes, 2011.<sup>3</sup>*

“Kill the Indian” to “Save the Man.” The institutions accomplished their primary goal of teaching English by outlawing the use of Native American languages and punishing those children who dared to use their mother tongue. The punishments ranged from being forced to chew on soap to beatings, depending on the institution’s discipline code.<sup>4</sup>

One can look back on history in horror at the way the Native Americans were treated. The U.S. Government forced Native Americans to assimilate and adopt Western culture—while at the same time the government repressed and punished Na-

tive Americans who accomplished assimilation on their own terms (the Cherokee Indians, for example, created their own constitution and built their own schools and education systems using the U.S. Government as their model. The government still forced them to leave their land during the Trail of Tears).<sup>5</sup>

Needless to say, Native Americans have cause to distrust boarding schools run by Christians that claim their sole purpose is helping Native Americans. Especially since, for the older generations, the term “boarding school” evokes memories of oppression, abuse, and assimilation. In the 1940s, when the Indian Boarding School movement had all but died out (although there were still some off-reservation schools for Native Americans that offered a boarding option), Marvin and Gwyndolyn Walter, Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to the Navajo Nation, viewed literacy instruction as a way out of the crushing poverty that plagued (and continues to plague) the Navajo Nation. They

BY ANITA STRAWN de OJEDA, LOREN H. FISH II, and JOVANNAH POOR BEAR-ADAMS

purchased land near the southern border of the Navajo Nation in Holbrook, Arizona, and opened a boarding institution named Holbrook Indian School (HIS). For more than 70 years, HIS has served Native Americans from all over the United States as a low-cost, Christian alternative to government-run schools.

In recent years, HIS has incorporated curriculum based on concerns voiced by older tribal generations regarding the westernization of their young people. Today's students live in a dichotomy—iPhones and out-houses, rap music and tribal ceremonies, the “You can be anything you want to become” message mixed with “You need to stay home and take care of your family” pleas from some family members. Along with the dichotomies comes the slow realization that the Western way of civilization, which tends to discount all

other ways of seeing<sup>6</sup> as “heathen” and “savage,” does little to ultimately improve the lives of Native Americans.

As the faculty of HIS became aware of a need to adapt the curriculum to better serve their students, they sought to make changes that would enhance students' cultures rather than eradicate them. The curriculum now includes Navajo language and government, Native American pottery, horsemanship, and agriculture (while agriculture is not a tradition for all tribes, for the Navajo it is).

More recently, HIS has adopted a philosophy called the Nutrition, Exercise, and Wellness (NEW) You Health Initiative. The areas of spirituality, mental health, academic achievement, and physical health make up the four pillars of NEW You. The program design allows the school to work in a culturally sensitive manner

that fosters collaboration between the educational personnel and the tribal members they hope to serve.

### **Spiritual Pillar**

Since the foundation of the school, an active and growing spiritual journey has been integral. Students attend dorm worship and church services, and observe how the faculty and staff live out their personal relationships with God through prayer, worldview, and faith. Out of respect for Native American beliefs and cultures, faculty and staff invite students to participate in spiritual growth, but never force them to become involved.

Cindy Giago, from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, reflects fondly on her experiences with HIS: “The school goes out of their way to find healing for the broken pieces in their students. That's something that benefits everyone—no



matter what their beliefs.”<sup>7</sup> Five of Cindy’s children have attended HIS, traveling all the way from South Dakota. She actively raised each of her children in the traditional Lakota beliefs and holds leadership roles in Tiospaye Sakowin Education and Healing Center, an organization and traditional community that focuses on returning to traditional aspects of the Lakota culture to bring healing to their youth. Like Gaigo’s children, many of the students at HIS come from homes where traditional beliefs are integral to their spiritual journeys.

Holbrook Indian School personnel do not seek to eradicate traditional beliefs and traditions; rather, they seek to introduce students to a different way of seeing that includes the message of salvation and a personal relationship with God. Finding identity as one of God’s children provides a crucial step in the healing process for HIS students.

“I recently read about a boy who had to graduate without a graduation cap because the school he was graduating from wouldn’t allow him to wear his beaded cap for the ceremony. Something amazing that happens at that school [HIS] is how supportive they are of cultural identity,”<sup>8</sup> commented Jolena Johnson, HIS alumna from Coyote Canyon, New Mexico, on the Navajo Reservation.

Through English and Bible class curricula, teachers encourage students to sit down with their elders and listen to and learn traditional stories. Students also link Bible stories to corresponding traditional stories from different tribes. This effort shows the commonality of values important in both Christian and traditional beliefs, and thus helps students feel valued and accepted.

### **Mental Pillar**

The school’s mental-health emphasis was implemented to address two significant problems: the high number of HIS students experiencing emotional issues, and the lack of

quality mental-health services available to them. There is a disproportionate amount of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), reactive attachment disorder, and substance abuse among the students attending HIS. Daily occurrences of nightmares, flashbacks, urges to cut themselves or to use drugs/alcohol, suicidal thoughts, or anger outbursts are not uncommon for some students. These mental-health issues undermine the students’ potential for social, academic, and spiritual success. To meet this challenge, HIS supporters have funded two full-time clinical counselors.

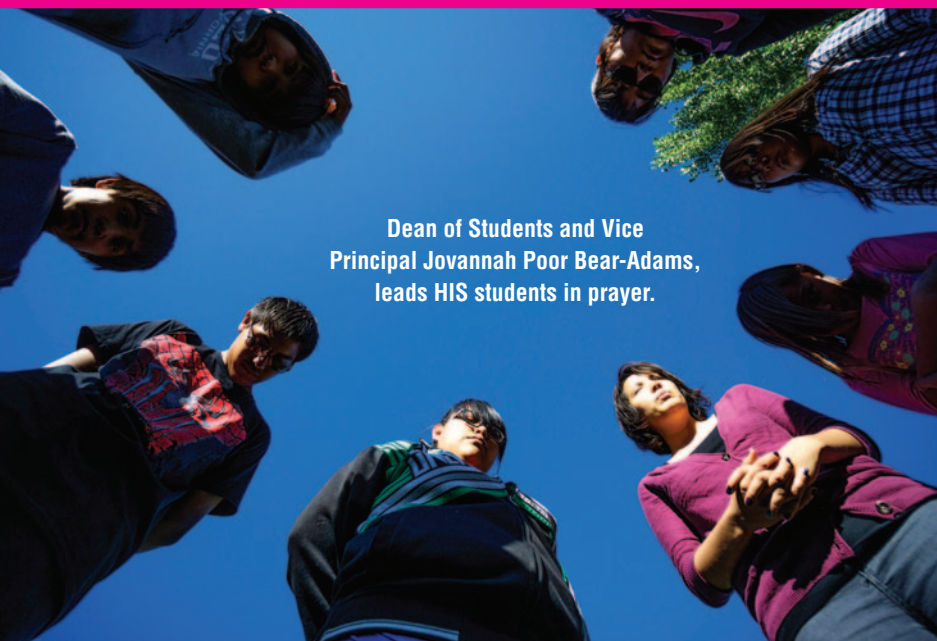
The root causes of the students’

mental-health issues are numerous. A 2011 study done on the Navajo Nation by Northern Arizona University (NAU)<sup>9</sup> showed that in almost 30 percent of households with children under 18 years of age, the father was absent, and in another 10 percent of households, the children were being raised by a grandparent. According to the same study, almost half (44 percent) of all children under 18 years of age in the Navajo Nation lived in poverty.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control regularly evaluate the leading causes of death within American In-



HIS student Terrel in woodworking class.



Dean of Students and Vice Principal Jovannah Poor Bear-Adams, leads HIS students in prayer.



HIS student Dineh learns to play the ukulele.

dian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. Cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and cirrhosis are included, as are disproportionate rates of “unintentional injury” (accidents), as well as suicide and homicide.<sup>10</sup> And according to Espey et al. in the *American Journal of Public Health*,<sup>11</sup> overall death rates for AI/AN were nearly 50 percent higher than that of non-Hispanic whites in the U.S. from 1999-2009.

The Navajo Nation reported 42 murders in 2013.<sup>12</sup> This rate exceeded the national average, with more murders per capita taking place in the Navajo Nation than in major cities with three times the population, such

as Boston and Seattle. The report pointed out that “jobs are scarce, alcoholism is among the greatest social ills, and cycles of violence and lack of access to basic necessities can stifle people’s spirits.”<sup>13</sup>

The above factors may also contribute to the findings in a report from the CDC that shows AI/AN to consistently report two to three times more “serious psychological distress in the past 30 days” than the national average.<sup>14</sup>

At the beginning of each school year, the counseling department at HIS uses screening tools to identify

those students who would benefit from their services. Requests by students and referrals by staff and administration can also be made throughout the year. The clinical counselor met individually with 54 of the 96 students enrolled at HIS during the 2015-2016 school year. The case manager met with approximately 66 students throughout the same school year. The department also engaged the students in many psycho-educational opportunities, including classes, small groups, and presentations on topics such as coping skills, grief, trauma, suicide, and substance abuse.

A student receiving counseling services at HIS does not always achieve a higher GPA (although some do improve their grades); success is measured by a decrease in frequency of negative symptoms and an increase in stabilized mood, use of coping skills, positive social interaction, and improved family relations. Spiritual enhancement is also witnessed. These improvements not only benefit the individual student, but also positively affect his or her peers.

One student, who was having angry outbursts, nightmares, volatile family relations, and depressive symptoms, did not trust any of the staff, and had been reacting to the issues by self-injury/cutting, punching walls, and giving in to severe mood swings. Over the course of the school year, staff at the counseling department established a trust relationship with the student, who then became more willing to address the above issues. The counselor and case manager used a combination of therapies and coping-skills development to assist the student. With the student’s permission, they also incorporated prayer as part of the sessions. During the last two months of the school year, the student’s mood began to stabilize, enabling him to move into a leadership role where he helped and encouraged other students who were experiencing difficulties. Despite the student’s ongoing family dysfunction,

which did not improve during this time, he began to make good choices about his life.

### Academic Pillar

The incorporation of academics as the third pillar acknowledges that without addressing the mental and spiritual concerns of a student, very little HIS does will have a lasting impact. In a study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, Clancy Blair of New York University, New York City, and his colleagues studied the cortisol levels in students from impoverished backgrounds. “High levels of stress hormones influence the developing circuitry of children’s brains, inhibiting such higher cognitive functions such as planning, impulse and emotional control, and attention. Known collectively as executive functions, these mental abilities are important for academic success.”<sup>15</sup>

Due to the circumstances that thwart HIS students’ learning capacity, the average new student at the school reads three to nine grade levels below other students in the same age group nationwide. In other words, HIS high school students have barely mastered the basics of reading and thus fail classes, which in turn causes increased stress and leads to feelings of inferiority that can cause them to act out or drop out. In order to decrease classroom stress, teachers at HIS incorporate an individualized approach to instruction in the areas of math and reading, while at the same time identifying textbooks for core classes that take into account students’ low reading levels.

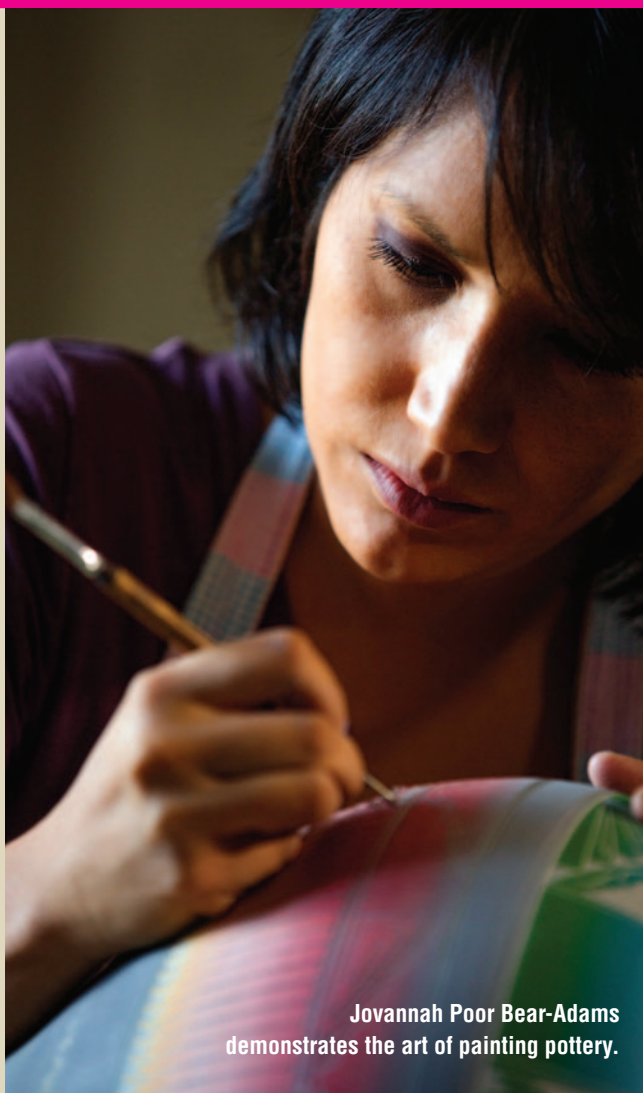
HIS has adopted the STAR software published by Renaissance Learning to quickly identify the strengths and deficiencies of each incoming student using computerized tests that take 10 to 15 minutes to administer, and which provide instant results. The test results then help to guide instruction.

In math classes, the students work

at their own pace to master objectives. The teacher acts as a facilitator, helping them understand new concepts; and a prescriber, identifying when students have mastered a skill and demonstrate readiness to move on to the next. The system alleviates classroom stress because each student receives individualized assignments that help him or her achieve the goal of math literacy. Success breeds success, and students often experience more than a year’s worth of growth during one school year.

High school students at HIS have participated in the Renaissance Place program (formerly known as Accelerated Reader)<sup>16</sup> for the past six years,

with the elementary and middle-school students joining during the 2015-2016 school year. The program works on the philosophy that improving one’s reading requires practice. Renaissance Place uses the gamification model to encourage students to read and to continue choosing more difficult text. *Gamification* means incorporating a game element into the learning in order to provide an immediate extrinsic reward for small successes. As students progress through the program, they need fewer and fewer rewards because reading successfully becomes its own



Jovannah Poor Bear-Adams demonstrates the art of painting pottery.



**Terry Benedict, founder of the Shae Foundation—an educational and humanitarian organization dedicated to inspiring creativity and mentoring young artists—instructs HIS student Tosh on how to use a camera.**

reward. Each student takes the STAR test (a standardized, computerized reading examination) and based on the instant results, sets a reading goal with the help of the teacher. Students learn their ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) and then self-select books from the library that fall in that zone—thus ensuring both interest and success.

The library plays an integral part in the reading program. The HIS librarian has scoured thrift stores, garage sales, and book resellers to purchase an additional 6,000 books (for about \$6,000 over six years) for the library—including an extensive collection of picture books (90 per-

cent of new HIS students grades 1 to 12 self-select picture books for the first three to four months of school—the majority of new students have never successfully completed a chapter book on their own). The librarian labels the books with the Accelerated Reader test number, reading level, and the point value of the book (as determined by Renaissance Place). In addition, each book has a colored dot on the spine, allowing the librarian to arrange the volumes by reading level and THEN author. This makes it easy for students to shop for books in their ZPD. During the 2014-2015 school year, students read and passed tests

on 3,133 books; and during the 2017-2018 year, on more than 7,000 books.

In addition to the individualized math and reading programs, teachers researched and began the adoption process for textbooks that fall within the majority of students' ZPDs (for example, textbooks written specifically for second-language learners that incorporate scaffolding and inquiry methods). As their reading levels increase, students discover that comprehension increases in other core classes as well.

For students reading below the 4th-grade level (regardless of actual grade level), teachers also assign learning objectives in the learning apps Skoolbo and Reading Kingdom.

#### **Health Pillar**

Native American organizations across the country tout the importance of gardening as a part of a well-rounded community, for reversing trends in chronic disease among AI/AN, as well as for reconnecting to their culture.<sup>17</sup> The Garden to Plate Program at HIS comprises an important innovation in the physical pillar of the NEW You Health Initiative. The students participate in all aspects of cultivation, tending, harvesting, packaging, and ultimately eating the fruits and vegetables they helped to produce in the garden at HIS.

Valerie Segrest, of the Muckleshoot tribe in western Washington, describes the importance of a Native American's connection to the land: "The land is our identity and holds for us all the answers we need to be a healthy, vibrant, and thriving community. In our oral traditions, our creation story, we are taught that the land that provides the foods and medicines we need, are a part of who we are."<sup>18</sup>

A movement spreading through North America among Native American communities calls for a return to the physical health they enjoyed during the pre-colonization period. This movement embraces both physical and dietary health. According to Allan Richter of *EnergyTimes*, "Native

Americans are among the original practitioners of holistic health.”<sup>19</sup> Native communities seek to promote an active lifestyle by returning to traditional expectations of physical fitness.

Many Native Americans, both on and off the reservations, have a mostly sedentary lifestyle, which contributes to the diabetes and heart issues prevalent amongst this ethnic group. Tribal leaders encourage members to adopt a more active lifestyle through organized events and education. The Navajo Nation hosts a summer series of non-competitive runs and walks called *Just Move It*, and through community awareness and advertising, participation has risen from 482 participants in 1993 to more than 40,000 in 2015.<sup>20</sup>

Pre-colonization families had to farm, herd, hunt, fish, and gather food in order to survive. The community outreach described above can be as simple as a call to get outdoors while others encourage their youth to greet the sunrise by running to the east each morning—or simply by running or walking each day.

Holbrook Indian School innovates these values through its NEW You programming and physical education (PE) curriculum. HIS requires a minimum of three years of PE credits for graduation, while many public schools only require one or two years. Many of the school’s seniors who have spent four years at the school finish with four or five years’ worth of PE classes. PE students at HIS also have opportunities to learn Native American hand games from different tribal traditions.

### Conclusion

In order to effectively work with Native Americans to attain the mutual goal of a beneficial education that will allow students to succeed in life and break the cycle of poverty in which many find themselves, schools and institutions must seek ways to collaborate and honor the culture



HIS students work on the school farm during gardening class.



HIS student Tessa during horsemanship training.

from which the students come. No one method works for every student, but the guiding principles remain—to work holistically to address the spiritual, mental, academic, and physical needs of the students and to honor their families of origin. ✍

*This article has been peer reviewed.*



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# Shielding Students From Stereotype Threat:

## Instructional and Developmental Implications



Lizzy performs poorly in math. John does not do well on the SAT exam. Jennifer consistently achieves below-average scores on subject-area tests.<sup>1</sup> The performance of these students may be influenced by their own perceptions and awareness of stereotypes about what is expected of them. For example, they may have been told, “Girls are not as good as boys in mathematics,” or “African-American students do not do well on standardized tests.” In reality, these students are likely affected by a phenomenon known as “stereotype threat.”

Stereotype threat is driven by the conviction that academic performance may be judged or evaluated on the basis of culturally driven false beliefs or preconceived notions about the academic abilities of the ethnic, racial, gender, or socioeconomic group to which one belongs. These perceptions are not thoughts developed due to being overly sensitive; instead, they are established stereotypes that are often systemic and built into the fabric of a society, the perpetuation of which can limit access for certain segments of the population. Once internalized, stereotype threat may trigger anxiety or fear that one will live up to this negative stereotype, which may severely limit a student’s ability to recall important ideas, formulas, principles, or concepts within

specific content areas. Stereotype threat is experienced by students in public, private, and denominational schools (including universities/colleges) that are ethnically, racially, multiculturally, and gender diverse.

This type of threat may also lead to a diminished or weakened performance on a task that the individual believes that he or she is less able to carry out simply because of a social group to which he or she belongs.<sup>2</sup> When individuals find themselves in situations where a stereotype applies, they bear an extra cognitive and emotional burden—the possibility of confirming the stereotype, either in the eyes of others or in their own eyes.<sup>3</sup> These experiences can lead to anxiety, which has been investigated as a possible link between stereotype threat and lower math performance by women and African Americans.<sup>4</sup>

Latino students are not immune from this type of threat. One of the few studies to investigate Latino elementary school-age children revealed that they performed worse on working memory tasks under conditions of stereotype threat if they were aware of the broadly held negative stereotypes about their group.<sup>5</sup>

When these student groups face high-stakes tests, they tend to adopt performance-avoidance goals that help them re-

BY MICHAEL MILMINE and ELVIN GABRIEL

duce the possibility of failure and do not make them appear less capable than other students. For example, students attempt to reduce their chances of failure by avoiding novel and challenging tasks or by cheating.<sup>6</sup> If students continue to adopt performance-avoiding goals and develop self-defeating strategies to avoid looking less intelligent, this can eventually cause them to withdraw, not care about school, exert little effort to succeed academically, or even drop out of school.<sup>7</sup>

Even though many education systems are becoming more diverse, students from groups that continually face negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination still face barriers to their educational success. These barriers “may be the result of both actual differences in the treatment of students in the classroom, and the ability of educators to understand students and be sensitive to and inclusive in teaching styles and content.”<sup>8</sup> The following examples illustrate how stereotype threat may impact students’ beliefs about their abilities.

### **Adverse Effects of Stereotype Threat**

#### ***Cognitive Learning Factors***

When stereotype threat exists in the learning environment, students’ working memory capacities may be negatively impacted. Working memory is where the mind operates on information, organizes it for storage or disposal, and through rehearsal, connects it to other stored information.<sup>9</sup> Studies have confirmed that stereotype threat can reduce working memory resources, undermining the student’s ability to perform the information-processing requirements of complex intellectual tasks.<sup>10</sup> This type of threat appears to negatively impact the speech and language components of the working memory system involved in inner speech and thinking.<sup>11</sup>

Stereotype threat also has the potential to harm students’ ability to assimilate and apply academic information. One study found that when learning abstract mathematics principles, young women under stereotype threat were not able to absorb these principles as easily as others who were not under stereotype threat, and were less able to apply their learning to solving math problems.<sup>12</sup> Another study revealed that students under stereotype threat had less factual knowledge, and the knowledge they did have was poorly organized, making it more difficult to access. These students also spent less time thinking about and studying class material than students who had not experienced stereotype threat.<sup>13</sup>

#### ***‘Cued’ Stereotype Threat Factors***

“Cued” stereotype threats can adversely affect individual performance on academic tests or tasks. Some cues are subtle and may only be recognized unconsciously, which means that the stereotype is not conveyed, but the task experience is manipulated by the teachers/supervisors who are administering or supervising the test or task (for example, a teacher referring to how various groups perform on tests). Cues may be recognized consciously, when differences between groups are communicated to individuals using directions and/or

context without indicating which group(s) tend to perform better than others. Blatant cues are those communicated to individuals directly through statements about alleged group inferiorities in performance and ability.<sup>14</sup>

An example of a recently cued stereotype threat is a student recognizing that for the first time in her academic experience, she is the only female in her advanced math class. This type of experience may reduce the affected individual’s self-control and impulse control, leading to changes in attention control, judgment, decision making, aggression, hostility, and even food consumption.<sup>15</sup>

#### ***Spillover Factors***

When negative stereotype threat expands to affect individuals in other areas of their lives—i.e., outside the academic environment—this phenomenon is referred to as “spillover.” When spillover occurs, it negatively affects the individual’s performance on unrelated tasks because the memory resources necessary to perform those tasks are being used to manage the threat.<sup>16</sup> Spillover occurs because the experience in the threat environment (whether school-related or work-related) was emotionally and cognitively overwhelming for the individual.<sup>17</sup> Such threatening environments can leave students feeling depleted and less able or willing to engage in a variety of tasks requiring significant self-control.<sup>18</sup>

### **Creating a Christ-centered Climate for Reducing Stereotype Threat**

Despite the paucity of research on the prevalence of stereotype threat in Christian schools, educational administrators, teachers, and stakeholders must continue to work collaboratively to establish instructional and social climates that will help students achieve positive learning outcomes. Espousing a philosophy that first establishes God as the “Source of all true knowledge, and the Holy Scriptures as the perfect standard of truth,”<sup>19</sup> is foundational to the creation of a Christ-centered learning environment. A Christocentric educational philosophy emphasizes not only academic knowledge, but also the balanced development of the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social powers of each student.<sup>20</sup>

An important facet of this philosophy is the relational dimension, which focuses on developing and sustaining genuine social interactions among students, school personnel, and parents, as well as church and community leaders. Such interactions help create caring learning communities that are vital to the energy and life of educational institutions.<sup>21</sup>

Stereotype threat cannot be sustained in learning environments in which everyone, “including teachers, students, and parents feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to each other. It is when everyone is treated with kindness, respect and helpfulness. It is when everyone has a mutual sense of responsibility.”<sup>22</sup> In such environments, unconditional love permeates the fabric of relationships, diversity is

celebrated, the needs of learners are fulfilled, and quality instruction is provided for every student who experiences difficulty in achieving his or her learning goals.<sup>23</sup>

The relational dimension of education is well illustrated by the way that Christ was able to connect at the deepest level with humankind: Ellen White wrote that “in every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace. Looking upon them with hope, He inspired hope. Meeting them with confidence, He inspired trust.”<sup>24</sup>

Christ’s method of dealing with people from stigmatized groups reflected His concern, sympathy, and love for those who were ostracized and marginalized by society. For example, Zacchaeus, a Jew and tax collector, was detested by his countrymen because his rank and wealth came as the reward of a vocation they detested, and because of its association with injustice, bribery, and extortion. However, beneath Zacchaeus’s worldly exterior beat a heart that yearned for a closer relationship with God.<sup>25</sup> Even before Zacchaeus looked upon the face of Christ, he had begun the work that made him a true penitent. Before being accused by his countrymen, he had confessed his sins.<sup>26</sup> Christ demonstrated His unconditional love for Zacchaeus by going to his home to “give him lessons of truth, and to instruct his household in the things of the kingdom.”<sup>27</sup>

The biblical narrative and commentary on the woman who washed Jesus’ feet reinforces the deep love that Jesus demonstrated toward those who struggled to find acceptance from their fellowmen. Luke tells her story as follows: “When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, ‘If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.’”<sup>28</sup> Christ saw in this woman great capabilities for good. He saw the better traits of her character. The plan of redemption had invested humanity with great possibilities, and in her, these possibilities were to be realized. “Through His grace she would become a partaker of the divine nature.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Instructional Strategies for Reducing Stereotype Threat**

Following Jesus’ example of offering unconditional love, hope, and affirmation, teachers and administrators can help students in Adventist schools recognize stereotypes and learn how to counter their power in the classroom by (1) creating a safe climate for learning; (2) using research-proven techniques when testing and assessing students; (3) engaging students in self-affirming activities; (4) promoting gender equality; and (5) encouraging students’ growth and self-confidence through role modeling and mentoring programs.

### **Creating a Safe Classroom Environment**

Teachers and educational administrators have important roles to play in creating safe classroom environments where all students feel competent and cared for.<sup>30</sup> Celebrating diversity, affirming belongingness, and fostering positive and supportive relationships with and among students will help to create a classroom climate that ensures the success of all student groups.<sup>31</sup> Focusing on the positives, such as noting each student’s improvement instead of the areas where he or she has performed poorly, is another way to support students suffering from stereotype threat.<sup>32</sup> And, while support is vital, teachers can also help students overcome the harmful effects of stereotype threat by having high expectations of all students, challenging them to continuously improve, and showing belief in each one’s ability to succeed.<sup>33</sup>

Teachers should share stories about people similar to their students who overcame adversity to achieve success.<sup>34</sup> Having students record stories from their own past, telling how they persevered in difficult circumstances, may make them more optimistic about their own ability to succeed.<sup>35</sup> Finally, teachers can provide detailed feedback on assignments by including positive observations indicating where the student has met expectations, as well as areas where he or she could improve.<sup>36</sup>

Schools can also establish safe spaces (psychological and physical within the classroom or school) that are free from stereotype threats, and that provide students with a place to develop and share coping strategies.<sup>37</sup>

### **Using Best-practices Techniques in Administering Assessment Instruments**

When administering assessments, the following techniques can be used to reduce the likelihood that students will internalize stereotype threats:

1. Avoid discussing group membership (ethnicity, race, gender, etc.) or having students reveal their group membership before an assessment, as this may cue negative stereotypes<sup>38</sup>;
2. Because referring to an assessment as a test of ability may trigger negative stereotypes, describe it as a measure of student learning, or as a measure of students’ problem-solving skills<sup>39</sup>;
3. Be aware of the order in which the subject areas are presented, especially when students are required to complete more than one test. Research has found that girls perform worse in math if they are tested in math first. If the math test follows another test area that does not trigger a stereotype threat for them, girls perform equally to boys in both cases and better than girls who took the mathematics test first. Therefore, plan to begin testing with a subject area that will not trigger stereotype threats, then move on to those that may cue these threats. Randomized order actually appears to put girls at a disadvantage in math and math-related courses.<sup>40</sup>

- **A teacher using different amounts of praise for the same work, depending on group membership.**

\*Chris, who is of Asian descent, receives almost no praise for his excellent arithmetic test score. Tina, who is of African-American descent, receives a lot of praise for her excellent arithmetic test score.

- **Having different standards or expectations depending on group membership.**

\*Meghan's homeroom table, at which she sits with some other girls in her class, gets extra computer time if they score an average of 85 percent on their next math test. Meghan finds out that the next table over, at which a small group of boys sit, must get 90 percent on the same test to get additional computer time.

- **Attributing a student's difficulty with a subject to his or her background.**

\*Alex is struggling in history. His teacher suggests that he may have more difficulty than other students because his family members are immigrants.

- **Overtly or covertly referencing background or group membership when it is irrelevant to the situation. This can unconsciously trigger related stereotypes.**

\*Lisa is required to provide some demographic information (including her gender and racial background) before taking a competency exam. Her friend Shelby also takes the exam, but the proctor forgets to ask her to provide demographic information. Despite having a better understanding of the material than her friend Shelby, Lisa does not pass the exam, while Shelby does.

\*Sam, whose parents are from India, is sitting in his first business course when the professor makes a comment about how successful Indians are in business. Sam suddenly feels extra pressure to succeed in the course.

\*Names are used for illustrative purposes only.

Teachers need to avoid using situations/texts/visuals that reinforce stereotyped roles. For example: (1) the father (working outside the home); (2) the mother (homemaker); (3) the doctor (male); (4) the nurse (female); (5) boys (proficient in science, math, and technology); and (6) girls (proficient in languages, secretarial sciences, and consumer sciences).

The curriculum should reflect the pluralistic character of society by increasing the number of female achievers depicted in the curriculum as well as in the examples cited in class. All instructional materials, whether textbooks, handouts, or workbooks, need to be evaluated to determine if they are gender biased, gender neutral, or gender-sensitive/-responsive.<sup>46</sup>

### ***Providing Role Models for Students***

An effective strategy is to discuss women and minorities who have made significant achievements in areas where minority groups are usually negatively stereotyped or excluded.

For example, highlighting and emphasizing the contributions of women and minorities in the domains of math, science, technology, religion, philosophy, business, and the social sciences. Teachers can also use media to highlight individuals who have not succumbed to stereotypes.<sup>47</sup> Teachers and administrators who belong to underrepresented groups can also be effective role models in combating stereotype stress.<sup>48</sup> They can convey to students, through their instructional and interpersonal approaches, that they possess the potential and the capacity to accomplish their academic, social, and career goals. Church and community members and leaders from various minority groups and women in non-traditional careers can be invited as guest speakers to describe their achievements and success in combatting stereotypes.

### ***Providing Mentors***

Providing students with mentors is another evidence-based method of countering stereotype threats. This type of intervention can be particularly helpful for students who suffer from group-targeted stereotype threats; that is, is the fear that if their performance matches stereotypical expectations, they will have further confirmed biased perceptions relating to the entire group.<sup>49</sup> Mentors help reduce stereotype threat because they have succeeded in fields where such prejudices exist. Teachers can also identify older students who are achieving well academically and who would be willing to mentor their students. They can then match these more mature students

### ***Engaging Students in Self-affirming Activities***

Engaging students in self-affirmation activities can help to shield them from the effects of harmful stereotype threats. The protective nature of self-affirmation is especially important for "self-targeted" stereotypes,<sup>41</sup> which involve the perception that if one's performance fits a group stereotype, the performance will also reflect poorly on the individual.<sup>42</sup> One strategy that has been shown to improve student performance on stressful academic events is to schedule a brief (15-minute) writing task just before the event, during which the students tell why a positive skill, talent, value, or belief that they possess is important to them.<sup>43</sup>


Students have achieved both short-term and long-term performance improvements after completing this activity. Teachers can further enhance student performance by reading these essays and affirming individual students on their strengths.<sup>44</sup>

### ***Applying Gender Neutral Teaching Skills in Classrooms***

Teachers, as leaders in the classroom, should apply instructional skills that reflect gender awareness and gender equality. Within this framework, all students need to gain experience in a variety of task roles. This may be achieved by (1) rotating tasks in each group; (2) frequently changing the group membership; and (3) developing other methods that can shatter or dismantle social structures or expectations designed to exclude certain groups.<sup>45</sup>

with younger ones from the same cultural group or gender.<sup>50</sup>

### Conclusion

Every teacher and educational administrator should acquire an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the debilitating effects of stereotype threat on the academic, social, psychological, and spiritual development of children, particular those who are from underrepresented and stigmatized groups. These professionals must be willing to advocate for children and youth, many of whom do not fully understand how to deal with the far-reaching effects of broadly held negative stereotypes about their group. Schools that serve these marginalized groups of children must focus on accelerating their achievement by using effective instructional methods, and by committing themselves to ensuring the success of every child.<sup>51</sup> 

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Dale B. Linton



## Celebrating the World in Your

# Classroom

The typical classroom in many parts of the world looks physically similar to classrooms of decades past. Yes, there is more modern technology, but the desks and tables are often organized as they always have been. Even the school calendar looks similar to ones in the past, many of which were based on the cycle of sowing and harvesting crops.

Something else in today's classroom also looks very similar to schools in the past: the teacher. Today's classroom teacher in the U.S. looks very much like teachers of the 1950s and 1960s: primarily Caucasian, female, and middle class.<sup>1</sup>

What is markedly different from the past, and will continue to change in the foreseeable future, is that the racial, ethnic, and cultural demographics of classrooms nationwide will continue to look different from the majority of those who make up the teaching profession.<sup>2</sup> Whenever multiple cultures come together, difficulties can arise—and many teachers may not recognize that there are cultural disconnects between them and their culturally diverse students.<sup>3</sup>

In his book, *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer stated, "We teach who we are."<sup>4</sup> Imbedded within Palmer's statement is an understanding that every teacher acts in a manner that reveals what I call his or her "inner teacher"—based on a vast array of

guiding personal and professional beliefs, acquired knowledge, personal epiphanies, and practical experiences, which are nested within a specific cultural frame of reference. It is within this cultural frame of reference that sometimes (often without the teacher's awareness), a cultural disconnect arises between him or her and culturally diverse students. I didn't fully understand this until I began teaching within an international school structure, and also began collaborating with a multinational group of teachers focused on teaching children of 30 nationalities. Over time, both my cultural frame of reference



and my “inner teacher” changed. This teaching experience altered who I was and how I taught students who were culturally different from me.

Fortunately, my circumstances allowed me the opportunity to learn how to see life from diverse perspectives. Some researchers criticize teacher-preparation programs for failing to adequately train novice teachers to “meet the challenges of teaching in culturally diverse classrooms.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, many practicing teachers don’t fare much better, as they typically have had limited experience “traveling or working with intercultural groups of people,” which could assist them in bridging classroom cultural divides.<sup>6</sup> For more than 20 years, educational experts have been warning that American teachers are not “prepared to work in multicultural settings.”<sup>7</sup>

For some, the concept of bridging a cultural divide may be exciting. For others, it may be overwhelming or even threatening. The apostle John, writing in Revelation 7:9, describes a heavenly celebration that includes a group of people too large to be numbered, comprising every cultural group imaginable. For Christian teachers, a diverse student body offers an opportunity to celebrate a bit of heaven now in our own classrooms.

### **Where to Begin? It Starts With You!**

The apostle Paul provides insight into how he maximized his efforts to interact and communicate with people whose backgrounds were different from his. In 1 Corinthians 9:22, Paul wrote: “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.”<sup>8</sup> Paul was keenly aware becoming “all things to all people” meant that he had to be willing to listen to those to whom he wanted to speak. In essence, Paul knew that his message needed to be contextualized, or referenced, within the culture and worldview of the people he wanted to reach. Evangelists and missionaries have long used contextualization as the primary starting place when attempting to reach out and explain bib-

lical truths to people of other cultures.<sup>9</sup>

Today’s teachers would be wise to adopt a similar contextualization approach, even if currently teaching in classrooms that are monocultural. To accomplish this, they must first become aware of the cultures present in their classroom while recognizing that their own cultural beliefs may hinder them from being fully successful in instructing culturally diverse groups.<sup>10</sup> According to Spradlin and Parsons, “To be effective in multicultural classrooms, teachers must be committed to becoming more aware of who they are as a people and what they believe, including being willing to identify and question their cultural assumptions.”<sup>11</sup> It is critical then to understand that, perhaps unintentionally, a teacher’s own cultural upbringing and operational understandings may have prejudiced his or her thinking and thus negated efforts to effectively engage with students who are culturally different from the teacher. Duane Elmer points out that an individual typically communicates from his or her own “frame of reference.”<sup>12</sup> Despite this limitation, he suggests that several principles can be applied to encourage positive interaction with other cultures:

Recognize that “cultural heritage” plays a foundational role in how interactions with and responses to others take place. According to Elmer, “everything we say and do” is a reflection of our cultural heritage.<sup>13</sup> This becomes problematic when we fail to realize how much we impose our cultural values and understandings on the way others think or do things. This quickly leads to the slippery slope of judging others. It is human nature to believe that one’s own way of doing things is “better than other approaches.” However, there are many different ways to get something done; some are more efficient than others, but each way tends to achieve the desired outcome.

### **Acknowledge the Role of Culture**

The first step, then, in celebrating the variety of cultures in the classroom is for teachers to become aware that their cultural upbringing has shaped who they are and how they act. Similarly, the cultural upbringing of their students has also shaped who they are and how they act. As teachers find ways to bridge cultural divides in their classrooms, they begin to recognize that perhaps a portion of the contributing factors of any such divide may lie within their own cultural understandings and preferred operational norms.

### **Take Time to Celebrate Your Students’ Uniqueness**

The second step in celebrating the world in the classroom is somewhat of a reciprocal exchange, which takes place as the teacher becomes more aware of his or her students individually and learns to celebrate their uniqueness. According to Elmer, taking time to learn about the cultural heritage of others, including “their perspective(s) and intentions,” provides a better understanding of them. This in turn allows teachers to “withhold judgment” and opens the door to continued dialogue, which can build understanding and acceptance.<sup>14</sup>

Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, and Terrell tell a story about a person who viewed icebergs through a special type of glasses that allowed him to see the entire structure of each iceberg above and below the water line. An examination of multiple icebergs revealed that each was unique; no two were the same. Using this illustration, the researchers concluded that as teachers become better adept at employing the skills of cultural proficiency, they will learn more about their students, viewing each student from a special set of lenses that helps them recognize and appreciate him or her as a unique individual.<sup>15</sup> This supports Wardle and Cruz-Janzen’s belief that “teachers must be prepared to work in affirming ways with all students”<sup>16</sup> and Brown et al., who state

that “good teaching implies solid learning by all students, and such learning does not happen when the heritages, experiences, interests, and needs of the individual student are not taken into account.”<sup>17</sup>

### Step Out and Try Something New

The third step in celebrating the world in the classroom involves trying something new and incorporating different practices and understandings. Below are some practical and effective ways to embrace students and their culturally different backgrounds.

#### *What’s in a Name?*

Everything! One of the most important things every child possesses is his or her name. It is a person’s primary identifying marker. Many traditional Anglo names can be traced back to historical roots and meanings; but in my experience, people with such names don’t generally attach too much context or value to them. On the other hand, for many students from other cultures, their name carries with it significant meaning. It may denote a long lineage of family identity and provide insight into the cultural beliefs of their heritage. It may geographically represent the area where their family originated. In some cultures, children are not named until they are several years old. The name they are given may denote something special that others observed about them. It is vitally important for teachers to learn each student’s name, pronounce it properly, and validate students by helping all of them pronounce one another’s names correctly.<sup>18</sup>

It takes practice to listen intently and replicate small inflections or to learn how to manipulate your tongue when pronouncing a name that uses an alveolar trill or rolling “r” (Miriam or Ricardo). In some languages, clicks, gutturals, and explosive sounds such as “t” and “s” are present in names. While getting the pronunciation right is not an easy

process and may require a lot of practice to replicate different sounds correctly, it is worth the effort. As one teacher wrote, “I want my students to know that I respect them for the whole person they are, including their beautiful names that are sometimes difficult to pronounce.”<sup>19</sup>

#### *Readjusting Your Eyesight to See What “Others” See*

Perhaps you have stepped into another teacher’s classroom, looked around, and noticed that something looked out of place, or appeared to be missing. Maybe you did a double-take because you would never arrange or decorate your classroom in this way. If you have ever done any of those things, then you were interpreting what you saw through your own beliefs and preferences. It is fine for each teacher to arrange and decorate his or her room differently because the decor of a classroom should reflect the “inner teacher,” and no two “inner teachers” are exactly the same.

Using this same philosophy, teachers of students from other cultures can critically examine their classroom through the eyes of their students. For example, consider what the students see when they enter your classroom.<sup>20</sup> Do they see anything that speaks to their cultural heritage? Do the pictures or images posted in the classroom vary in their geographic representation or cultural, ethnic, gender, and/or racial depictions?

Think about the English-language learners in your classroom. Do they see any words on the walls written in their primary language? Is information presented visually in a manner that is authentic and non-linguistic?<sup>21</sup> Craig Roland suggests that using pictures to represent various aspects of a given culture are a powerful means of reflecting the diversity present in classrooms. In his classrooms, he incorporates numerous images and based on his experiences, has created a list of culturally referenced Websites teachers may use.<sup>22</sup>

#### *Seek First to Understand, and Then Begin Teaching!*

It is important for teachers of culturally diverse students to recognize that the typical operational norms and expectations of their classroom may not be the cultural norms practiced by their students. I have become convinced in almost 40 years as an educator that students really do want to do the right thing, and they want to please their teacher. Sometimes, they just need to be guided in how to do that. Teaching students the classroom operational norms and expectations takes patience and guidance. It is a repetitive process, not a “one and done” type of activity. However, teachers need to be aware that sometimes their cultural norms and expectations can conflict with the cultural upbringing of some students. When such encounters occur, it provides an opportunity to inform, demonstrate, and practice desired behaviors.<sup>23</sup>

The teachers of the international schools with whom I work are typically from Western cultures. Likewise, the schools where they teach are organized around educational principles and curriculum associated with Western culture. However, a number of the students come from other cultures—and the same can be said of students in many American classrooms today. Teachers need to be mindful that while Western culture encourages traits like individualism, competition, and setting oneself apart, other cultures value the opposite: collaboration, community, and uniformity. Western culture values eye-to-eye contact when people are communicating. But this is not so in other parts of the world. For someone in the position of authority (the teacher) to demand eye-to-eye contact with students who are culturally different from him or her may cause cultural confusion because the students have been taught to demonstrate respect to those in authority by casting their eyes downward. Likewise, male teachers need to practice great sensi-

Requiring students to participate by answering a question or speaking up in a class discussion seems harmless enough—that is, until you call on a student from a different cultural heritage who does not reply, not because of disrespect, but out of deference to you as his or her teacher. In many cultures, students listen; they aren't expected to respond.

tivity in how they make eye contact with females, both students and adults, from other cultures.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, some of the most common Western classroom practices such as using proximity, touching, or using certain gestures can be offensive or construed as inappropriate within some cultures.<sup>25</sup> Even certain instructional practices may create culturally embarrassing situations. Requiring students to participate by answering a question or speaking up in a class discussion seems harmless enough—that is, until you call on a student from a different cultural heritage who does not reply, not because of disrespect, but out of deference to you as his or her teacher. In many cultures, students listen; they aren't expected to respond.

Likewise, requiring students to “problem solve” independently when they have not acquired the innovative thinking and advanced processing skills for this task leads only to discouragement and sets up barriers to their learning. For these, and many other good reasons, a number of educational experts<sup>26</sup> promote the use of small groups and collaboration or cooperative learning so that students can work and learn together. In most cases, students are able to successfully attain the desired learning they would have achieved through the use of

independent-learning activities. In addition, cooperative learning helps students practice a variety of cross-cultural skills such as listening, hearing others' perspectives, and achieving consensus in a respectful manner. These are also important 21st-century employment skills that will be required of our students.<sup>27</sup>

Teachers of Asian students will benefit from acquainting themselves with the cultural differences between Eastern-based and Western-based cultures. Chang, Mak, Wu, Chen, and Lu<sup>28</sup> provide an intriguing discourse regarding the evolution of Eastern cultural beliefs and practices and the differences that exist within learning and teaching styles. Jonathan Borden's 2008 book *Confucius Meets Piaget* offers useful insights about the cultural and educational differences between the West and East, primarily within the Korean culture.

#### *Make Cultural Adjustments to the Curriculum*

Imagine my surprise when I walked into a primary-grade classroom thousands of miles from the United States to find the students busy counting money using plastic American coins and filling out a corresponding U.S.-

based worksheet. What was wrong with this picture? To begin with, there were only a couple of American students in the class, and they were so young that I wasn't sure they had ever lived in the U.S.A. or recognized the numerical value of the coins they were using. Furthermore, the rest of the class was made up of nationalities from different parts of the world. When I asked the teacher, an American, why she was using this method to teach the concept of money and counting instead of using the local currency, she shrugged her shoulders and replied, “It's in the curriculum.”

Actually, it wasn't in the official curriculum. It was, however, in the American textbook being used. The curriculum stated that students should practice counting by ones, fives, tens, and hundreds using money (coins). This incident served as a great illustration that many times, teachers become enamored with “following the textbook/curriculum” without considering whether it makes sense or leads to meaningful learning for all the students. That particular classroom enrolled eight to ten different nationalities. Imagine the potential global learning opportunities that classroom could have provided if the students had been encouraged to bring in coins from their home country, and along with coins used in the local economy, and then conversed with their fellow students while teaching one another to count and make change. Similar adjustments can be made in classrooms around the world if teachers view their curriculum as something to be modified to enhance and personalize meaning for students from other cultures—indeed, for every student—in their classrooms. Matthew Lynch stated that the “culturally responsive curriculum helps students from a minority ethnic/racial background develop a sense of identity as individuals, as well as proudly identify with their particular culture group.”<sup>29</sup>

For years, I have advocated for teachers to modify their curricula—

and it isn't that hard to do.<sup>30</sup> For instance, within a science lesson on mammals, the teacher can allow students to gather information about different types of creatures indigenous to their countries of cultural heritage. Language-arts classes can incorporate poetry and writings representing the cultural heritage of the students in the classroom. Sloan suggests that math problems can be developed to "represent diverse names and situations" and that highlighting scientists and scientific discoveries from different countries demonstrate the value of the cultural heritages of the students in the classroom.<sup>31</sup> Authors Tiedt and Tiedt provide numerous ideas for teaching core curriculum areas from a multicultural approach in their book *Multicultural Teaching: A Handbook of Activities, Information, and Resources*.<sup>32</sup>

When teaching students from other cultures, educators need to be considerate in how they present accounts of historical import. For example, the social studies curriculum offers multiple opportunities to explore and modify topics in culturally responsive ways. Historical events can be examined from both American and non-American viewpoints. However, when doing this, one must also examine the disturbing parallels between the past and present, and recognize that there may be students whose lives are still being affected by these events. For instance, when teaching about wars, revolution, civil unrest, and injustice, culturally responsive teachers are mindful that there may be students in their classrooms whose ancestors perished as a result of such events, were enslaved, forced to flee their homes, and perhaps made great sacrifices to come to America, or relocate to new homelands. Some students may even have family members who are presently living with fear and vulnerability due to current political unrest in various countries. Teachers of refugee students thus need to acquire knowledge about the backgrounds and sensitivities of their students, as some may have arrived with

Schools and classrooms reap tremendous benefits when they create a day to celebrate the cultural heritage of a specific group or multiple cultural groups. Dressing up in national dress, singing songs, and reading poetry or other works from their culture provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate pride in their heritage and stimulates curiosity and learning opportunities for others.

the horrors of war and injustice freshly imprinted on their minds. Sadly, these students may have family members still living in these same horrific situations they fled. It is imperative that before they begin teaching certain subjects, teachers carefully review the curriculum to be taught and express sensitivity regarding who their students are, their countries of origin, and the events that may have brought them to their classroom.

#### *Celebrate Your Students' Cultural Heritage*

Schools and classrooms reap tremendous benefits when they create a day to celebrate the cultural heritage of a specific group or multiple cultural groups. Dressing up in national dress, singing songs, and reading poetry or other works from their culture provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate pride in their heritage and stimulates curiosity and learning opportunities for others. Best of all, involving parents in the celebration creates a positive connection between the school and home. According to Matthew Meuleners: "When you celebrate the many differences in those around you, you will be able to utilize, nurture, and empower others to achieve

more than ever before."<sup>33</sup> And it goes without saying that a celebration that includes food from the various cultural heritages in your classroom is a must. As a wise mentor once told me, "Food is culture!"

#### *Respect, Relationships, Caring, and High Expectations = Success*

Certain universal values speak volumes about the teacher's character and help to bridge cultural divides. Exhibiting respect toward others, taking time to build meaningful relationships, and demonstrating genuine care are hallmarks of culturally responsive teachers.<sup>34</sup> According to Irvine and Armento, culturally responsive teachers understand that teaching is a "social interaction that involves the development and maintenance of relationships as well as more widely accepted activities such as planning, delivery, and evaluation of instruction."<sup>35</sup> The culturally relevant teacher is adept at finding ways to learn about his or her students' lives and then creating connections to the curriculum from these relationships.<sup>36</sup>

Numerous studies indicate that students highly desire a teacher who is

respectful, caring, and takes time to build meaningful relationships.<sup>37</sup> In some of the cited studies, the student voices provide a multinational perspective (American, Australian, Canadian, and British) and represent culturally diverse groups including African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Australian Aboriginals. The takeaway from this is that across nationalities, separate countries, and cultural heritages, a respectful, caring teacher who builds meaningful relationships with students is valued and appreciated by her or his students. This supports the belief that students gain many benefits from studying with a genuinely caring teacher who possesses strong cultural competency skills. Parents, administrators, communities, and even students desire to have teachers who know how to teach the content material well, hold high learning expectations, demonstrate flexibility, and practice good classroom management. Together, these practices provide a safe and structured learning environment that is appreciated by students from multiple cultural backgrounds.<sup>38</sup>

The challenges presented by a rapidly changing student population require today's teachers to take stock of their abilities to reduce cultural barriers in their classroom. They can start by examining their own cultural heritage, reading more about the topic and completing self-inventories, participating in professional development training, and recognizing any limitations they may have in understanding students who are culturally different from them. Next, by putting on a new set of "cultural glasses," teachers can train their eyes to view each student as unique. Coupling these two things with a curiosity to investigate and learn more about their students, teachers can position themselves to move forward in engaging in a variety of culturally responsive practices.

Wading into another person's culture can be a bit scary and complex. It may even challenge a few things you believe about your own cultural heritage. But for today's teacher, it is a ne-

cessity to face the challenges and reach each student, regardless of cultural backgrounds, in order to maximize individual learning experiences. ✍

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Betty F. Nugent

# Know and Engage Your

# CONSTITU

**W**inston Churchill guided Great Britain through the devastation of World War II with a firm hand and constant reassurance of what they could accomplish together. When he became prime minister of the island nation and its territories in 1940, victory seemed unrealistic both within and from outside the British Isles. Germany had already invaded Czechoslovakia and Poland. On the day Churchill became prime minister, the Netherlands and Belgium were under attack by the German war machine. It is little wonder that on May 13, 1940, Churchill told his people: “I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.”<sup>1</sup> By the end of May, the people of Great Britain felt isolated and near defeat. The prime minister realized that they needed to be emboldened to fight and sacrifice.

Churchill understood that in order to win the war, he had to garner the citizenry’s total support for the lonely fight against the Axis powers while continuing to bolster their confidence throughout the conflict. During the darkest days of the 1940s, Churchill understood a basic tenet of leadership: A leader must have the support of his or her constituency to achieve





change. As Christian educators in a mortal fight for the minds of our children, we must garner the support and confidence of the constituency with the same passion that Churchill demonstrated.

Paul Delano<sup>2</sup> was a product of Christian education and a successful businessman. As he sat in the rear of the church enjoying the back-to-school concert, he inwardly debated the amount of the gift he should place in the offering plate. He wrote a check for US\$1,000 and relaxed to enjoy the remainder of the program, content that he had done his part. But something happened to Paul as



the student giving the closing prayer thanked God for the generous offerings received. He found himself reflecting on the dreams the students shared about what they hoped to become, and the principal's desire for more technology resources to help students accomplish these goals.

The following Monday morning, Paul rescheduled a business trip to California and visited the principal's office so he could discuss the technological future of the school. After hearing the principal's dream to begin a robotics team, Paul shared that his business provided robotics training for medical professionals. He asked the principal: "What would it take to make your dream a reality?"

Paul began organizing church members to partner with him, and together they raised funds to outfit a new technology center for the school. This partnership expanded to providing guest speakers, workshops, and financial assistance for students to participate in technology programs on a regular basis. Eventually, the school established an award-winning robotics team where participating students performed beyond what they ever imagined they could. This all happened because a church member, with no children of his own in the local school, was impressed to get involved.

It should be noted that prior to the back-to-school concert, Paul and the principal had never met. Yet, her enthusiasm about what could be accomplished with new technology captured the imagination of her students and they, in turn, were able to inspire others. The principal never thought someone would be so generous with his or her personal funds and limited time. The principal never asked Paul to give. The students tugged at his heart at the concert, so he gave. He was inspired by the student's prayer, and he organized others to give even more.

When asked why he raised more than US\$100,000 and volunteered

hundreds of hours, Paul replied: "This is God's school. All of the children belong to us. We need to do what we can to give them what they need to compete out there."

More than 100 years before Paul was convicted to give to his local church school, Ellen G. White experienced the same calling to relieve the financial strain suffered during her era. After a very restless night, she wrote: "I have not been able to sleep . . . in regard to the debt on Battle Creek College."<sup>3</sup> Mrs. White's solution was to donate the profits of her book, *The Parables of Jesus*, to help Seventh-day Adventist church schools. Her plan called for local conferences and ministers to encourage church members to purchase the book and for all proceeds to be contributed to defray the indebtedness of the church schools in the area.

Mrs. White wrote: "Let each member in each family in each church make determined efforts to deny self. Let us have the whole-hearted co-operation of all in our ranks. Let us all move forward willingly and intelligently to do what we can to relieve these of our schools that are struggling under a pressure of debt."<sup>4</sup> She clearly had in mind that the entire church community would contribute to relieving the debt of the schools.

Contemporary research supports the union of community and the school. Dipaola and Hoy<sup>5</sup> found that community support of schools helps to foster student learning and achievement. Stringer encouraged educational stakeholders to become aware of what a community has to offer, so that when there is a need, it can be more easily met.<sup>6</sup> In order to be aware of what the community has to offer, the administration and staff must establish professional relationships to serve the needs of the community and the school. In 2 Kings 6:1

**Connect and promote.** Sponsor annual community events, organize back-to-school and holiday concerts, and develop an active online presence to connect with parents, alumni, and church members, as well as current and former students.

**Be visible.** Arrange for students to be involved in the church services regularly or to participate in church-sponsored activities such as soup kitchens or community-service giveaways (as appropriate by age). Make sure that constituents see and hear from the students on a regular basis.

**Engage.** Invite church members to conduct worship in the classrooms, sign up to volunteer in various ways (especially those who have a background in education), and/or be part of a prayer team that ministers to students and families on a regular basis.

**Share expertise.** Identify professionals in the church and organize events such as career days, science fairs, or STEM celebrations where they can share their expertise with the students.

**Express gratitude.** Thank supporters for their commitment—don't only ask; thank and inspire. For example, present original and creative monthly reports to the church board and church business meeting, have students write thank-you notes to members in the church who pray for them or volunteer in their classrooms, or plan a thank-you luncheon or reception every year for those who support the school.

to 5,<sup>7</sup> we find a story of a community that freely donated to help the local School of the Prophets. As the prophet Elisha was teaching, the students voiced a serious concern about the size of the school:

“The company of the prophets said to Elisha, ‘Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to meet.’ . . . They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees. As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron ax-head fell into the water. ‘Oh no, my LORD!’ he cried out. ‘It was borrowed!’” (NIV).

Usually when we read this story, we focus on the miracle of the floating ax head, but notice that in verse five, the student exclaims, “‘It was borrowed!’” Remember that during

the reign of King Saul, the Philistines monopolized iron in Palestine, making it very expensive. The owner of this expensive iron tool had confidence that it was being used for a good cause and faith that the tool would be returned. Elisha's students only had to ask to borrow it.

How many more constituents are sitting in pews of churches waiting to be inspired to get involved, waiting to use their gifts to improve their local church school? As teachers, administrators, and students of the schools form relationships with members in the congregation and purposefully share their dreams with passion and intentionality, it maximizes the opportunities to dream big together and experience miracles. As we all get involved, the churches will be unified, the schools will be edified, and the Lord will be glorified. ✍

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Apopka, Florida, U.S.A. As an educator with more than 30 years of teaching experience, Dr. Nugent also has experience as a grant writer, special-projects coordinator, and administrator. At the university level, she has served as a supervisor of student teachers and professor of various educational methods courses. Dr. Nugent completed a bachelor of science in behavioral sciences at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, U.S.A.; a Master's in educational psychology at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.; and a doctorate in teacher leadership at Walden University, an accredited online university headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

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**Betty F. Nugent**, “Know and Engage Your Constituency,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 80:3 (July-September 2018): 40-42.

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Sharon Aka



Paola Franco-Oudri



## Continuing Education Courses and Resources Offered by the Adventist Learning Community (ALC)

*“In the ideal college, intrinsic education would be available to anyone who wanted it ... The college would be life-long, for learning can take place all through life.”*

—Abraham Maslow.\*

**F**ifty years ago, this ideal situation was a dream. Today, with the rise and impetus of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), college-level classes are open anytime, anywhere. Lifelong learning is now accessible to anyone with a desire to continue learning, without the hindrance of prescribed class times and hefty tu-

ition fees. As an initiative of the North American Division (NAD), the Adventist Learning Community (ALC) also seeks to contribute to fulfil this vision.

The Adventist Learning Community offers a wide selection of free online continuing education (CE) and ministry training courses and re-

sources, all of which are available to Seventh-day Adventist teachers, education administrators, pastors, and chaplains. There are several courses housed on the ALC that provide the option of university academic credit. These courses list the Adventist university(ies) where credit can be obtained. The ALC provides a platform that allows teachers to work toward their professional goals with the added benefit of learning at their own pace, and the flexibility of adapting professional development to their own schedules and unique needs.

Adventist teachers and administrators employed outside of the NAD can also access the ALC. International users can report CE course completion

by filling out the “*Who should be notified when you complete this course*” page at the beginning of every course. Notification of course completion will automatically be sent to the person(s) listed on this page. For users employed within the NAD, course completion certificates may be automatically forwarded to conference or union registrars. Here are some of the courses the ALC offers specifically designed for Adventist teachers from a distinctively Adventist perspective:

### Courses

There are currently five courses valid for NAD teacher certification or re-certification available for Continuing Education Credit (CEUs). These courses can be easily identified by the Adventist Education logo and “Teacher Certification” label on the homepage of the course. These five courses include:

- Adventist Church History—Tell the World (1 CEU)
- Bible Doctrines (1 CEU)
- Health Principles—Light for Living (2 CEUs)
- Philosophy of Adventist Education (1.5 CEUs)
- Spirit of Prophecy (2 CEUs)

A number of other courses are available on ALC for Continuing Education Credit. The following list provides a few examples:

- An Introduction to REACH: The NAD Inclusion Initiative (1 CEU)
- Coaching Distinctively Adventist Sports (0.5 CEU)
- Continuing Education Course: The International Conference on the Bible and Science: Affirming Creation, St. George, Utah, 2014 (2 CEUs)
- Copyright for Teachers and Pastors (0.5 CEU)
- Creating a Positive Digital Footprint (0.1 CEU)
- Curriculum Mapping: Big Ideas & Essential Questions (2 CEUs)

The ALC seeks to provide teachers and pastors with information, training, and resources needed to enhance professional practice throughout a lifetime. Our mission is to empower them with the skills necessary to further the kingdom of Christ with passion in the 21st century.



- Elementary *Encounter* Adventist [Bible] Curriculum (1 CEU)
- Facilitator Course (1 CEU)
- Implementing a 1 to 1 Device Program (0.5 CEU)
- Internet Safety in the Classroom (0.2 CEU)
- Introduction to Adventist Robotics (0.5 CEU)
- Passport to Preparedness [Preparation for Mission Trips] (1 CEU)
- Principals' Instructional Leadership (0.2 CEU)
- School Safety (0.2 CEU)
- Secondary *Encounter* Adventist [Bible] Curriculum (0.5 CEU)
- Sexual Abuse—Reclaiming Hope [Mandatory in Canada] (1 CEU)
- Social Media 101 (0.2 CEU)

#### Courses for Adventist School Boards:

- Adventist K-12 School Board Leadership Training (0.1 CEU)
- Adventist K-12 School Board Legal and Financial Issues Training (0.1 CEU)
- Adventist K-12 School Board Membership Training (0.1 CEU)

#### *Some of the many courses currently being developed:*

- Stages of Faith—This course will explore spiritual aspects of the development of children and adolescents based on James Fowler's "Stages of Faith" model.
- Implicit Bias—This course will provide an introduction to the concept of implicit or unconscious bias and explore diversity through the eyes of grace.
- Multigrade and Small Schools—This course will address the unique needs of small schools, and offer helpful tips on how to organize, manage, and teach a multigrade classroom.

#### Resources for Teachers

The ALC has a growing library of Adventist resources available for teachers. This collection of resources includes the following materials:


- *ByDesign* interactive [science] textbook resources
- *GraceLink* animated Bible stories
- *iBelieve* Bible videos
- Math resources
- *Pathways* resources
- R.A.I.N. 9th-grade art curriculum

Resources for other professionals such as pastors, chaplains, and church administrators, are also available to anyone with an ALC account. These resources include conferences, conventions, evangelistic television programs, and more.

#### Steps for Taking Teacher CE Courses from the ALC:

- Go to the ALC homepage: <https://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com/>.
- Create an account on ALC by clicking on "Sign Up" or, if employed by the North American Division, use your NAD teacher toolkit login information.
- Log in.
- Click on the "Browse Course Catalog" grey search bar on the ALC homepage.
- In the search line, type in the first few letters of the course title.
- Click on the course.
- Enroll in the course.
- If you wish for someone to be notified about your course completion, fill out the "Who should be notified when you complete this course" fillable box page.
- Complete all the learning modules and quizzes.
- A completion certificate will be generated upon course completion.

The ALC seeks to provide teachers and pastors with information, training, and resources needed to enhance professional practice throughout a lifetime. Our mission is to empower them with the skills necessary to further the kingdom of Christ with passion in the 21st century.

For additional information about the ALC, or to participate in authoring an ALC CE course, please contact us at <https://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com/contact>. 

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*The ALC, an initiative of the North American Division, is an online resource designed to provide professional development and continuing education for ministerial and educational professionals within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. ALC also provides local church communities with access to Adventist-produced content and resources. For more information, visit <http://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com/>.*

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\* Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin Group, 1993), 175.

sist others in the mission of Jesus Christ—providing restoration for the world now and the world to come.

### In This Issue

In the special section of this issue, authors of diverse educational backgrounds and experiences offer a wealth of information on culturally responsive pedagogy within Adventist education. The writers not only celebrate awareness of cultural diversity within Seventh-day Adventist schools, but also provide best practices for successful learning opportunities to students from all cultures.

Kalisha A. Waldon draws upon spiritual principles and lessons learned from the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ—real-world examples, and educational research to support the education and culture of the whole child. Anita Strawn de Ojeda, Loren Fish, and Jovannah Poor Bear-Adams incorporate Native American values in addressing the spiritual, mental, academic, and physical needs of students while honoring their families of origin in “Culturally Responsive Christian Education at Holbrook Seventh-day Adventist School.” In “Shielding Students From Stereotype Threat: Instructional and Developmental Implications,” Michael Milmine and Elvin Gabriel define Stereotype Threat (ST) and its adverse effects on performance by members of a particular social-identity group. They also provide Christ-centered approaches to reduce it and create supportive school and classroom environments. In the *Perspectives* section, Dale Linton’s “Celebrating the World in Your Classroom,” provides ways for teachers to better recognize the influence their own cultural heritage plays in defining who they are and how they teach in order to engage meaningfully with diverse groups of students.

I hope these articles serve as catalysts for the educational ministry within Seventh-day Adventist and other Christian schools. God needs educators—administrators and teachers—who value the whole child, who value inclusion, and are willing to teach in a culturally diverse manner. In addition, He needs educators who can inspire students to counter injustice within and beyond the classroom. Culturally responsive teaching provides the framework to help faith-based institutions translate Scripture into action by advocating the education of the head, the heart, and the hand.

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**Charline Barnes Rowland, EdD**, is the Diversity Program Coordinator/Teaching Consultant for the University Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. A former classroom teacher, Dr. Rowland has served on the teacher-education faculty at several universities, including Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A., where she was the director of the curriculum and instruction program. She has published and presented on culturally responsive pedagogy, global issues in curriculum and instruction, and professional development of

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As coordinator of this issue, Dr. Barnes Rowland assisted in all aspects of its development, from identifying topics, authors, and reviewers to providing input on manuscripts and answering questions. The Editorial Staff of the JOURNAL express heartfelt appreciation for her assistance throughout the planning and production of this issue.

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