

The Difference Adventist Education Makes

by

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Adventist Education has made all the difference in my life. I am a firm believer that the money invested in receiving a Christian Education is worth it. Adventist Education became a big part of my life when I was 14 years old, in Berrien Springs, MI.

Andrews Academy (AA) was a very expensive school, but my parents got enough courage to plead for their two children to be able to study at a very considerably cheap price. By God's grace, we both graduated from AA with many fun memories, a solid spiritual base, exemplar role models, and friends for a lifetime. It's amazing to realize that in October, 2005 we celebrated our 10 year reunion of the class of 1996.

Those four years at AA taught me so much about mission, vision, purpose for living, cooking, health, sewing, trust, honesty, maintaining a steady job, singing, death, thankfulness, acceptance of different cultures, rules and that there is a time for everything. This is what I call a well rounded and balanced Adventist Education. You felt safe at school. You knew that nobody would bully you, you were not afraid of a teacher's discrimination because many of them were from so many different cultures. What impressed me the most was that the staff at Andrews Academy looked me in the eye, sat down to listen to me, gave me second chances, demonstrated patience, provided opportunities for honesty and trust, helped me in anything I needed.

Just to name a few teachers that impacted my life there, I will begin with Mrs. Russell, Home Economic teacher. I got an "A" in all of her classes. But her health class was very tough. I remember getting my report card one day. I screamed with happiness to see an "A-." I went running to the school to talk to Mrs. Russell and ask her why she had given me an "A-." I thought I deserved a "B-" or a "B." She said: "Molly, I didn't give you an A-minus, you earned it. Remember the last assignment you came and made up after school one day? Well it pushed you from an 89 to a 90." That day I learned perseverance.

Dr. Nash was the Vice Principal. One day he came and sat in front of me at lunch time. He asked how everything was going. Then he asked me why I was wearing blue jeans to school that day. I don't remember if he gave me a white card or if I got in trouble for wearing blue jeans to school, but I do remember how he patiently answered my concern about *why* we couldn't wear blue jeans to school. That day I learned that when you tell a minor not to do something, you have to explain why. When they understand *why*, they will learn and obey quicker and respect you more.

Dr. McKenzie was the principal during my time at AA. He knew that I was poor and was being helped with my tuition, yet he never embarrassed me about it. He always greeted me and asked me how my life was going. At our graduation, he gave me a little card with a note saying "Let me hear great things about you in the future." I don't know if he wrote the same words to the whole graduating class, but I still carry this card with me in my Bible. It inspires me to become a blessing wherever I may be.

Mrs. Snow was the cafeteria director. I began to work serving food at the cafeteria. The food was delicious, but so expensive, but serving food for 15 minutes would get me free lunch. During this time each day, I began to get to know Mrs. Snow. She was so kind and simple. I learn that everyone counts. She valued her kids, she valued us, and she always kept up with us. I think she just reflected my mother's image: a hard working mother trying to keep her three kids in Academy.

Mr. Sheppard was the history teacher. To me, this was the hardest class. One year his paradigm changed, so he announced "from now on you may take my tests over and over as many times as you want until you get the grade you want." This sounded good, but the catch was that the tests were super hard. I remember retaking a test four times and the best grade I got was a "C." History was just not my thing, but I certainly appreciated the chance to retake the tests or else, I would have flunked.

All of these wonderful experiences helped me to desire to be a teacher myself. ***Therefore, the first way that the money invested in Adventist Education was worth it is that it gave me a career choice, and dedication to serve.***

After graduating in 1996 from Andrews Academy, by God's grace, I received about \$10,000 dollars in scholarships to begin studying at Andrews University, where I began to work in the Education Department as a secretary assistant. I basically lived at the library and studied hard. My life was classes, work, intramurals, friends, church leadership, and family (I was living with my parents). I used the daily help of the math and writing centers on campus. With these student helpers, I was able to pass algebra I & II. I

don't remember my algebra teacher's name, but his teaching style impacted me so much. He would often ask his students to go to the board and show the class how they figured out an algebraic equation. I would volunteer every time I could. He noticed my diligence and always thanked me for sharing my "interesting way of solving a problem." As a teacher, I always used this strategy in math class: I have my students go to the board. This often helps their classmates learn faster seeing how their own classmates solve a math problem.

After entering my final year in the education program at Andrews, Dr. Denton became an influential teacher that I began to highly respect. This was his second to last school year before retiring. I took about six classes from him. In each class he taught with preparation and passion. He knew what he was teaching; he taught us practical things. He offered us options. I remember making digital portfolios for our professional portfolios, we needed to present before education administrators. He helped us prepare so well that when the day came to present our portfolios, we felt confident and proud. One day I was coming to his office, simply to ask him to scan a picture so I would make a CD cover. He saw my initiative and offered to show me how easy it was to make a CD cover. I learned that day that teachers are always willing to help students who show a bit of interest and initiative.

These experiences have made all the difference in my life as a teacher, wife, mother and pastor's wife. My eyes were opened more and more to see how dedicated, compassionate, caring, teachers are in our Adventist Institutions.

After God gave me all the desires of my heart (I graduated from Andrews University and served as a missionary in Dominican Republic), I wanted to give back to the Lord in some way. The Lord inspired the idea of getting poor and talented Dominican kids, sponsored so they could graduate from an Adventist School. With God's help I organized SPADS (Sponsorship Program for Adventist Dominican Students). We currently have 30 kids sponsored until they graduate. The objective of this project is for these 30 kids to experience the privilege of being educated in the Adventist Education system, therefore strive to study in an Adventist University and as a final result become positive influences in a corrupt society. ***Therefore, the second way that Adventist Education was worth the investment is that it gave me an inspiration to begin the Sponsorship Program for Adventist Dominican Students in order to give other kids the same opportunity I was given to receive Adventist Education.***

Everything in life has its good or bad consequences. I thank God for the opportunity of having given me the privilege of having graduated from Andrews Academy and Andrews University.

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