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Is Adventist Education Worth It?

According to the General Conference Working Policy (FE 05 10), the distinctive characteristics of Adventist education, derived from the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White, point to the redemptive aim of true education—to restore human beings into the image of their Maker—mentally, socially, spiritually, and physically. Our church exists to prepare individuals for God’s kingdom, and education is a crucial process through which this preparation occurs. Should this vision of mission be lost, there would be no reason for our schools to exist.

Since God is the Author of all truth, and the aim of each educational discipline is to discover truth, the Bible provides the basis for the best possible education. When biblical principles underlie the essential ingredients of the curriculum, the result is a unified rather than fragmented understanding of our world. When biblical principles shape the context and instructional attributes of schools, this provides a solid basis for promoting students’ growth in critical thinking, social interaction, spiritual insight, and knowledge about a healthy lifestyle, as well as the principles of psychological and physical well-being. In other words, scriptural principles become the lens through which other knowledge is interpreted and evaluated.

The promise we make to Adventist parents and students is that we seek to provide the best education possible. This biblically based education helps students understand what matters most in life, enables them to distinguish between truth and error, and provides them with an opportunity to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This holistic context for learning prepares them for life here on Earth and for eternity. This is higher-order knowledge, interpreted in the light of God’s Word.

Adventist institutions, developed within this framework, serve as “Redemption-Oriented Schools of Excellence (ROSE).” I refer to it as a ROSE because the students graduating from this type of school should come out smelling like one!

There are other characteristics of Redemption-Oriented Schools of Excellence:

1. They are very clear and unapologetic about their mission.
2. Their goals and objectives stimulate attitudes and processes of operation that convey academic and behavioral expectations which are consistent with their mission.
3. Their personnel (faculty and staff) exemplify institutional ideals and are selected with this in mind.
4. They provide their students with opportunities for service and outreach, and inspire them to make a contribution to society and to the church.

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By C. Garland Dulan
Adventists and Human Dignity

I. Why do Adventists believe in human dignity?

On November 17, 1998, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists published a Statement on the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It asserts: “In promoting religious freedom, family life, health, mutual assistance, and meeting crying human need, Seventh-day Adventists affirm the dignity of the human person created in the image of God.”

Why do we believe in human dignity? From the first page to the last, the Bible teaches us that every human being is precious to God: (A) God created humans; (B) Christ died for humanity; (C) He wants to dwell in us through the Holy Spirit; (D) God gave us His commandments so we can live healthy, happy lives. God could not have shown more clearly how important we are to Him.

A. God Created Humans

The roots of human dignity are found in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis. God created Adam and Eve and gave them the breath of life. Human beings were the crowning act of creation: “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image; . . . male and female He created them. Then God blessed them and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:26-28, NKJV).

The place of human beings in creation is absolutely unique. All other living creatures are merely referred to as “living things,” but God created humans in His own image. As persons, Adam and Eve received a mission: to be God’s managers on Planet Earth. The difference between

The difference between the biblical concept and ancient pagan traditions or the theory of evolution is dramatic. Human beings are not the product of natural processes or the arbitrary actions of a lunatic divinity. We are the fruit of God’s love and part of His global design.

By John Graz
the biblical concept and ancient pagan traditions or the theory of evolution is dramatic. Human beings are not the product of natural processes or the arbitrary actions of a lunatic divinity. We are the fruit of God’s love and part of His global design. We are called to be the main actors in an extraordinary destiny. When we also deal with other human beings, we deal with God, their Creator. We cannot escape that basic truth: We have been created by God in His image, in His resemblance, for a special purpose. This is the foundation of human dignity. This concept should be incorporated in Adventist schools at all levels.

B. Christ Died for Humanity

After Adam and Eve sinned, God did not abandon them. The promise of salvation came right after the Fall: The devil, represented by the serpent, would be crushed. Human dignity would be restored. Because of God’s love for humanity, “He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” When Jesus came to Earth as the Son of God, He identified with the poorest among the poor and commended us to do the same. “Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.” Human beings, despite their sinfulness, have intrinsic worth. Every time one of them is abused, tortured, or humiliated, Christ is distressed. The creatures made in the image of God, for whom Christ died, should never be treated like ordinary objects to be used and discarded, but like irreplaceable jewels.

C. We Are the Temple of the Holy Spirit

Because they were created by God and redeemed by Christ, human beings are the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul writes: “Do you know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone defiles God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple” (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17, NRSV). In the same letter to the Christians of Corinth, Paul states: “Or do you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price . . .” (6:19, 20).

We are therefore responsible for the way we treat ourselves. We cannot say “my body belongs to me; I can do whatever I want with it.” Our bodies belong to our Creator, so we must respect and manage them the best we can. Treating our own bodies poorly not only negatively affects our health and personality, but also the global image we develop about human dignity.

D. God Gave Us His Commandments

The Ten Commandments constitute the first charter of human rights. Violating their principles has a direct effect on one’s quality of life, peace, and dignity. Positive human relations can be built only when murdering, lying, and stealing are not sanctioned.

The first four commandments underlie our allegiance to God, the
Source of our rights. Jesus summarized this part of the law in a few words: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with your soul, and with all your mind . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37). God is the supreme reference for the respect we should give to others.

In giving us the Decalogue, God provided us with a mandate to promote and protect human dignity. Each person has great value. The people of God are to build relations with others based on a recognition of the intrinsic value of each person. For example, God commands us not to disrespect others by killing them, stealing from them, or coveting their possessions.

II. Human Dignity in the Bible

Through the Bible, God teaches us to be sensitive about the protection and defense of human dignity. When God’s people betrayed these principles, He taught them through their mistakes to value every human being. Through Nathan, God taught David that even a mercenary had rights, and the king had to respect them (2 Samuel 12:3). Jacob had to learn that lying and stealing are not the way to succeed. No one has the right to exploit or to oppress others.

Jesus, of course, is our ultimate Model. He spent hours with prostitutes and publicans who were despised by society, giving them hope. He listened to the sick and those possessed by devils, and healed them in spite of the prejudices of His time (Matthew 9:36; 15:22-28). He talked with women and played with children, who had few if any rights in ancient society (Matthew 18:6). He valued each person as a creature of God, vested with dignity. He said of the children: “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6, NRSV).

When Jesus saw the needs of the multitude, “He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick” (Matthew 14:14). He could have used His popularity to manipulate people and benefit Himself. But He did not. He was moved with compassion for their plight. He saw them as creatures of God. These who have nothing, who are rejected, have value to Jesus because of their importance to God.

In ancient times, the poor were seen as having lost their human dignity. Because they were dependent on the generosity of others, they were treated with contempt. But God said: “Blessed is he who considers the poor; The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on the earth” (Psalm 41:1, 2).

The people of God were not put on Earth just to decry all the transgressions and oppressions. They should seek to correct these problems and to further human dignity in every way they can. Whenever human dig-
nity is attacked, the devil is victorious. James wrote to the Christians: “if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors” (2:9). “Partiality” means discrimination, which oppresses the dignity of human beings created in God’s image.

III. Human Dignity as a Test of Our Actions

Humans have always been tempted to isolate religion from their daily lives. But when God orders us to love Him with all our being and our neighbor as ourselves, He brings us back to reality. Our religion has to be put into practice every day. Our relationships with other human beings form the core of our lives. The prophet Isaiah denounced a religion that is only a matter of ritual and tradition: “In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exploit all your laborers . . . . Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you invite to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?” (Isaiah 58:3, 6, 7).

Religion must be more than rituals. It is not just inspiring prayers, lovely music, and uplifting sermons in a beautiful church. James gives us a wonderful definition of true religion. It is not a catalogue of doctrines, even if the doctrines are right. It is life! “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). It is the protection of human dignity.

A. The Adventist Commitment

From the time their church was founded, Seventh-day Adventists have stood for human dignity. Early on, they took positions against slavery and all forms of social injustice. Ellen White wrote:

“Slavery, the caste system, unjust racial prejudices, the oppression of the poor, the neglect of the unfortunate, these all are set forth as unchristian and a serious menace to the well-being of the human race, and as evils which the church of Christ is appointed by her Lord to overthrow.”

On the subject of human dignity, Ellen White wrote: “The Lord Jesus demands our acknowledgment of the rights of every man. Men’s social rights, and their rights as Christians, are to be taken into consideration. All are to be treated with refinement and delicacy, as the sons and daughters of God.”

Based on the teachings of the Bible and Ellen White, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has developed a ministry of restoration and respect for human dignity. We have thousands of schools, hospitals, community services, and other institutions and associations. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency is working in approximately 150 coun-
tries throughout the world. We have taken a leading role in promoting religious freedom for all. In these ways, our church has positively affected the quality of life for millions of people.

But what about the defense and promotion of human rights and human dignity? What about legislative discrimination? What about policies dealing with war and terror? What about systems and political structures that negatively affect people’s lives, creating famine, refugees, and concentration camps? What about the AIDS pandemic? What about child slavery? Abuse of women?

**B. The Silent Church**

In 1998, Zdravko Plantak published a courageous and eloquent book about our church and human rights entitled: *The Silent Church*. In it he wrote: “Adventists must become involved [in the world] because their God cares and wants them to care for each other. Identifying with Jesus means identifying with the poor, oppressed and those whose basic rights and freedoms are denied them. It is not enough to care for a person and have no concern about the laws that affect the life of that person in society.” When faced with the very sensitive problem of slavery, Ellen White was very clear. While calling for an improvement in the condition of the slaves, she forcefully condemned this evil system. She wrote: “The institution of slavery . . . permits man to exercise over his fellow man a power which God has never granted him, and which belongs alone to God.” She went further, condemning the keeping of slaves as “an insult to Jehovah.”

The Adventist pioneers understood that in order to uphold and restore human dignity, the church cannot be isolated from the community. According to James White, the Christian “has really as much interest in this old world as any man. Here he must stay and act his part until the Prince of Peace shall come and reign.” This vision, that the Christian role in helping people must go beyond the traditional welfare approach, was reflected in an 1865 General Conference resolution: “Resolved that in our judgment, the act of voting when exercised in behalf of justice, humanity, and right, is in itself blameless, and may be at some times highly proper; but that the casting of such crimes as intemperance, insurrection, and slavery, we regard as highly criminal in the sight of Heaven.” This means that the promotion and defense of human dignity involves “the act of voting” to change laws. However, a limit has been set: “But we would deprecate any participation in the spirit of party strife.”

What Ellen White wrote about the promotion of temperance in November 1881 may be extended to any activity that positively affects the
restoration of human dignity: “Every ‘temperance’ advocate is duty-bound to counteract [the moral paralysis upon society] by precept and example—by voice and pen and vote.” This means that church members should act to reform the societies in which they live.

Human Dignity: A Core Value

We must teach our students that human dignity is a core value of Adventism. We should never support policies or attitudes that deny it. As a church, we should be prudent and wise when speaking officially. Being a Silent Church on such a vital issue for millions of people is like being ashamed of Jesus our Saviour and God our Creator. Christians should not be part of any enterprise that transforms a creature of God into a thing or an object. It is not only a question of consistency, but one of testimony. We should never forget that on Earth, we are the ambassadors of the Kingdom of God. We are witnesses of a new world that God will establish where human dignity will be totally restored and established forever.

Such a commitment will have a great effect on our individual and collective testimony and on the scope of our students’ potential contributions to society. God has promised: “Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard” (Isaiah 58:8).

—Zdravko Plantak

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1. Look up the definition of human dignity in various dictionaries and discuss the differences between the definitions.
2. In newspapers and magazines, look for examples of respect and non-respect of human dignity. Work together in small groups, then report from each group on what you find.
3. Investigate an area where Adventists have been traditionally involved in promoting and defending human dignity. Report your findings to the class.
4. List some areas where Adventists have been part of a “Silent Church” and note reasons why you think this has occurred.
5. Discuss Jesus’ defense of the poor, women, children, etc. Cite texts and references to support your points.
6. Did Jesus take risks in defending human dignity? If so, how?
7. Divide into small groups. Each group is to write the names of three people in the Bible who made a difference when defending human dignity. Share your findings with the class.
10. Send letters to the legislators and the president/prime minister of your country, encouraging them to promote and defend human dignity.

Read:

Bible texts about: justice, poor, rich: For example, Genesis 1: 26, 27; John 3: 16; Matthew 18: 6; Isaiah 58: 3c, 6, 7.


Ask yourself:

How do the Bible teachings about human dignity influence my life?

How can Jesus’ example influence my involvement in my school and community?

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Student Success: How to Help Your Child
A Primer for Parents

Adventist education is both a bargain and a good investment, but it isn’t cheap. Parents work hard to pay the tuition, and in return, expect their children both to get a good education and to be brought closer to God and to eternal life.

This is a fair expectation. Unfortunately, some students don’t do as well as everyone would like. Why is that? It’s easy to blame teachers, and sometimes teachers are the problem. More often, though, the problem is the students. What the students are depends to a large extent on what the parents have made of them.

After teaching college English classes for 25 years and reading papers by some 1,500 students, I have a pretty good idea of what students know and don’t know, and why. I’ve also come to realize that the education debate is blaming the wrong culprits.

Parents want their children to do well, they say, but they expect teachers to do all the work and achieve miracles. That’s not the road to success! There has to be a partnership between teachers and parents for students to succeed.

Learning problems are most common when parents prefer entertainment to lifelong learning. When parents neglect their duty by not teaching children to love learning and not giving them time to learn, teachers are condemned to providing remedial education, rather than expanding horizons and fostering excellence.

What Can Parents Do?
Our children’s minds are gifts from God. We should aid in their development so they can bring Him glory. This process takes time. Yet time is scarce for today’s children because they have been allowed to fill their lives with things that steal their time.
If parents give their children time and point them toward productive ways of using that time that help them discover the joy of learning for learning’s sake, they will excel. Many of the differences among students are due less to variations in intelligence than to different attitudes toward learning.

The following solutions may sound pretty extreme, and children will accept them best if parents begin early, but they really do work, and late is better than never. They require parents’ time and attention, but they’re cheap. If children are worth our money, aren’t they worth our time, as well?

So What Can Parents Do?

First, get rid of the television, or at least limit its use. An hour or two weekly is plenty, even for preschoolers and even for parents. Choose nature or history programs on PBS, or educational videos. The fast pace and superficiality of most ads and programs dull the mind. Perhaps you are saying, “But television is an important part of my life! What’s wrong with relaxing in the evening?” Relaxing is good, but it can be done in more useful ways. Try reading together, hobbies, taking nature walks, and just talking with your kids.

Second, get rid of the video games. The excitement exhausts children and makes them think everything else is boring. Children who are used to searching a screen for objects to zap find it very difficult to quietly read a book. I’ve had students argue that playing video games increases manual dexterity, but they’d get more useful manual dexterity working in the garden or building something.

Third, limit computer use to educational games, writing, or learning to type, and even then not more than an hour or two a day. Chat rooms and Web surfing have little to do with learning and can introduce children

When parents neglect their duty by not teaching children to love learning and not giving them time to learn, teachers are condemned to providing remedial education, rather than expanding horizons and fostering excellence.
to dangerous people and ideas. The computer is a wonderful tool, but it can also be a great waste of time.

Sit down with your children and show them how to use computer search engines to find answers to an amazing number of questions. When a question arises at the dinner table, say, use the computer to find the answer. In a few hours, students can learn more about a topic than anyone they know. (Of course, you’ll need to help them recognize reliable Web sites, or they’ll also learn a lot that isn’t true. Also, many Web sites are quite superficial.)

**Athletics or Education?**

Fourth, consider whether you should encourage your children to watch or participate in sports. When we watch sports on TV we aren’t getting any exercise, and neither are our children. Playing sports is fun and healthy (barring injuries), but it eats up study time and can leave students too exhausted or excited to study. Running or walking a few miles or shooting hoops for half an hour are fine, but the competition of team sports is wasted time and effort. It can also develop bad attitudes.

Most of my weakest students have been high school athletes. They argue that high school rules for participating in sports (generally a C average) kept them in school. They also claim that sports taught them the value of cooperation. If we want children to learn to cooperate, however, we’d do better to suggest the school choir or band than the football team.

A lot of students participate in athletics because this helps them gain their parents’ admiration. Dads, especially, often live vicariously through their children’s triumphs and urge them to go farther than the young athletes actually want to go. This can lead to resentment and can ruin parent/child relationships for young people who don’t excel at sports.

Athletics also give students a way to become heroes; everybody loves a winner. But the chance of making a living as an athlete is nearly as low as that of winning the lottery. Sports are not a good investment of time and money, and they take time away from academics and personal devotions.

Some Adventist schools see intervarsity sports as a good way to attract students, and perhaps they are. Students may see their athletic ability as a method of opening doors to scholarship money for college. However, spending 20 hours a week or more practicing and playing any sport makes it difficult to find enough time for studying. Athletes may be able to do enough studying to get decent grades, but it will be much harder for them to go beyond the basics and do the sort of deeper studying that leads to excellence.

**Book Worms**

Fifth, buy books; visit libraries; have books and magazines in the house. When toddlers see their parents reading, they decide reading must be fun. It may be that your children are having a hard time learning to read because you yourself haven’t developed a habit of reading.
Many of my students claim they never read for pleasure, and quite a few say they have never read an entire book (in high school they cheated, borrowing notes and watching videos). Few of these students have parents who love to read.

For the price of a new computer, you can build a good reference library for your children. (Start with an old set of encyclopedias at an auction or library sale. That’s what I did.) For the price of a cable TV subscription, you can buy several books a month. If you can’t afford to buy new books, visit used bookstores and check out books from the public library.

Students who develop a habit of reading and have books in the house are seldom bored, so they are less likely to get into trouble. Children enjoy books about how things work, picture books about animals and nature, and biographies. If you can interest them in reading good stories about faithful Christians, you will also be encouraging their walk with God. But remember, they can’t read these books unless you make room in their lives for reading.

Nearly every Sunday afternoon for the past decade, I’ve taken my children to lunch and then to the bookstore of their choice. They love it. They call it “going out for fun.” Children love to peruse the great variety of books, and this also builds family closeness.

Sixth, read to and with your children. Start out by reading to your preschoolers, and encourage older children to read to you as their skills improve. For many years, either my wife or I read to our children nearly every night for half an hour or more. We still do so when we have a special book to share. If you choose books that are interesting but a little above your children’s level, their interest will lift them higher. For example, most 10-year-olds aren’t ready to read Charles Dickens’ novels, but they will listen intently. Be sure to leave time to talk over the night’s reading. This is a wonderful opportunity for discussing Christian ethics.

Such reading and listening helps students build a large working vocabulary and improve their grasp of geography, history, and social conditions. Reading a variety of good books ties together many fields in the context of a story, so it’s easier for stu-
Limit computer use to educational games, writing, or learning to type, and even then not more than an hour or two a day.

dents to remember and use than facts memorized for an achievement test.

Grounded

Seventh, keep your children home after supper. Little useful learning takes place in malls, restaurants, parties, street corners, or cars. The hours after supper should be reserved for study, reading, and family activities. My developmental writing students tell me that in high school most of them could stay out until 11 p.m. on school nights and 1 a.m. on weekends. Top students don’t do that. Parents who want their children to succeed shouldn’t allow them out at night except, say, until 10 p.m. on Saturday nights.

Eighth, early to bed. Students who have read for several hours after supper often grow sleepy. If they’re asleep by 9 or 10, they’ll get plenty of sleep. Then they’ll be alert in school and learn more. If they stay up reading, at least they’re learning.

Ninth, limit phone calls. Hours of telephone gossip are not educational. Do your children have their own phones? How many books could you buy with that money? My students argue that they acquire valuable social skills talking on the phone. Given that the majority of students are extroverts, they don’t really need the practice. One does not find a positive correlation between the level of meaningful communication in a marriage and the number of hours spent gossiping on the phone in adolescence.

Tenth, cultivate a sense of wonder. If you are continually fascinated by the world around you, you’ll be inspired to share the excitement with your children. Such learning for the fun of it translates readily into high grades and SAT scores. Life is so wonderful, so amazing. There are always more things to learn, and learning is fun. Students who see life that way nearly always excel.

Eleventh, don’t disparage academics or make jokes about “nerds.” Nerds run the world and earn a comfortable living. Many of my students are first-generation college students who report that their parents are proud of them, yet also feel threatened by their growing knowledge. In unconscious ways, families often sabotage their children’s success by complaining about the time invested in study. “You don’t have time for your family anymore,” they may say, or “You’re getting too big for your britches.” Involve yourself with your
children’s schooling. Discuss with them what they’re learning, and do some reading yourself to stay up to date.

**Home/School Cooperation**

The result of following these suggestions is a sort of informal home schooling that frees classroom teachers to do their best. Any parent can do it.

The neurosurgeon Dr. Ben Carson tells of growing up in a single-parent home in a Detroit ghetto. His mother demanded that her sons go to the library every week, check out a book, read it, write a report on the book, then read the report to her. Only years later did Carson realize that his mother was in fact illiterate.

Want your school to improve? This will happen automatically when parents start enrolling students who love to learn because the parents have made learning interesting and given the children time to learn by freeing them from extracurricular activities that rob them of that time.

Children, too, play an important role in improving their own learning. Studies have shown that self-motivated learners whose parents provide them with a rich learning environment in the home manage to learn quite a bit and succeed even in the worst schools. If they can succeed in the worst schools, imagine what they can do in Adventist schools!

A pastor who read this manuscript mentioned to me that he found it disappointing because nearly every principle in it is already in Ellen White’s books. How clever of him to notice! If we put these principles into practice, both our students and our schools will succeed.

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Teaching values to children has become much easier with a new set of materials recently completed by the Southern Asia-Pacific Division Education Department. These materials are entitled REBIRTH and are part of a set of resources designed to help teachers achieve the ideals of Christian education.

Almost everyone will agree that teaching values is one of the most important tasks of a parent or teacher. Values may be expressed as character traits, virtues, fruits of the Spirit, Adventist lifestyle, beliefs, or faith. But they go to the heart of what we want our children to believe and the kind of people we want them to be.

But what values should we teach? When you list them, or harder yet, try to teach them; it's easier to speak in generalities than to be specific. But what could be more important than finding ways to inculcate them in our youth?

This was the challenge that led to the REBIRTH Christ-centered values-education materials. Dr. Stephen R. Guptill, director of education for the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, and Martha Johnson, curriculum coordinator for the division, recognized the need while...
preparing textbook supplements for Adventist primary and secondary school teachers. They identified one of the approaches teachers can use in making their classes Christ-centered as “teaching specific values or beliefs of faith.” But what were these values? They were not as clearly defined as the subject content. A search for the values to teach produced a number of partial lists, with certain favorite values amplified but no systematic approach for teachers.

Guptill and Johnson began to compile a list of virtues and beliefs considered essential to Christian education. The list grew very large and included many synonyms and overlapping virtues. It was clear that some organization and grouping was necessary. In the end, 89 of the most central Adventist values and Christian character traits were selected and
grouped into seven categories. Each of these categories or groups addresses the great issues of life and helps set children on the right path of salvation and successful living. Each letter of the REBIRTH name represents one of these virtue groups.

The Religious virtues help us be like Jesus and respond to His perfect character. The Ethical virtues help us make wise decisions in life. The Biblical group includes core scriptural beliefs that form the basis for our faith and experience with God. The Individual virtues help make us become people with noble, God-like characters. The Relational virtues help us build wholesome relationships with others. The Temporal values relate to time and Adventist lifestyle. And finally, the Healthful values help us take good care of our bodies.

Each virtue is expressed in terms of its relationship with God. This is how Christian values are different from secular ones. Despite having a similar name, a Christian value may be completely different from a value taught from a humanist or secular perspective. Also, it may be valued for a totally different reason.

With the core virtues identified, the next challenge was how to teach them. Visual aids and resources were needed. How could teachers help students progress from knowing what is right and good to owning and affirming the value as part of their character?

A beautifully illustrated flip chart was created. Finding artwork that illustrated all the virtues and beliefs proved to be difficult. Fortunately, Marvin Marcelino, a local pastor and artist, offered his talents. He and two other artists produced a wonderful set of illustrations for each of the core values.

In developing the curriculum materials, we sought to provide a simple definition of each value that helps students understand what is right and good and how it came from God. “Choice statements” for each value help the children express their desire to embrace that value or belief as their own.

Next, we collected resources and teaching ideas for each value. This...
proved to be an endless task. Students and faculty from the Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies (AIIAS), the General Conference graduate school located near the division office in the Philippines, provided a wealth of materials. A workshop for college education department faculty and secondary and primary teachers produced additional resources. The product was the REBIRTH Resource book, a companion to the flip chart, which included teaching aids for every virtue. It became a model for teachers to use in building their own collection of value resources. The resource book includes art, music, Bible stories, Ellen White comments, value stories from other books, links to school subjects, student activities, applications for student life, and evaluation questions. To assist teachers wanting to create their own value materials for bulletin boards, handouts, and projects, there is a clip art CD with the pictures and drawings for each value.

Looking back on the project, we have several observations:

1. The process of selecting values is almost as important as the final decision. When a community focuses on the specific values they want their children to learn, they are more likely to cooperate in the process of teaching the values. Discussing and deciding on which values to teach is an exercise that the board, faculty, church, and parents would do well to consider. It helps highlight what they really want to accomplish beyond conveying the subject content. For instance, what do Christian parents want their 4th graders to learn about a Christian lifestyle, personal devotional habits, health, and Bible beliefs? How can we find out? Should we schedule a brainstorming session where these character traits are identified and expressed in tangible and, if possible, measurable terms? School leaders, teachers, and parents can work together to make specific plans about how and when these virtues will be taught. This does not negate the work of professional curriculum developers, who also address these values, but it does give focus to local concerns and increases local participation and involvement.

2. We also learned that there will never be a comprehensive or inclusive list of values or resources to support them. The more you work at it, the more you discover.

3. Finally, values must be owned, not just memorized. Values education must go beyond the primary level where students are taught what to do. As children grow, the values must be addressed at a more mature level. Louis Rath some years ago suggested that for virtues to become values, a person must choose them freely after understanding the alternatives and consequences of the different choice (see sidebar).

If students really value something, they will embrace it and be willing to publicly affirm and act on it. The challenge is to help older students work through this process. They must be shown the consequences of other choices and given opportunities to cooperate in the process of teaching the values. Discussing and deciding on which values to teach is an exercise that the board, faculty, church, and parents would do well to consider. It helps highlight what they really want to accomplish beyond conveying the subject content. For instance, what do Christian parents want their 4th graders to learn about a Christian lifestyle, personal devotional habits, health, and Bible beliefs? How can we find out? Should we schedule a brainstorming session where these character traits are identified and expressed in tangible and, if possible, measurable terms? School leaders, teachers, and parents can work together to make specific plans about how and when these virtues will be taught. This does not negate the work of professional curriculum developers, who also address these values, but it does give focus to local concerns and increases local participation and involvement.

Each virtue is expressed in terms of its relationship with God.

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**Louis Rath’s Values Criteria**

1. **Choosing freely.** No one can force you to embrace a value. You choose it and act upon it even when you are not being observed.
2. **Choosing from alternatives.** You choose after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative. You choose this way to believe and act, even when you are unable to say so out loud.
3. **Choosing after thoughtful consideration.** You are committed to your choice even after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative.
4. **Prizing and cherishing.** You feel happy about your choice.
5. **Affirming.** You are willing to affirm your choice to others.
6. **Acted upon.** You act upon your choice. Although values are embraced mentally and emotionally, the actions they produce “speak louder than words.”
to express the reasons for their values. They also need help clarifying their questions and concerns.

The REBIRTH materials are being enthusiastically received by Adventist parents and teachers. Kent George, a teacher from Palawan, Philippines, says: “Our school selects a value from REBIRTH to feature every week. We tell stories about the selected value and bring it into our discussions during the different class subjects. The REBIRTH materials give us a visual and systematic way to talk about the core values we are trying to teach in our school.”

Eleanor Roque, associate director of education for the North Philippine Union, says: “The teaching of values is so important and central to the mission and objectives of our Adventist schools that we want every teacher involved. Every classroom has the REBIRTH flip chart and resource book, and it provides an organizational structure and visual aid for addressing the essential values we want our students to adopt.”

The REBIRTH materials are not intended to take the place of the Bible or values classes but serve as a supplement for teachers or parents as they seek to emphasize or teach values. The materials provide a starting place and organization for the work of teaching Christ-centered character traits and beliefs.

The REBIRTH materials are now all on the Web. See http://www.ssd.org/rebirth. For more information, contact the Southern Asia-Pacific Division Education Department by E-mail at edu@ssd.org

**In developing the curriculum materials, we sought to provide a simple definition of each value that helps students understand what is right and good and how it came from God.**

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**Value - “Law of God”**

**Value - “Creation”**

**Value - “Church Organization”**

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On May 1, 2003, 198 students 7 to 16 years of age were trapped under a pile of rubble following an earthquake in southeastern Turkey. They had been sleeping in a four-story dormitory of the Celtiksuyu Boarding School when the quake hit. Two days later, 60 students were still buried beneath the rubble, 45 bodies had been recovered, and no more cries for help were heard. The parents immediately filed a lawsuit against the dormitory’s builders. The prime minister vowed to hold responsible both the builders and those who failed to inspect the building. Ironically, the school’s teachers lived in a nearby building that was largely undamaged.

In far too many cases, disasters such as this must happen before school administrators seriously consider appropriate preventive measures. Yet, Proverbs urges the wise to learn from the ants, which store their winter provisions during the summer time (6:8).

In this case, the risk was well known. Previous earthquakes had killed thousands of people only a few miles away. Yet, only one of the school’s residences was built wisely; the other might as well have been built on the sand (Matthew 7:26, 27).

Disasters are a serious threat to schools worldwide. In order for educators to prevent and manage disasters, they must have a basic knowledge about what to expect.

But first, a definition: Disasters are major crises that result in damage to property, sickness, injury, and/or death and that cannot be prevented or managed through applying standard protocols or resources. Disasters come under three categories: natural, non-natural (including manmade), and other, such as infectious disease outbreaks. This article will give a brief outline of the essentials for disaster preparedness and emergency response plans.

Natural disasters: Unpreventable and largely uncontrollable, natural disasters often occur...
with little warning. They include floods, earthquakes, volcano eruptions, mudslides, and windstorms.

• Because of deforestation, urbanization, and the consequences of El Nino, floods—which cause 30 percent of disasters worldwide—have been increasing more rapidly than any other type of disaster. Floods can cause severe loss of life and property. The threat is increasing due to the high concentrations of people living on alluvial plains. Recent floods in Vietnam, Russia, and Kenya killed a total of at least 109 school children, submerged more than 690 schools, damaged some 100 educational institutions, and kept almost 157,000 students out of school for an extended period. However, this toll could have been reduced, as meteorologists and hydrologists can now predict floods with a high level of accuracy.

• Earthquakes, generally regarded as the most terrifying and ruinous of all forces of nature, have also taken a toll on schools. Three months prior to the recent earthquake in Turkey, children in China’s Xinjiang province were injured and killed as their school buildings collapsed from a quake, which destroyed or damaged 900 classrooms. On October 31, 2002, 26 students and one teacher in San Giuliano, Italy, were killed when an earthquake struck, leveling their school.

Compared to other disasters in Asia in the 1990s, earthquakes caused the most economic loss. Many cities
in developing nations such as Lima, Peru; Santiago, Chile; Quito, Ecuador; and Caracas, Venezuela, are especially vulnerable. They lie on or near dangerous fault lines, and their residents are generally unable to afford structures that can withstand the damage. Even in wealthier countries, evidence suggests that building schools on firm ground and/or adding structural reinforcement could have averted tragedies.

- **Violent volcanic eruptions**, especially those leading to lava flows, mud streams, clouds of volcanic gases, and even tsunamis can leave a trail of death and destruction. In January 2003, lava from a volcano 10 miles north reached the center of Goma, the most populous eastern city in the Democratic Republic of Congo. About 20 percent of the city was wiped out, including 45 schools, and more than 100 people were killed. Similarly, a mudslide in Tajikistan in August 2002 seriously damaged a school and killed 24 residents in one mountain village.

Experts can use data about previous eruptions to forecast volcanoes and lava flows. Magnetic fluctuation and unrest by animals helped forecasters predict an eruption in Hawaii with surprising accuracy.

- **Mud slides** may be predicted by monitoring the natural disasters that provoke them, such as floods. Fighting deforestation and soil erosion, as well as avoiding construction in dangerous areas (such as locations downhill from rivers) are several ways to prevent schools from being inundated by mud slides.

- **Windstorms**. Windstorms’ serious danger to schools worldwide can also be minimized. In the 1990s, floods and windstorms were not only the most frequent disasters in Asia and the Americas, but they also killed the largest number of people. Windstorms were the most frequent disasters in Oceania, and they affected the greatest number of people in both Oceania and Europe. Compared to other disasters, windstorms caused the most economic damage in Africa, 41 percent of economic losses in Oceania, and half of the reported economic damage in the Americas. For example, Hurricane Hugo damaged 51 of the 72 schools in Charleston, South Carolina.

- **Tornados**, whose wind velocity can top 200 miles per hour, originate from violent thunderstorms. Schools can prevent tornado injuries by developing “redundant warning systems”
such as shelters, appropriate drills, and media alerts.\textsuperscript{16}

- Hurricanes are powerful storms originating from the Atlantic, whereas typhoons come from the Pacific Ocean and China seas.\textsuperscript{17} The greatest damage to life and property from hurricanes or cyclones—whose winds may reach 300 km/h—actually result from tidal waves and flash floods. These may severely affect food availability by destroying standing crops as well as food stocks. However, radar, satellite data, and even warnings from airplanes are helping forecasters predict hurricane severity and their likely path of destruction.\textsuperscript{18}

Non-natural disasters: Schools are also threatened by non-natural disasters. In the 1990s, Europe was the only continent where non-natural disasters caused more deaths (58 percent of the total) than natural disasters. Half of these deaths were due to transportation accidents.\textsuperscript{19}

Manmade disasters: One of the greatest concerns for schools is acts of war, including torture, taking of hostages or prisoners of war, invasions, hijacking, and terrorist attacks.\textsuperscript{20} While such acts against children may have been unthinkable years ago, recent experience shows that children, because they are highly prized by their families, have become a target of violence.\textsuperscript{21} One particularly deadly manmade disaster is bio-terrorism, which may involve chemical, biological, or radiological attacks.\textsuperscript{22}

Students and teachers may get caught in the crossfire when war breaks out. In September 2002, 160 students—mostly Americans—and 39 staff members at an international missionary school in Ivory Coast were stranded inside as rebels and government soldiers waged war outside. Mortars flew overhead, and 50 mm shells exploded against the walls.\textsuperscript{23} Before violence escalates, policies should be in place to help officials decide when evacuation is in order.

In the 1990s, floods and windstorms were not only the most frequent disasters in Asia and the Americas, but also killed the largest number of people.

Other: Other preventable disasters that may affect school communities include transportation-related accidents, structural damage to schools, infectious disease outbreaks, fires and explosions, and serious air pollution problems.

Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response—The School’s Role

Schools can play a very significant role both in responding to and preventing disaster. They can offer trained professionals to help the community in the process of recovery. In Charleston, South Carolina, the school’s maintenance employees agreed to work 12- to 15-hour days following a hurricane even though they themselves had no home.\textsuperscript{24}

Schools also provide a place for children to receive counseling and treatment. After September 11, 2001, one study shows that 58 percent of American children 4-18 years of age received in-school counseling for disaster-related issues.\textsuperscript{25}

Schools can function as a source of volunteers and a means of raising funds for the community. Following Hurricane Andrew, schools functioned as the primary social institution in their community. Teachers provided lessons and after-school activities in Red Cross shelters and relief camps. The Dade County, Florida, school system helped secure $11.5 million in federal funds to keep schools open during the summer and...
One of the greatest concerns for schools is acts of war, including torture, taking of hostages or prisoners of war, invasions, hijacking, and terrorist attacks.

be able to recognize in their students the warning signs of suicide and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

3. Preparing students: Research shows that children who have been adequately prepared are likely to suffer only minimal and short-term reactions to disaster. Self-efficacy, social support, and intellectual understanding will help adolescents cope. Preparedness through practice, especially using drills, helps children know how to respond to various disasters.

4. Alert and evacuation: Before an emergency occurs, contingency plans should be clearly spelled out. Plans to shelter-in-place should be made and communicated to all employees. Teachers and staff should be trained to evacuate students and turn off utilities.

5. Search, rescue, and first aid: Teachers, staff (including the school nurse), and even students should be taught first aid, as uninjured survivors may be the only help for some time after a disaster. Such training should include identifying necessary emergency medical service and proper use of basic equipment.

6. Returning to buildings or homes: Before people return to buildings following a disaster, experts and/or staff should ensure that there are no structural hazards, gas leaks, or live electrical wires. No candles, torches, or gas lanterns should be used; rather, people should return during the day and/or utilize battery-powered flashlights or lanterns. Schools should keep on hand waterproof gloves, rubber boots, and disinfectant, and maintain an up-to-date list of volunteers for clean up.

7. Coordination and communication: This may be the most important area in writing policy. Schools should spell out how service providers should be organized. It is also important to determine ahead of time how to communicate with parents and the community.

8. Role of school buildings: How will the school buildings be used during and following a disaster? People may want to use the campus as a temporary shelter. However, this may hinder the school’s ability to provide instruction.

9. Helping the most vulnerable: At each step, policies need to take into consideration children with special needs or in vulnerable populations.

Supplies to Stock

The school should keep the following items on hand: medical, food and water, and other general supplies:

1. Medical: bandages and antiseptic, splints, oxygen, oral airways, cervical spine stabilization, and anaphylaxis kit with epinephrine.

2. Food and water: Ready-to-eat foods that do not require refrigeration, and one gallon of bottled water per person should be stored at the shelter-in-place. If bottled water runs out, water in a toilet tank may be boiled and consumed. Food rations for an extended disaster situation should include a staple such as cereal, a source of concentrated energy (fat), and a source of concentrated protein. Use the following rules of thumb to estimate requirements: (a) 1,000 people can be sustained on 16 metric tons of food per month, (b) two cubic meters is needed in order to store one metric ton of food.

3. General: First aid kits; flashlights, battery-powered radio and extra batteries; duct tape and scissors; plastic sheeting and towels; stove and fuel for boiling water, a working telephone.

Long-term disaster response:
Disaster experts and educators with experience in natural disasters point out that: “emotional scars, logistical

Instructions
A school emergency and disaster preparedness plan should include the following:

1. Risk assessment: Identify and correct hazards such as poorly constructed buildings, places where water may erupt during flooding, and fire hazards.

2. Teacher preparation: Teachers need to learn how disasters affect children and how to respond to children’s questions and anxieties. They need to help children understand potential dangers in their environment such as landslides, floods, falling objects like trees and high-voltage cables, and airborne hazards propelled by high winds. Teachers should also

to expand library hours. In Iowa, the school community donated time to make sandbags, cook meals, and assist the Red Cross at shelters in a variety of ways, and the Ottumwa Education Association donated $2,000 for flood relief.

Important Things for Schools to Do or Have on Hand for Emergencies

- Develop a disaster preparedness and emergency response plan.
- Reinforce buildings if needed.
- Conduct periodic drills.
- Train teachers to perform first aid and recognize warning signs of suicide as well as indicators of post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Advise students about wading or driving through water where power lines or other hazards lurk.
- Develop policies that take into consideration children with special needs.
- Keep on hand stocks of food, water, first-aid kits, flashlights, battery-powered radio and extra batteries, duct tape and scissors, plastic sheeting and towels, and a working telephone or two-way radio (walkie-talkies).

- Estimate requirements: (a) 1,000 people can be sustained on 16 metric tons of food per month, (b) two cubic meters is needed in order to store one metric ton of food.

- One of the greatest concerns for schools is acts of war, including torture, taking of hostages or prisoners of war, invasions, hijacking, and terrorist attacks.

- Be able to recognize in their students the warning signs of suicide and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

- Research shows that children who have been adequately prepared are likely to suffer only minimal and short-term reactions to disaster. Self-efficacy, social support, and intellectual understanding will help adolescents cope.

- Preparedness through practice, especially using drills, helps children know how to respond to various disasters.

- Before an emergency occurs, contingency plans should be clearly spelled out. Plans to shelter-in-place should be made and communicated to all employees.

- Teachers and staff should be trained to evacuate students and turn off utilities.

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- How will the school buildings be used during and following a disaster? People may want to use the campus as a temporary shelter. However, this may hinder the school’s ability to provide instruction.

- At each step, policies need to take into consideration children with special needs or in vulnerable populations.

- The school should keep the following items on hand: medical, food and water, and other general supplies:

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  - General: First aid kits; flashlights, battery-powered radio and extra batteries; duct tape and scissors; plastic sheeting and towels; stove and fuel for boiling water, a working telephone.

- Disasters experts and educators with experience in natural disasters point out that: “emotional scars, logistical
nightmares, financial problems, and red tape that follow such an event can persist long after the relief workers have departed and the television cameras have gone.\textsuperscript{47} The disaster coordination team should re-organize itself to deal with such problems once the emergency is over.\textsuperscript{48}

Identifying those most at risk: The school staff should play a key role in monitoring children’s behavior, performance, and particularly their negative reactions.\textsuperscript{49} For example, teachers should watch for the warning signs of depression and suicide.

Children who are closest to the disaster, who are affected more severely, who receive little social support, or whose lives are most disrupted are more vulnerable to emotional stress.\textsuperscript{50} Children with serious health conditions may also be more psychologically vulnerable. In one study, asthmatic children showed a significantly higher level of distress following a volcanic eruption.\textsuperscript{51}

Counseling: If you have a large group of disaster survivors, provide group treatments as the first line of therapy. Divide by gender, in groups of six to eight.\textsuperscript{52} After Hurricane Hugo, the use of Catastrophic Stress Intervention (CSI), a long-term psychosocial nursing assistance designed with precise protocols for small and large groups, significantly decreased adolescents’ mental anguish in an easy and cost-effective manner. Its researchers found that the first 12 to 24 months following a catastrophic event was the best and most economical time for intervention.\textsuperscript{53}

Community challenges and recovery: Since the school provides an ordered and natural environment for children, it should function as a key community resource for crisis intervention.\textsuperscript{54} First, students should be allowed to explore their own feelings and thoughts relating to the disaster. Some schools have even developed their own situation-specific curricula.\textsuperscript{55} Second, the school can act as a resource for the community’s recovery. School officials with experience in this area agree that getting the school functioning again is of utmost importance to regaining normalcy for the community at large.\textsuperscript{56} For Christian schools especially, working with the community to recover from a disaster provides a great witnessing opportunity as well as a good way to train students for community service.

Although schools and their communities have historically worked together toward recovery, outside assistance has also been helpful. Following a flood in Valmeyer, Illinois, the entire town cooperated to restore the school system. They dug 850 holes in which they set up concrete piers for 30 portable classrooms.

School officials should not hesitate to request assistance early on, as
needed. A good first step is to ask a donor to send an expert to assess the damage and create a reconstruction and rehabilitation program.

Disaster recovery depends on the population’s access to relevant information, readiness for the event, the environmental conditions that reduce or increase vulnerability, and the availability of insurance, savings, and other resources. All schools and their communities will face challenges in the areas of communication, transportation, finances, and clean-up.

The disaster coordination team needs to have on hand a reliable means of communication “it’s best not to rely on the telephone, since lines may be down.” Although food supplies may be close by, they may be difficult to obtain due to transportation, communication and distribution problems, or lack of money to obtain food.

Conclusion: Despite the enormous challenges that disasters bring, some schools have transformed obstacles into opportunities. Following a hurricane, Dade County, Florida, school officials developed a $25 million initiative to weave educational reforms, including a competency-based curriculum, into the process of reconstruction. The new schools offer preschool services, before- and after-school programs, family resource centers, and a multitude of other social services. They proved that visionary school leaders can combine a rebound from disaster with increased government efficiency and add a proud chapter to the school district’s annals.

Advancements such as new software that measures the magnitude of approaching earthquakes offer new hope for preventing injury and death in schools. With such equipment, a school located 35 miles from an earthquake’s epicenter would have a
15-second alert; during this time, students could move away from windows and tuck themselves underneath their desks.\(^6\)

However, our greatest hope is the Lord’s promises: “In times of disaster they [the blameless] will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty” (Psalm 37:19, NIV). “If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; even the LORD, who is my refuge—make the Most High your dwelling—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.” (Psalm 91:9-12, NIV). Though disaster may come near, as believers we need not be afraid, but rather trust in the Lord and learn from the wisdom of His Word and His creation.\(^7\)

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Schools can play a very significant role both in responding to and preventing disaster.


17. Ibid., p. 3.

18. WHO 1989, p. 47; Landesman, p. 3.


26. Viadero, p. 3.


31. La Greca, et al., p. 169.


34. Landesman, p. 4.


37. Landesman, p. 5.

38. Ibid., p. 10.

39. Those seeking to help through interventions or research.

40. La Greca, et al., p. 368.


42. La Greca, et al., p. 420.

43. Sapien and Allen, p. 5.


47. Viadero, p. 1.


49. La Greca, et al., p. 395.

50. Viadero, p. 2.


52. La Greca, et al., p. 234.


54. La Greca, et al., p. 394.

55. Ibid., p. 66.

56. Viadero, p. 3.

57. Landesman, p. 3.


60. Viadero, p. 5.

Binge Drinking

A New College Epidemic

Make a punch, man. The chicks go for punch. It tastes like a fruit drink, and anyway, everyone thinks it’s a light drink . . . .”

“Yeah, but what are you going to spike it with?”

“Vodka, of course—it’s got hardly any taste, so we can make the punch quite strong.”

The “boys” were making their party concoction in a large plastic tub. They poured in fruit juices and even—in a stroke of culinary genius—opened a couple of cans of peaches, blended them, and added the slurry to the juice. “Just like Mom makes for Sunday company,” Tom gave John a wink.

“Have you got the vodka?” asked John.

“Yeah. It’s under my bed.”

Four bottles of vodka went into the punch. “How’s it taste?” “Not bad.” “How many are you expecting to the party?” “Perhaps 20.” “Then I’ll add a couple more bottles of vodka. That’s a fair-sized tub.”

“Are you inviting Steve?” asked John. “No, he’s too uptight; anyway, I want to make a move on his sister Mandy if I can get her loosened up.”

Such are the preparations at colleges around the U.S.A. and other places for the “big bash” events that are proliferating as weekend college “binge-outs.”

Binge drinking (consuming, at one sitting, five or more drinks for males, or four or more for females) is a major problem among young people. In fact, high-risk alcohol and other drug use is considered the “most widespread health problem on college and university campuses in the United States.”

By Allan R. Handysides

High-risk alcohol and other drug use is considered the “most widespread health problem on college and university campuses in the United States.”

Studies suggest that between 1993 and 2001, approximately 44 percent of college students
were heavy drinkers, defined for men as five or more drinks in a row on at least one occasion in the past two weeks, and for women as four or more drinks.²

A report developed by a special taskforce on U.S. college drinking of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA),¹ composed of college presidents, alcohol researchers, and students, and reported by Hingson, reports that each year in the U.S.:

• Some 14,000 college students between 18 and 24 years of age die from unintentional injuries related to alcohol, and more than 150,000 develop an alcohol-related health problem.

• 500,000 students in the same age group are unintentionally injured while under the influence of alcohol.

• More than 600,000 college students are assaulted by another student, and more than 70,000 suffer sexual assault or date rape related to alcohol.

Other startling facts about alcohol use by college students:

• As many as 360,000 of America’s 12 million undergraduates will ultimately die from alcohol-related causes. This is more than the total number who will be awarded advanced degrees.

• Each year, American college students spend $5.5 billion on alcohol (mostly beer). This is more than they spend on books, soda, coffee, juice, and milk combined.

Heavy drinking is occurring at younger ages, as well. Binge drinking during the past 30 days was reported by eight percent of youth ages 12 to 17. Among persons under the legal drinking age (12 to 20 years old), 15 percent were binge drinkers, and seven percent were heavy drinkers.⁴

Alcohol poisoning—a severe and potentially fatal physical reaction to an alcohol overdose—is the most serious consequence of binge drinking. With the HIV/AIDS epidemic raging, there is increasing concern about the combination of alcohol consumption and unsafe sex, with no precautions against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease. This, in the U.S., involves some 400,000 students annually, a quarter of whom (100,000) are so intoxicated, they don’t know whether they consented or not.⁵

U.S. students missing class, falling behind, or doing poorly because of alcohol amount to 25 percent of the student body. Hingson reports that in 2001, between 1.2 and 1.5 percent of students tried to commit suicide due to drinking or drug use, and 2.1 million students drove while under the

Each year, American college students spend $5.5 billion on alcohol (mostly beer). This is more than they spend on books, soda, coffee, juice, and milk combined.
influence of alcohol.6 Not only are these students likely to harm themselves, some 11 percent of them admit to vandalism while under the influence of alcohol.7 Each year, some five percent of four-year U.S. college students become involved with police or campus security over alcohol problems, and some 110,000 students are arrested for an alcohol-related violation.4

It does not take a genius to deduce that American colleges have a crisis on their hands. In fact, U.S. college drinking constitutes a serious public health problem.

Alcohol consumption is not just an American problem. The World Health Organization calls abuse of alcoholic beverages “one of the most serious public health problems in the world.”9

The age when one begins to drink is related to alcohol dependency. More than 40 percent of persons who began drinking before age 15 were diagnosed as alcohol-dependent at some point in their lives; compared to only about 10 percent of those starting at age 20 or older.10 These figures offer a most powerful argument for abstinence.

Of special concern is alcohol consumption by college women. Women tolerate alcohol less well than men, so those who attempt to compete with men to see “who can hold their liquor best” are putting themselves at serious risk. Not only do females weigh less than males—and therefore have less total body water to dilute the alcohol—but they also have smaller livers, so their bodies have a harder time cleansing alcohol from their systems.

The liver is the body’s major detoxification center. Here, enzymes break down the alcohol so it can be absorbed. Energy is released from alcohol metabolism at a rate of seven calories per gram.

A lcohol is alcohol, whether in hard liquor, wine, or beer. The alcohol content of a 10-ounce can of beer, a five-ounce glass of wine, or a shot of liquor (1.5 ounces) is the same. This means that the “dainty” drinks women consume, thinking they are less toxic, are just as damaging as a shot of hard liquor when compared “drink” to “drink.” In addition, alcohol’s empty calories supply no nutrients such as vitamins or minerals. This may contribute not only to weight gain, but also to the “fatty liver” of many regular drinkers, a factor in the development of cirrhosis.

Binge drinking, or drinking heavily over a period of time, is a major health hazard during pregnancy, and is more common among 18- to 24-year-olds—also a woman’s prime fertility period. White women are more likely to drink than black women; but the latter drink more heavily, as a group, if they do drink.11

Even moderate drinking is hazardous to the fetus. There is no “safe” level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Alcohol in any concentration is a toxic poison. Its effect is particularly noticeable in developing brain tissue. The brain’s functional reserve allows it to compensate for minor damage, so the effect of alcohol on the fetus is often hard to measure. But a child whose intelligence is only average might have had an intellect in the exceptional range if his or her mother had not drunk alcohol during pregnancy.

Because of her lower concentration of body water, a woman will have a higher blood concentration after consuming a smaller amount of alcohol, compared to a man of the same weight. In addition, women process alcohol more slowly than men, owing to differences in liver mass.12 Women also develop alcohol-related liver damage sooner than men, and at a
lower level of consumption. They are more likely to die of cirrhosis of the liver.13 Because of their different response to alcohol, women need different strategies for managing alcoholism.

Other alcohol-related risks for women include the following:

- Breast cancer risk increases when drinking exceeds one drink per day.14
- Violent victimization of young women increases in the circles of those drinking alcohol. They are more likely to be shoved, kicked, or punched than their peers who attend religious services and have frequent parental monitoring.15 Such young women are mixing with a crowd that drinks more and are, consequently, less controlled in their behavior. Alcohol consumption may also be an indicator of poor self-esteem and social skills.

- There is some evidence of higher levels of violence in homes when premarital drinking has occurred during the courtship. In fact, though husband drinking patterns are the predominant factor in alcohol-related domestic violence, problem drinking by wives has also been linked to husband-to-wife aggression.16

Data such as these should give pause for thought to parents, educators, and students. Schools need to establish alcohol education programs and effective disciplinary deterrents to student drinking. Many students are concerned about their peers’ destructive behavior and can be induced to participate in drinking prevention programs and peer counseling.

The search for excuses to drink—such as the oft-quoted benefit to middle-aged persons of one drink per day, is for many but a desire to salve the conscience. Even young people are aware of the toll of alcohol in violence, automobile accidents, and crime.

Middle-aged persons with fatty plaque buildup in their blood vessels may gain some limited benefit from the anticoagulant (blood-thinning) results of consuming one drink per day, but there is no evidence of such benefit in healthy people. In fact, experts consider this one positive effect insufficient to overcome the many risks of alcohol. No editorial on the subject in medical journals has recommended that people start drinking for health reasons, despite the impression fostered by the liquor industry.

Even individuals who would benefit from alcohol’s anticoagulant effect can obtain the same results by taking a low-dose aspirin each day, with none of the negative side effects of alcohol. Alcohol would never pass FDA approval as a medication, if it were recommended for this purpose.

Rather than being beneficial to society, its side effects are measured in billions of dollars of health costs, property damage, human misery, and premature mortality.

A number of studies have shown that there are ways to change these statistics.17 Working out of the Harvard School of Public Health, Wechsler and his associates report: “Students who attend college, in states that have most restrictions on underage drinking, high volume consumption, and sales of alcoholic beverages, and devote more resources to enforcing drunk driving laws, report less drinking and driving.”18

An article by the same team reported on the role of low prices and special promotions of alcohol. Studying more than 10,000 students at 118 colleges, they found special weekend low price sales and large volume cases of alcohol were positively associated with the amount of alcohol consumed by students.

The authors concluded: “The regulation of marketing practices such as sales prices, promotions, and advertisements may be important
strategies to reduce binge drinking and its accompanying problems.18

Interventions at the college level need to take into account the environment of the college, the personality traits of students, and the cognitive processes that help to form the students’ thinking and expectations in relation to drinking. The institution can shape many of the emotional, social, and interpersonal factors related to student drinking behavior.

What about students attending Christian colleges—and particularly, Adventist schools? Those piously thinking that this is “not an Adventist problem” need to reacquaint themselves with Gary Hopkins’ data which—though showing a smaller percentage of alcohol and drug usage—nevertheless confirm anecdotal impressions that, indeed, Adventist schools are not immune to these problems.20 It is time for parents, school officials, board members, and students to work together to implement a comprehensive program like the 3-in-1 program recommended by the taskforce of the NIAAA.21

Its recommendations include a research base, the collection of baseline information, the setting of incremental goals, and an ongoing method of evaluation. Outside support is available, and in the U.S., funding from federal, state, and local agencies is there for the asking for well-planned programs.

Research strongly supports a program of multiple components that complement one another. These must be integrated so that the program has a clear target and unified objectives. The first target is the “at-risk” or “alcohol-dependent drinkers” as individuals. The second is the student body as a whole. The third target is the community of the college (teachers, administrators, staff, and students) and its surrounding community.22

The NIAAA taskforce recommends that presidents, administrators, college prevention specialists, students, and community members think in broad and comprehensive ways about college drinking. Student drinking is the outcome of multiple factors, including genetic and biologic factors, family and cultural background, previous drinking exposure, and student activity and behavioral patterns. This makes a multifaceted approach vital.

Alcohol problems form a continuum from occasional misuse to serious dependency. Individual students need to be engaged in a process of screening and support on a one-to-one basis.

The student body as a whole is best addressed by examining the factors on campus that encourage or permit alcohol usage. These include the availability and promotion of alcohol. On an Adventist campus, important factors include students having large amounts of unstructured time, inconsistent publicity and enforcement of campus policies and local laws, and perhaps most significant—student perceptions of alcohol usage as the norm.

The community of the college, and the community in general, can discourage college drinking through collaborative strategies that involve student affairs offices, residence life directors, local police, retail alcohol outlets, and even the courts.

Of course, the number one initiative is a decision by administration to address the problem in a way that is perceived as supportive of students rather than condemnatory. It is important to change the culture of drinking at an early stage because life patterns quickly become entrenched. Family drinking patterns can visit the ravages of alcohol on multiple generations.

But we must move beyond the statistics and the cold numbers to the overall societal burden created by school and college drinking, to put faces on the problem. The faces should be those of our children and loved ones. Once we see that the lives at stake are those we love, we may be moved to become involved, to change the attitudes from those that foster consumption of this legal drug to ac-
tively discouraging its use.

For educators, this problem is not going to go away spontaneously. It affects students’ grades and their health, as well as their ability to benefit from education and to connect with God. In an Adventist setting, we must be concerned not just with transmitting information, but also with developing the whole person.

Behavioral change requires complex interactions. Dissemination of information is insufficient to achieve behavior modification. Behavior is predominantly determined by the presence of meaningful relationships. The influence of a caring adult is very important in teen behavior. Teacher-student relationships are known to be of a high order of influence, where these are positive.

Student-to-student relationships are also influential, but not to the same extent as teacher-student interactions. A sense of belonging and connectedness, as was shown in the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescents, is the single most powerful influence on behavior.3

This places a high responsibility on the educator to personalize his or her interaction with students. Such interactions must be spontaneous and real, rather than contrived and forced.

Teachers must show they really do care—not only about students’ grades, but also about their personal lives. Ellen White puts it well: “Our schools . . . should be family schools, where every student will receive special help from his teachers as the members of the family should receive help in the home. Tenderness, sympathy, unity, and love are to be cherished. There should be unselfish, devoted, faithful teachers, teachers who are constrained by the love of God and who, with hearts full of tenderness, will have a care for the health and happiness of the students.”4

Adventist educators, as professionals with a sacred vocation, must commit themselves to helping students make good choices for time and eternity.
Theology for Children

Three-year-old Alisha wore a puzzled expression as her family settled themselves on a church pew, waiting for the service to begin. Soon Mother felt a tug on her sleeve and heard Alisha whisper, “Mommy, Teacher said the church is God’s house. Where is His bed? Where does He cook?” Mommy tried to hide her amusement as she replied, “I’ll explain after church.”

Children often misunderstand theological concepts. After all, many adults are not too clear themselves on the meaning of some theological ideas, and books on the subject are not generally known as light reading. Many theological ideas are abstract and symbolic, hard for children to understand. So the teacher has the responsibility to help explain theology to students. The really important parts are not difficult to understand.

Learning Theological Concepts

When children are very young, they do not have the mental ability to understand theological ideas. But they are building a foundation for later theological thought. Every experience the child has is a part of the foundation for later thinking processes and for understanding theology.

Young children have difficulty putting all the facts together to form a concept. For example, a young child might call every woman “Mommy” and every man “Daddy.” Later on, the child would learn that mommy, sister, and grandma are all women. We say the child has learned the concept of women. As thinking progresses, the child will realize that men and women are people. For young children, facts can be disjointed. Two unrelated facts might become linked in the child’s mind and cause confusion.

Many experiences help to shape a child’s theological concepts. Five-year-old Brianna, learning about the second coming of Jesus, might have these thoughts or experiences:

By Donna J. Habenicht and Larry Burton
• Brianna sees a picture of Jesus coming and notices the open graves. She feels afraid.
• Teacher said Jesus will come soon, but He hasn’t come yet! He should be here by now.
• Teacher said everybody would see Jesus when He comes. Brianna wonders whether Jesus will be on TV.
• Brianna’s playmate told her that Jesus is going to burn all the bad people when He comes. She didn’t obey her mommy. Will Jesus burn her?
• Brianna went to her granddaddy’s funeral. Mommy says Granddaddy will come out from the grave when Jesus comes. Brianna wonders who will dig the dirt from the grave so Granddaddy can get out.
• Mommy goes out for the evening. Brianna wonders if Jesus will come while she is gone. How would she find Mommy?
• Mommy said Jesus was very unhappy with her because she told a lie. Brianna’s afraid. She doesn’t want Jesus to come.
• Teacher says all the good people will go up in the air to meet Jesus. Brianna wonders whether there will be airplanes or helicopters or rockets to take all the people.
• Mommy reads a story about heaven. It shows a picture of a family in white robes. Brianna thinks that wouldn’t be very much fun—she couldn’t play because her robe would get dirty.
• Brianna’s mommy and daddy are divorced. She wonders whether Jesus will know where to find her daddy when He comes. Will she and Mommy and Daddy be together as a family again in heaven?

All of these thoughts and experiences—and others—might be part of Brianna’s concept of the second coming of Christ.

The child’s home provides a very important foundation for theological and doctrinal ideas. Children associate many ideas about God with the way they feel about their parents and relate to them. Children also hear many comments about theological issues at church and at school, which influence their thinking.

Mental Development and Theological Ideas

Children’s stages of mental development will influence what theological ideas they can understand and whether they associate doctrines with a particular church. Research on children’s thinking about churches shows that before age 7, most children have no understanding of what it means to belong to a certain church or what that church believes. Many
Many theological ideas are abstract and symbolic, hard for children to understand.

They have been taught, but without any real idea of what it means. Never urge children to learn theological concepts that are too advanced for their level of thinking.

Children have no way of checking their own observations or what adults tell them. They must depend on their senses, because they do not yet have the mental capacity to judge and reason. They believe what others tell them, and sometimes misunderstand what is being said. Children can also pick up much misinformation from their friends who don’t understand any more than they do.

Sometimes a child’s previous experiences cause him or her to draw conclusions contrary to biblical concepts. Mickey insisted that the Flood story his teacher told was wrong. “It didn’t happen that way,” he said. “I know. I saw a video.” Young children believe TV and videos are real life. Religious videos create much confusion because of their inaccuracies.

Many words have more than one meaning. While you may be perfectly clear about the meaning you are trying to convey, the child may infer something else. Visuals may be misleading (such as videos), or perhaps no visual is used when one is needed. One little boy thought Peter walked on water covered with ice, but his brother knew what really happened because his teacher had shown the class a picture of Peter walking on the water.

Children often hear words incorrectly, especially in songs. When words are unfamiliar, they insert a word they know and come up with an incorrect idea of what is being taught. One little girl thought the birth of Jesus was announced by angels “While shepherds washed their socks by night.” Another child, asked if he had seen the Dead Sea Scrolls at a Chicago museum, responded, “Mom, why did we want to go see the Dead Sea squirrels?” Another child, asked to recite the text “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted,” responded, “He that humbleth himself shall be exhausted.”

Try asking kindergartners or primary-grade children to tell you what “He’s the bright and morning Star,”

How Misconceptions Occur

Childish misconceptions about scriptural ideas can occur for many reasons. First, many children experience mental overstimulation. Too much input from the mass media clutters their minds with ideas that they cannot really organize or assimilate.

Sometimes teachers mistake quantity for quality, and urge children to memorize more and more Bible verses, to know more and more stories, without paying attention to how much they really understand. Children may repeat mechanically what
“amazing grace,” “fishers of men,” or “This little light of mine” mean. You may be surprised at the response.

Checking Children’s Thinking

To understand what your students are thinking, first study child development. Knowing the kind of thinking most children do at a particular age will help you identify ideas that might be confusing. You will also be able to listen with greater understanding.

Listening to your students’ conversation is very helpful. Listen to the meanings given to stories and events. Listen to how songs are sung. Listen to their answers to questions. Careful observation will give you invaluable insights into their thinking.

Talking with your students informally will also help you find out what they are thinking. Ask questions about common religious words and ideas. When they give you pat answers, be wary. These are not evidence of insight and understanding. Pursue the idea further. Ask them what they think the word really means.

Often children can express their religious ideas better through art, music, or role playing than in words. Ask your students to draw a picture of the Bible story. You may be amazed at their interpretations. Then you will have an opportunity to clarify misconceptions. After a child has drawn a picture, ask him or her to tell you about it. Just say simply, “Tell me about your picture.” Never make fun of what the child says or has drawn. If the explanation reveals misconceptions, note these for future reteaching. Never belittle or embarrass a student because of a misconception.

More than one child has drawn Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden in a car driven by an angel or Jesus. When teachers say, “Adam and Eve were driven out of their beautiful garden,” they set young children up for this kind of misconception. Watch your words carefully, especially when teaching younger students.

Learning Correct Theological Ideas

1. Be sure you understand clearly what you are trying to teach your students. If you are fuzzy about the meaning of salvation, you will have difficulty explaining it.

2. Use easy-to-understand words. Avoid complicated religious phrases and symbolic explanations. On the other hand, be sure your simple explanation is doctrinally correct.

3. Use familiar objects and everyday events to teach Bible truths.

4. Use illustrations familiar to the child.

5. Explain the Bible lesson using objects to handle or visuals to look at.

6. Illustrate your teaching with stories.

7. Don’t rush the students. Use short periods of instruction. Teach here a little and there a little. Give the students time to digest what they are learning.

8. Do not confuse the students with many ideas at a time; teach one idea well before moving on to another.

9. Teach the same idea in many different ways. Strive for real understanding of a few very important ideas rather than encyclopedic knowledge with little understanding. Teach an
# THEOLOGY FOR CHILDREN
from Ellen G. White

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theological Idea</th>
<th>What to Teach</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God the Father</td>
<td>God is a loving father who wants loving obedience from each child. God is</td>
<td>Child Guidance 487, 548; Testimonies for the Church vol. 8, 320; Adventist Home 321</td>
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<td>Law of God</td>
<td>Children should love God and obey His law. They need to understand what is</td>
<td>Child Guidance 43, 81, 89, 490</td>
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<td>right and what is wrong.</td>
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<td>Life of Jesus</td>
<td>Tell your students about Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection as soon as</td>
<td>Child Guidance 487, 494; Adventist Home 320, 321; Testimonies vol. 8, 320</td>
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<td></td>
<td>they can understand. Associate every lesson with Christ. Help them understand</td>
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<td></td>
<td>that God shows His love through Jesus.</td>
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<td>Scripture</td>
<td>The children should learn to love the Bible as the rule of life. The Holy</td>
<td>Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students 172</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spirit will help them understand. Reading the Bible is very important.</td>
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<td>Salvation</td>
<td>Teach the Plan of Salvation simply. Disobeying God’s law is sin. Jesus will</td>
<td>Counsels on Sabbath School Work 79, 80; Child Guidance 490, 491; Messages to Young People 15; Testimonies vol. 5, 520</td>
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<td>forgive sins; help your students believe He does. They should ask daily.</td>
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<td>Invite them to give their hearts to God. Help them to understand that Jesus</td>
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<td>loves us so much that He came to live on Earth and to die so we might be</td>
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<td>forgiven. Teach with love and tenderness. Explain about the Day of Atonement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and forgiveness.</td>
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<td>Victorious Life</td>
<td>Help your students look to God for strength. He hears their prayers. If they</td>
<td>Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students 109, 50, 131; Testimonies vol. 2, 287;</td>
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<td>believe and trust God, He will send the Holy Spirit. Encourage them to</td>
<td>Child Guidance 146, 147, 172, 173</td>
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<td>thank God for His goodness and to use the Bible as a guide and help. With</td>
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<td>God’s help, they can be true to Him in all circumstances. Explain how to</td>
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<td>obtain eternal life.</td>
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<td>Creation</td>
<td>Nature is God’s second book. Rightly understood, it teaches many different</td>
<td>Testimonies vol. 8, 326, 327; Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students 185-190; Education 99-120</td>
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<td>lessons—God’s care, love, creation of the world, sin and suffering, the new</td>
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<td>earth. Provide a strong foundation on creationism.</td>
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<td>Healthful Living</td>
<td>Teach about self-control and self-denial, the laws of health, and the function</td>
<td>Testimonies vol. 3, 567; Child Guidance 104, 362</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of the human body. Help your students understand that many kinds of illness</td>
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<td>are caused by what one does.</td>
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<td>Heaven</td>
<td>Describes the glories of heaven and how to enter the Holy City.</td>
<td>Child Guidance 487, 488</td>
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<td>Pillars of Faith</td>
<td>Help your students understand the pillars of the faith, the reasons why</td>
<td>Testimonies vol. 5, 330, 331</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sevent-day Adventists are separate and distinct from the world.</td>
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<td>Prayer</td>
<td>Teach your students how to pray clearly, distinctly, and simply. Help them</td>
<td>Child Guidance 522, 523</td>
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<td>memorize the Lord’s Prayer.</td>
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<td>Reverence in</td>
<td>Teach your students to have the highest reverence for God and His house.</td>
<td>Child Guidance 541, 542; Testimonies vol. 5, 494</td>
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<td>Worship</td>
<td>Describe proper deportment in the sanctuary and in other religious settings.</td>
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<td>Sabbath</td>
<td>Teach your students about Sabbath observance and preparation and about the</td>
<td>Child Guidance 530; Testimonies vol. 6, 193, 356; Education 251</td>
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<td>importance of attending worship services. Explain that keeping the first day</td>
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<td>of the week is not true Sabbath keeping since it contradicts God’s law.</td>
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<td>Service</td>
<td>Teach your students to be helpful to others, starting with their own family.</td>
<td>Adventist Home 286, 486, 487</td>
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<td>Encourage missionary activities.</td>
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<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>Teach your students to deny self and to give to others or earn money to</td>
<td>Counsels on Sabbath School Work 139-143</td>
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<td>help others. Help them understand the need to return tithe and offerings.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Center birthday celebrations around God’s blessings.</td>
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**KEYS TO THEOLOGY FOR CHILDREN**

- Teach simply, but always teach accurately.
- Increase complexity as your students’ thinking matures.
- Check your students’ thinking for misconceptions.
- Teach important doctrines thoroughly so children understand what they believe.

important idea in 10 different ways, instead of teaching 10 different ideas.

10. Don’t talk too much. **Avoid long, tedious explanations and prayers.** Children will become bored with religion.

11. **Give the students an opportunity to explain in their own words what they have learned.**

Wise counsel from an inspired source makes the point very clear: “Make sure your scholars understand you. If they cannot comprehend your ideas, then your labor is lost.”

**Important Theological Concepts for Children**

The same inspired source gives us important counsel about the theological ideas children need to understand. The chart on page 39 summarizes this information. Notice that the theological concepts mentioned first and most often are really fundamental to understanding grace. They are the essentials. Teach them often and in many different ways.

The first six theological ideas are stressed many times by Ellen White. Over and over, she indicates that we should teach our children that God is their Father, that He and Jesus love them very much, and that they should study the Bible and obey God’s law. When they do wrong, Jesus, who died to save them, will forgive their sins and help them live a victorious life. They will be filled with the Holy Spirit and the grace of their Saviour.

The remaining theological ideas are in alphabetical order. Ellen White specifically mentions that each of them should be taught to children, but they are mentioned less frequently than the first six, which are really the core of salvation.

Teach these doctrines frequently and thoroughly. Begin with very simple ideas for young students. Little by little, add more information as their mental ability matures. Be sure older students understand what God’s Word teaches about these doctrines and what they mean in everyday living by the time they complete elementary school. This will give them a “sure foundation” for the future.

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**CHECK IT OUT and Learn More**

The following books tell the story of the great controversy between God and Satan for children of different ages:


✔ *Building Faith-Shaped Kids* (Review and Herald, in press) and is printed with the permission of the authors and publisher.

Donna J. Habenicht is Professor Emerita of Educational and Counseling Psychology at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Larry Burton is Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Andrews University. Both have taught at all levels from elementary school to graduate school and have also been involved in children’s ministry in churches.

**NOTES AND REFERENCES**


3. For an excellent discussion of this topic, see “Children and Their Theological Concepts” by Norman Wakefield and Robert E. Clark, in *Childhood Education in the Church, Revised and Expanded* by Robert E. Clark, Joanne Brubaker, and Roy B. Zack, eds. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986). We are indebted to Wakefield and Clark for inspiration and ideas for this article. Also see *A Theology for Children* by William L. Hendricks (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman, 1980), a classic book with many useful ideas for explaining theology to children and helpful connections between child development and an understanding of theology.


7. To help you do this, obtain the CD, which accompanies the authors’ upcoming book, *Teaching the Faith: An Essential Guide for Building Faith-Shaped Kids*, where you will find the 27 doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church broken down into ideas children can understand, including suggested ages at which each idea can be taught.
I met Miguel when he entered my multigrade classroom in the middle of the school year, flanked by his older brother Juan and two younger sisters, Carmen and Maria. His mother trailed behind, anxiously looking to her children for a response when I addressed her in English.

It became apparent, after a few basic tests, that although Miguel was 10 years old, he would be joining my 2nd-grade class. The fact that his classmates were younger and smaller than him made no difference to Miguel, who settled into his desk, all smiles, eagerly grasping the brightly colored reader that I handed him.

As the weeks went by, I discovered that Miguel had lived in Mexico, Texas, and Florida before joining my class in Massachusetts. He had weeded crops, harvested fruit, and taken in what education he could, gratefully. He lived with his mother, older brother, two older sisters, their babies (four in all), and the two younger sisters. Of his father, he never spoke.

Miguel’s enthusiasm in the classroom was rivaled by only one thing—his enthusiasm for Pathfinders. Arriving early each Tuesday evening, he eagerly sought to help, setting up chairs, arranging flags, and passing out songbooks, his face radiating excitement.

When the director of the club announced a weekend camping trip in the fall, Miguel could scarcely contain himself. For weeks, he spoke of nothing else. He arrived at the church parking lot, early as usual, with a worn satchel and one thin blanket.

For two days, Miguel relished every waking moment. He scrubbed spaghetti off a pot with as much enthusiasm as he bounced a ball in the game of 4-Square. He put his tent in order for inspection as happily as he arranged his collection of rocks and leaves for a display.

At night, making the final rounds, I discovered him quietly shivering in his corner of the tent, his lone blanket wrapped tightly about him. I found an extra sleeping bag, zipped him up, and patted his thick, straight locks. “Thank you,” he said simply, and although it was dark, I knew his eyes were shining.

With the end of the campout came a return to our regular Tuesday Pathfinder meetings, leathercraft, stories, and knot-tying. As one meeting came to a close late in December, a group of our older boys wandered out of the fellowship hall. Moments later, I heard the sound of hurried feet running up the basement steps. A door slammed, and the boys ran outside, breathless. A trip down to the basement revealed a can of spray paint minus its cap and a four-letter word brazenly decorating the storage room wall.

We quickly re-assembled the club and demanded the facts. Who, we wanted to know, would dare do such a thing? Feet shuffled, nervous glances were exchanged, and fingers tapped the sides
of metal chairs. The clock ticked out the time. No one volunteered any information.

We took the children out of the room, one at a time, and questioned them. Still nothing. And then, finally, as car headlights began to signal rides home, a hand went up.

“It was Miguel,” whispered our informer, and then his head dropped. “Miguel?” I asked softly. “Was it you?” He nodded. “But why?” He took a deep breath and turned his eyes toward mine. “My dad died last night, and I was trying to get the bad out.”

I held him as he wept. It seemed as if all the evil in the universe were breaking out of his small frame with every shuddering sob.

I never saw Miguel again. I heard that he was not allowed to attend his father’s funeral. I heard that the family moved again, this time someplace out West where Miguel could once again take his place in the fields.

In 20 years, I have not forgotten my eager student, nor the lesson he taught me. Whenever I am tempted to chastise a student for a senseless act, rush in and accuse when a wrong is done, I remember the words choked out between heart-rending sobs on that darkened stairwell. “My dad died last night, and I was trying to get the bad out.” How many others, I wonder, caught in acts of school destruction, defiance of rules, ill-spoken words, are searching for a way to “get the bad out”? For Miguel’s sake, I have resolved to listen.

“All names have been changed.

Sandra Doran, Ed.D., is an associate superintendent of education for the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Winter Park, Florida.
August 2003

Principal, Staff, and Board Members
Boontown Seventh-day Adventist School

Dear Friends,

Today, our family visited your school. We have decided our two sons, Kyle and Brandon,* will not be attending. But I am getting ahead of myself.

Our neighbor brags about your caring teachers, Bible-centered curriculum, and high values. While our local public school does offer caring teachers, a humanistic curriculum and a dearth of values are also evident. We are definitely in the market for a Christian school.

As we parked our car, I couldn’t help but notice last fall’s leaves blanketing the base of the overgrown bushes in front of your school. Bare dirt next to the front door greeted us except for a deteriorating McDonald’s french fry box on one side and a smashed soda can on the other. Smudged fingerprints clouded the glass doors.

Our negative first impressions were temporarily forgotten with the graciousness of your assistant in the front office. In the business world, her genuineness, warmth, enthusiasm, and wealth of information would be in great demand! But she mentioned that she worked only part time.

As we toured your facility, our eyes were drawn to dirty walls, torn, faded posters, drooping live plants, and dust-laden silk ones. Torn and dirty carpet or dull, scarred tile was underfoot.

In one classroom, we saw bright, artful bulletin boards, desks reasonably clean and in neat rows, and several attractive study areas, making us wish one of our children could be a fortunate student in that room.

Unfortunately, a brief visit to what would be Kyle’s room disappointed us. A variety of “stuff” lay atop the low bookcases that lined the windows. The teacher’s desk was piled high, and books and papers were strewn about the tables and floor. The old couch in the reading nook was stained and torn. The room bulged with everything from a sailboat to a tree house to a fire station. All good ideas, but they made the room seem cluttered and messy.

Perhaps most disturbing—our tour of the bathroom. The stench announced its nearness before I even rounded the corner. I opened the door and found: no paper towels, water dripping from the faucet, unsightly wax buildup, and an overflowing, cracked plastic wastebasket.

The principal wasn’t there when we visited, so I called back to discuss our concerns about Kyle’s learning disability. I phoned at three different times of day, but never got an answer, and the answering machine did not pick up. What if I had had an emergency and needed to contact my child’s teacher? I finally reached the principal late one afternoon, but she brushed off my concerns, saying she was sure that in her school’s smaller classrooms, children received more individualized attention than they would in the public system.

Why do I write this letter? Because from what I understand, your teachers and curriculum for the most part are exceptional. However, if a school does not take care of its physical plant, I wonder if they will take care of the needs of my children. In business, we have been taught that people have choices, so the packaging had better “look good,” or you may not even get the consumer through your door—curb appeal, I believe it is called.

So I write this letter not to make you feel bad, but to alert you that you may be losing other good students. Don’t underestimate the power of “sprucing up” a bit and enhancing your customer service.

We’ve chosen to send our children to a smaller school in a nearby town. This school also has caring teachers and a curriculum with Christian values. Their physical plant is considerably smaller, so I am guessing the constituents have much less money than those of your larger institution. But let me tell you, that Seventh-day Adventist school is sharp. You would do well to visit!

Sincerely,

The Clark Family*

*A pseudonym. The author is a church employee in North America. This article is based on more than 30 years of observations made by quietly walking through front doors of schools public and private, outside and inside the U.S., East Coast to West Coast, North to South, kindergarten through university, historic buildings and modern complexes.
HOW DOES YOUR SCHOOL RATE?

Outside
- Bushes and trees trimmed
- Pavement clean and in good repair
- Healthy grass—no bare patches. (Of course, in drought conditions, brown grass may be the norm)
- Flower beds—don’t underestimate the beauty of a well-mulched, weed-free flowerbed (even if the area is small)
- Sidewalks in good condition
- Signs—attractive (fresh paint, if needed) and informative

Entrance
- Visually appealing. What first draws your eye when you walk in the front door?
- Healthy live plants or good-looking silk ones
- Is there clutter (old magazines, brochures, notices, lost and found)? If there is a table or bookcases in the entry, are they neat and attractive?
- What is on your walls? Nothing? Pictures or posters? Are they in good shape?
- If your entryway has glass windows or doors, do they sparkle?
- Are there clues that this is a Christian school?

Throughout the Building
- Walls clean and recently painted (most schools will need yearly painting)
- Floors waxed or tiles and grouting clean and unstained
- No clutter in the halls
- Carpet clean, not raveled or torn
- No spider webs in corners
- Areas well lit, burned-out bulbs replaced
- Water fountains working and clean

Bathrooms
- Clean-smelling. Solve odor problems; don’t just cover them up.
- Waste baskets in good repair and emptied regularly
- Regularly checked to ensure sufficient tissue and towels, and to keep floors free of clutter and trash
- No dirt or wax buildup
- Mirrors clean and unbroken
- Faucets and toilets working well
- If there are lockers in the bathroom, be sure the area around them is tidy.

Classrooms
- Attractive bulletin boards
- Desks and bookcases orderly and in good repair
- Paper and books stored in desks and carrels, not on the floor or piled on tables and desks
- Clean cages or aquariums for class pets
- Limited number of study areas—too many make the classroom look chaotic and make it difficult to walk around the room
- Good air circulation and comfortable temperature
- Supplies organized and readily available
- Pleasant colors; clean paint
- Can you tell that this is a Christian classroom?

Playground and Driveway
- Equipment regularly maintained, safe and freshly painted (if applicable)
- Free of clutter and trash
- Signs painted and repaired
- Flowerbeds weeded and mulched
- Bushes and trees trimmed and healthy
- Grass mowed and trimmed
- Fence in good repair and freshly painted
- Free from any “hidden” danger (e.g., objects in the
grass that children could trip over, un-
filled holes inviting a broken ankle,
etc.)

- If there is a storage shed, is it in
  good repair and freshly painted? Is it
  locked? Are tools lying about? If you
don’t have a storage shed, perhaps you
should buy one.

**Customer Service**

- Are you responsive to the con-
cerns of parents and students?
- Is your office assistant well in-
formed, polite, and helpful? If you
don’t have an office person, do you
have an answering machine that is
checked regularly? Does someone re-
spont promptly to phone and E-mail
messages?
- Does the school have a Web site
  that features the institution’s mission
and curriculum, seasonal programs and
outreach activities, and a list of teach-
ers and administrators? (Be sure to in-
clude attractive photos of the school,
its activities, students, and staff.) The
site should include a map showing how
to get to the school, as well as contact
information, such as phone number
and E-mail address(es). Update the in-
formation regularly.

**A Final Note . . .**

At first glance, this list may seem
overwhelming. However, school up-
keep and marketing is everyone’s re-
sponsibility, not just the principal or
head teacher. Enlist the support of
other staff and constituents. Schools
that look great and serve constituents
well do so because of a team effort.

Enlist the support of your board and church mem-
bership to get your facility in shape. Perhaps a parent or
home and school leader could help with redecorating or
could design and maintain your Web site. (Provide the
budget limit in advance so the project doesn’t bankrupt the
school!)

Enlist the support of your students, too. Let them
know there will be a random check of the bathroom many
times over a two-week period. Points will be given for
each check. If enough points are gained, a reward or spe-
cial event will be provided for the whole student body.
School clean-up can also be part of their community ser-
vice credit.

The goal, of course, is to help students understand that
a great-looking school brings its own reward! Awareness is
the first step.

It’s not how large or expensive your school is that
makes an impact. A homely little 50-year-old school build-
can be transformed into an educational wonderland
with sparkling windows, shining floors, and eye-catching
bulletin boards framing a simple but carefully planned
learning environment. Live plants, creative reading cen-
ters, special areas of interest—there are a thousand possi-
bilities for the creative teacher. Add to this excellent cus-
tomer service, and you have a winner!

Remember, if you like what you see when you drive up
to your school and walk through your front doors, chances
are students and parents will, too! ☺
 DISTANCE EDUCATION: COLLABORATING AND CONNECTING

Sponsored by the Adventist Virtual Learning Network

Webagogy—a term we introduced in the previous column—suggests that as teachers incorporate Web-based technology in their teaching and learning, they must always consider pedagogy first. The three exemplary courses referred to in the previous column (and described in greater detail at http://avln.org/jae/) demonstrated the wide variety of possible instructional designs. In the Web link for this column, we expand the possibilities with three more course descriptions: a curriculum-design class, a Web-design class, and a biocomputing class. In each case, instructors use technology in unique ways to help them meet their goals for student learning.

Because interactivity and assessment continue to challenge online instructors, we focus on how the teachers successfully incorporated these into their classes. Of course, there is much more to instructional design than these two components, however, these appear to be the some of the most difficult areas for online instructors.

In the April/May issue, we will highlight a new initiative that requires significant cooperation between academies and higher-education institutions. Historically, public colleges have provided courses in which both high school students and college students can enroll. Such courses are attractive to bright students who want to earn college credit while still attending high school. It is time for Adventist students to have this opportunity in a denominational setting.

This is a recruitment and enrollment management issue that needs broader discussion and implementation. High school students who make connections with Adventist colleges and accrue a number of credits at these institutions are more likely to attend an Adventist institution of higher learning. We invite your input on this new initiative. You will be able to read about it and respond in a special AVLN online bulletin board.

If you would like to present your research and/or experiences with distance education in this column, please send an E-mail message to Shirley Freed at freed@andrews.edu or Marilyn Eggers at marilyne@verison.net.

Now, go to http://avln.org/jae/ to read about three more exemplary online courses.

Editorial

Continued from page 3

5. Their programs are strong in quality and content.
6. Parents, constituents, and church leaders perceive the education as excellent and well worth the cost, and provide solid financial support.
7. The school, the local community, and the church constituency collaborate for success.
8. The facilities reflect what is expected of a school with high standards.

Whenever church members discuss the cost of Adventist education, I believe they are really asking: “Is an Adventist education worth the cost?” Homes and automobiles are also expensive, but this does not necessarily deter people from purchasing them. What makes the difference? I believe that part of the answer lies in one’s level of commitment and willingness to sacrifice. However, the greater part of the answer may lie in the perception that our schools do not provide a quality of education that warrants commitment and sacrifice.

The ROSE concept may be lost to parents and students if greater value has been placed on prestige, acclaim, and social placement, rather than on opportunities for gaining wisdom that is of eternal value. I believe that to the extent that our schools exemplify the mission, ethos, and educational practices of the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education, God will supply their needs “according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, KJV). Our biggest problem will be how to handle the waiting lists for admission because the education provided will be seen as of eternal value, and parents, students, church members, and leaders alike will commit themselves to pay for it.
The 2004 Student Healthy Lifestyle Contest is well underway. Students from Adventist schools and churches in the North American Division are invited to participate. The contest’s main emphasis is to encourage youngsters in grades 1-12 to commit to a healthy lifestyle and to become more aware of the dangers of using tobacco, alcohol, or other harmful substances.

Prizes range from $100-$250 for grades 1-8, and $100-$500 for grades 9-12. Awards are shared by the teacher and student. Young people compete with their peers (grades 1-4, grades 5-8, and grades 9-12) and can select one of four categories to enter: Posters, Essays, Videos, and Computer-Generated Graphics or Skits. All entries must be original. Adult friends or parents may assist in some brainstorming or collecting source materials, but the actual work must be entirely that of the student. Quotes must include full source information.


Click on the link for the Student Healthy Lifestyle Contest.

Even though this contest is primarily designed for Adventist schools, educational administrators are encouraged to invite students from public schools to join in. In 2004, the Baltimore, Maryland, city schools will be participating—with a potential pool of 96,000 students.

Scientific studies have shown that young people who make a commitment to live drug free by signing a pledge card are more likely to resist peer pressure to use drugs. Participating in the Healthy Lifestyle Contest is a great way for your students to reinforce their commitment to healthy living and making lifelong positive choices.
Good news! The steady growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, its institutions, and agencies has created a demand for qualified personnel who can support its worldwide mission with their talents.

In response to this need, the General Conference has launched the Adventist Professionals' Network (APN)—a global electronic registry of Adventists who hold a degree in any field and have an email address. APN assists Adventist institutions and agencies in locating candidates for positions in teaching, health care, administration, and ministry as well as personnel for mission and volunteer service. APN also helps Adventists around the world to find job opportunities and to connect with their respective professional associations and among themselves along professional specialties.

Enter your professional information directly in the APN web site, free of charge:

http://apn.adventist.org

Encourage your Adventist colleagues and friends with degrees also to register.
For questions and comments on APN, contact us through apn@gc.adventist.org