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The Journal of Adventist Education
Earns Honorable Mention and Finalist Awards

We are pleased to announce that THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION has won an award from the Associated Church Press (ACP) and two finalist designations from the Association of American Publishers (AAP).

From the ACP: Honorable Mention Award for Feature Article (“GMOS and the Great Controversy” by David A. Steen) in October/November 2014, pp. 4-15.


Read more about the JOURNAL’s awards at http://jae.adventist.org/awards.

Correction: On page 28 of the April/May 2015 issue, the Korean Union Conference of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) was credited with too few junior high schools. The correct number is eight.

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Urban Education
A Living HOPE

“The work in the cities is the essential work for this time.”
Ellen G. White
(Ministry to the Cities, p. 28)

Populations around the world are now predominantly urban, as migration into metropolitan areas continues to rise dramatically. Up to 54 percent of all human beings, or nearly four billion people, now live in cities—a figure that is projected to increase 1.84 percent per year between 2015 and 2020. This population shift creates unique and perplexing challenges for improving lives and communities in urban settings and preparing their populaces to receive the gospel. While issues and processes vary from one part of the world and from one metropolitan area to another, typical urban centers urgently need sustainable systems for providing a range of basic human needs.

Many of the world’s nations have committed to improving education as a first-line approach to addressing these needs. They believe access to and positive outcomes from high-quality education for all will ameliorate an array of life’s inequities. Gains are evident, yet this ideal remains a dream. Studies reveal educational disparities across socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, and religion worldwide. Complicated issues frustrate any attempt to improve outcomes for students in many urban schools.

Indeed, methods for addressing educational disparities remain some of the most contentious public policy issues throughout the world. Yet, change is possible. Most agree that success in urban-education efforts must be tailored to include components that transform the social, structural, and cultural aspects of city life. The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s response to God’s call of “mission to the cities” is to give top priority for wholistic ministry in the world’s large urban centers. Adventist education, along with the church’s health ministries, must be central to that effort; and to that end, must adjust to meet the challenging pressures and dynamics of urban life that mitigate against educational success. While this will demand changes to our perspectives on and processes of education, such change must not lead to a deconstruction of our identity. Our approach to education must adjust to meet the full range of needs that exist in urban centers while still modeling Adventist beliefs, values, and standards.

This special theme issue of the Journal is dedicated to encouraging awareness of education as central to the Adventist Church’s mission in urban settings, and inspiring action from stakeholders to help achieve this goal. The article by Simmons introduces the topic and provides a context for the issue. The article by Lea summarizes the ideas and issues a call for action. The following areas are also addressed:

- School success factors for urban settings: Ensuring that all children receive an adequate education is paramount to the future of any country, society, or community—including the church.
- Partnerships between parents, schools, churches, and communities: Too often, schools and teachers are inadequately prepared to deal with the social, political, and economic conditions that affect the lives of urban students, families, and communities. Collaboration among key stakeholders for school reform is imperative to ensure the success of urban schools. Change is always difficult and largely dependent upon the success of critical community alliances. Partnerships between parents, schools, churches, and communities will be addressed in the article by Cummings and Cummings.
- Spiritual principles for leadership: Studies show that educators can learn much from methods of spiritual development, and that the spiritual perspective of educational leaders is crucial for shaping school ethos and direction. Like schools in other settings, schools in urban locales need spiritual values and principles for education and life. Spiritual principles for leadership will be addressed in the article by Pollard.

The articles selected for this issue address some of the critical points of discussion on this topic, and will enhance awareness and spark conversation; however, much more could be shared. This is just a start. Today, education remains inaccessible for millions, worldwide. Societal inequality and marginalization are persistent across time and place for many groups. Many of the barriers that undermine educational access and outcomes relate to gender, social class, economic status, health, race, eth-

Continued on page 47
Despite its unassuming beginnings, Seventh-day Adventist education has been one of the church’s most successful ministries.¹ The quinquennial world division education reports reveal that the Adventist Church serves nearly two million students worldwide in 7,946 schools from primary through postgraduate levels with 96,388 teachers.² Adventist schools reported 264,579 baptisms in the past quinquennium (2010-2014) and have been celebrated by more than one study and anecdotal story as demonstrating higher quality than their public education counterparts.³ In some places in the world, national leaders and local employers express preference for graduates of Adventist schools, citing their academic and professional prowess—and most significantly—their honesty and reliability.⁴

Yet, throughout its history, the Adventist Church has faced great challenges in educational endeavors. From the early years, church leaders have called for reforms to align Adventist schools and their programs of study more closely with the church’s educational philosophy in its mission of preparing workers for the denomination. Over time, and in various locations as Adventism has spread worldwide, the church’s educational institutions have been called beyond their original bounds to address the current needs of the general public in various developing nations.

Interestingly, critiques have made two seemingly conflicting demands: that Adventist education itself be transformed, and that it become an agent of transformation in the church and society at large.⁵ Adventist leaders and educators were more involved in societal issues and secular education in the church’s early history at a time when Adventism was making a commitment to education as a key ministry. In more recent years, the intersections of secular society and...
Adventist education have been less evident, though needs throughout the world are at least as great as those of former years (perhaps even greater), and in a number of places, governments are calling on Adventist education to address societal challenges.

Moreover, today, the world wrestles with a range of long-established and mounting inequities associated with both access and outcomes of education, which are grounded in economic and social disparities. This is particularly true in major cities. Yet, while devastating to individuals and society, the challenges associated with poverty, marginalization, and other detrimental circumstances in life are neither inevitable nor irreversible, and education can make a positive difference.

**An International Dilemma**

Throughout history, education has been both credited with enlightening and liberating major populations and criticized for deceiving and subjugating various people groups. Education has been promoted as fundamental to ensuring equality, peace, health, prosperity, and liberty. Where societies have embraced noble aims for education, the result has been principled and effective actions, yielding social transformation and development. In contrast, when societies have used education as a tool of deception, oppression, or intellectual subjugation, the results have been devastating: poor-quality education for the masses that produces substandard academic outcomes, weak national and regional economies, perpetuation of national and individual poverty, and socio-political suppression.

**The Ongoing Quest for Positive Outcomes**

Almost three decades ago, Lisbeth Schorr’s shared her confidence that by working together, those with the means could prevent damaging outcomes for young people and break the cycle of disadvantage. Speaking broadly, she issued a challenge for better performance and outcomes from urban education. Schorr declared that all citizens, even if not acting from altruistic motives, have a vested interest in improving the lives of those around them: “We all pay to support the unproductive and incarcerate the violent. We are all economically weakened by lost productivity. We are all diminished when large numbers of parents are incapable of nurturing their dependent young and when pervasive alienation erodes the national sense of community.” Schorr’s research demonstrated that high-risk families need intensive assistance in health care, social services, family support, and education, which holds true today.

James White, co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, saw education as a means to mission, observing that “a well-disciplined and informed mind can best receive and cherish the sublime truths of the Second Advent.” God is calling us to move forward now to put Adventist education at the heart of our mission to the big cities.

**Mission to the Cities**

For the first time in Earth’s history, more than half of the population live in cities. Millions of people have flocked to large urban settings in search of adequate food supplies, potable water, professional health care, sustainable employment, permanent shelter, and safety. This often overwhelming influx of diverse populations increases economic, academic, cultural, political, and social demands on cities already struggling to meet the needs of their current inhabitants. In response, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has declared a bold emphasis on mission to the cities that calls for every entity of the church to set this mission as a top priority. To this end, mission to the cities demands the widespread, comprehensive involvement of Adventist education as a key element in bringing hope and relief to urban centers.

Against this backdrop of adversities and prospects, what can our schools do to address these realities and overcome the challenges faced by the world’s urban population? This issue of The Journal of Adventist Education will focus on how we can structure our educational efforts in urban contexts in order to provide high-quality education to our constituencies and support the church’s mission to the cities. The authors in this special issue have sought to identify and clarify the essential concerns, and to provide recommendations to church leaders and Adventist educators who have accepted the call to navigate the challenges and opportunities in the world’s great metropolises.

Education, along with health care, is one of the primary means for reaching the cities and helping to improve lives and communities. To achieve these objectives, however, Adventist educational programs must be designed differently from traditional models. Studies have shown that programs designed to help families and children living in concentrated poverty and social dislocation differ in fundamental ways from traditional programs that work for people in less-devastating circumstances. Education in urban centers most often demands a range of services beyond the usual classroom experiences. Adventism can build on its foundational principles of applying wholistic approaches to education, health care, and ministries for addressing needs in urban centers.

To be fully successful, urban education, indeed all education, must conform to the principles presented in Scripture and explicated in Ellen White’s writings. It must be founded on and aligned with God's original purpose for restoring humanity. Yet, while the church’s models for urban education must remain uniquely Adventist in principle and philosophy, they must change significantly in scope and application.

**Unique Challenges for Urban Education**

Schools in urban areas often have large, diverse populations, many poor and/or academically unprepared students, budget shortfalls, bureaucratic
administrations, social and political complexities, and challenges created by growing enrollments combined with shrinking resources. Despite the success stories of some urban schools, both news reports and research indicate that quality education is generally inaccessible to most students from underprivileged and marginalized groups in urban centers. Studies show a correlation between educational underachievement and the challenges of urban environments, such as poverty, destabilized homes and neighborhoods, gang activity, insufficient school funding, and frantic social and political relationships.

A wide range of international researchers, including those at The Global Cities Education Network (GCEN) and The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), have identified commonly experienced challenges to educational success in urban settings. The GCEN discovered and articulated commonalities among challenges and strategies used to address them in urban systems, which transcend borders and cultures around the world. Consistent with other literature, the NCLD’s summary of its findings is subdivided into structural and cultural challenges.

1. Structural challenges are physical and operational elements that collectivelly create internal and external barriers to school success. These include:
   - Limiting stereotypes: The tendency of educators to place urban families and their children’s likelihood of succeeding academically in a negative framework.
   - Lack of instructional coherence: Often, remedies to educational obstacles fail to focus on the real issues or to align with specific needs for student success.
   - Inexperienced and/or uncommitted teaching staff: New teachers are often assigned to urban schools, while more experienced teachers seek out more comfortable conditions in suburban schools.
   - Dysfunctional or non-existent data-management systems: Many urban schools either do not have a system of data collection or underuse data and information that would enable them to identify student needs, monitor their progress, and evaluate school practices.
   - Low expectations: Urban school cultures often do not promote high academic expectations among all students, and use tracking constructs that direct disadvantaged students to less-challenging instruction. Frequently, a lack of readiness for school or for particular learning tasks is interpreted as a lack of intellectual ability and academic potential.

2. Cultural challenges include those beliefs identified “generally as cultural dissonance that manifests itself in policies, practices, beliefs, and outcomes in myriad interconnected ways.” These create barriers to student success, including:
   - Perceptions that race, nationality, class, and language predict limited school success: Research provides compelling evidence that in most urban centers, race, ethnicity, nationality, and class still influence educational and other inequities. Socio-economic status also remains a powerful influence on school outcomes;
   - Perceptions of certain learning styles as intellectual deficiencies, and Policies and practices that demonstrate a lack of cultural awareness and/or responsiveness to diverse cultures and needs.

Facing the Challenges

Randy White, in his book *Encounter God in the City*, recalls a bumper sticker with the succinct message: “If you’re not outraged, you’re not paying attention.” Not only are many Christians not outraged at these distressing social realities, we have so individualized and internalized our faith that it has become disengaged from social systems altogether, in effect becoming “privately engaging but socially irrelevant.” White further charges that “we can’t imagine allowing anything to disrupt our lives, certainly not involve-

ment in the complexities of community transformation.”

We must remember that “Jesus’ special concern for the poor extended to all the marginalized, weak, and socially ostracized. In sharp contrast to His contemporaries, Jesus demonstrated a special interest in the disabled, children, drunkards, prostitutes, and lepers [cf. Luke 7:32-50; 19:1-10].” Ellen White speaks of the Adventist Church’s institutions as giving “character to the work” so that in them the gospel should be the “great leading power.” Taking a broad view of the gospel, she wrote: “The character of God, whose likeness we are to receive, is benevolence and love. Every faculty, every attribute, with which the Creator has endowed us is to be employed for His glory and for the uplifting of our fellow men.”

God has set us in the world and established our institutions to be blessings to those in need. “The most important work of our educational institutions at this time is to set before the world an example that will honor God.”

To achieve a broader range of success, educators must seek to contextualize teaching and learning endeavors through the application of culturally responsive practices. In order for educators to understand those they serve, they must draw close to them through personal association in daily life. They must participate in the communities they serve, functioning in the world as salt and light. As Freire asserted, “to become soaked in the cultural and historical water is very insightful.”

Ellen White’s charge to the first Adventist educators in 1872 is still relevant today. She emphasized the church’s expectation for these teachers to be reformers, combining practical and academic education. She called for educational practices that would “be of an altogether higher order than the traditional education” of their time. She charged them to teach practical Christianity, to make the Bible the highest, most important textbook.
It is apparent, even to a casual observer, that there are global needs for transformation in education, particularly for urban settings. We must act with urgency and continue to cultivate the commitment to mission to the cities.

An Urgent Call to Action

As we model godly transformation and lead others in this direction, we cooperate with God in outreach to the world; in this case, a ministry to the big cities. The Adventist Church has finally committed to ensure that all its organizations and ministries give priority to the growing challenge of urban mission. As populations shift to urban centers and societies struggle to relate to and assimilate individuals from diverse backgrounds, the Adventist Church can draw on its biblical roots and historical successes to identify and adapt educational practices that will be effective for the range of challenges and opportunities. It is apparent, even to a casual observer, that there are global needs for transformation in education, particularly for urban settings. We must act with urgency and continue to cultivate the commitment to the cities.

Responsibility and Response

While we continue to educate Adventist young people in traditional rural and suburban settings, we must also expand our efforts to meet the challenges of our members who for various reasons reside in the big cities. Further, we must do more, as our church’s working policy prescribes, to meet the needs of “other children and youth of the community who share similar values and ideals.”

Ellen White warned that “as a church, as individuals, if we would stand clear in the judgment, we must make more liberal efforts for the training of our young people, that they may be better fitted for the various branches of the great work committed to our hands.” Historically, we have applied this injunction solely to the education of Adventists. Could it be that this call includes reaching out to “young people” outside our faith and geographical communities who also need the blessings of true education?

Our Adventist pioneers recognized the dilemma of operating institutions in the world while not becoming one with the world. Though they strove to distinguish themselves from the world in perspective, purpose, and pursuits, they did not retreat from society or operate in a vacuum as they developed the church’s educational philosophy and standards. They understood that God expected them to make a difference in the world through service to others, and they participated in the public arena by standing for right, serving for change, and sharing hope. But today, Adventists often hesitate to get involved in public affairs, except perhaps in the areas of health care and guarding Sabbath-keeping rights. Is this due to reticence or just a lack of clarity about the responsibility for the education and needs of those outside our faith group?

Many other Christians also puzzle over their responsibilities for educating the masses. A 2012-2013 Barna Group study found that while most Christians and pastors of various faith groups in the United States recognized and ac-
cepted a responsibility for the education of all people, they were confused regarding the means, methods, and degree to which they should become involved. The Adventist Church also grapples with these questions when it comes to (1) expressing opinions on public education and (2) providing Adventist education for non-members.

Then further, the Adventist Church struggles with a dilemma associated with ministry to and in the cities resulting from Ellen White’s advice to move to the country—to flee the cities. Some among us—both members and leaders—seem to have taken this admonition to heart with little regard for her equally commanding call for ministry to and in the cities. She appeals for all to awaken to the needs and asserts: “A beginning is now to be made, and means must be raised that the work may go forward.”

To fully embrace mission commitments to the world’s cities, church leaders must agree that education is indispensable in accomplishing this work. The goal of having in every city an influential Adventist presence actively engaged in a comprehensive mission, using Christ’s method of ministry, will not achieve its full potential unless Adventist education is an integral component in its implementation. So then, what can Adventists do to bring hope and advancement through education for the billions in urban settings?

As a church, we must take the initial steps. First, we must acknowledge, draw from, and build upon the successful structures and methods of Adventist schools already serving in urban settings. Next, we must create and set in motion an operational plan. A successful contemporary model for initiating action that aligns with Adventist operational philosophy is Kotter’s “8-Step Process for Leading Change,” which provides an inspirational guide for moving forward in ministry to the big cities. Kotter refers to this process as “The Big Opportunity,” which accurately characterizes the occasion we now have in Adventist education. This model, adapted here for our context, suggests that leaders and other change agents do the following:

1. Create: Begin with the opportunity and its urgency to inspire workers to embrace the mission.
2. Build: Assemble a small group of capable, willing workers to lead and support the mission.
3. Form: Craft a vision for steering the mission, then develop strategic actions to achieve the vision.
4. Enlist: Raise a large force of ready and willing workers who sense the urgency of the mission.
5. Enable: Eliminate obstacles, change systems, and revamp structures to ensure support for the mission.
6. Generate: Track, evaluate, and celebrate mission accomplishments on both small and grand scales.

7. Sustain: Build on successes, cull impediments to mission, and revive workers through development.
8. Institute: Make clear the alignment between new behaviors and successes, and ensure leadership development to maintain the mission.

Recommendations

Transforming schools, according to Freire, will involve serious work in retraining educators, clarifying worldview and ideology, calling for commitments specific to urban work, and developing teachers’ professional and missional capacities.
leaders, health-care professionals and other key stakeholders with an interest in urban education and its challenges and opportunities.

6. Establishing partnerships: Church and institutional leaders must form partnerships to study the needs within large urban centers, and act on the findings with support from world church and division education leaders, missions and community-service leaders, and agencies such as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) to formalize and implement plans for increasing formal education and providing supplemental educational services for the general populations of the big cities.

7. Redesigning teacher-education programs: With support from world church education leaders from all levels, educational administrators must design and implement teacher-education programs (and other courses of study) at selected Adventist colleges and universities that emphasize mission service and provide comprehensive education on how to serve urban populations.

8. Launching mission-focused degree programs: Education administrators and church leaders must increase attention to education and health ministries in missions degrees, pastoral-development programs, and in-service education. When teachers and leaders have been trained specifically for ministry to the cities, the local and world church must sponsor them as “missionaries” in Adventist urban schools and communities.

9. Building community: Church leaders must encourage educators and pastors to participate more directly and more often in the affairs of community/public education and family-services endeavors in the cities. This will require developing or strengthening partnerships with urban organizations to meet the full range of family needs and to provide greater educational opportunities for urban students that extend beyond the regular school schedule and calendar.

10. Meeting community needs: Church leaders, pastors, and educators must inspire and prepare local church members to better support Adventist education in all its forms (traditional church schools as well as mission-focused urban schools) through financial and organizational means and hands-on participation (volunteerism) in order to meet the general needs of families and communities—for example, by providing marriage-enrichment seminars, parenting education and training, healthful-living programs, and so forth.

Conclusion

Gary Krause, director of Adventist Mission for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, sounded an urgent alert to the church in his 2012-2013 message, *Embracing the Cities*. Quoting from Stone and Wolteich, he recalled, “Wednesday, May 23, 2007, should have been a wake-up call to Adventists serious about Christ’s commission to go into all the world. Researchers estimate that on that day, the world’s demographic center of gravity changed. For the first time in history, a majority of the world’s population were now living in urban areas.”

But, Krause pointed out, most Adventist churches, institutions, services, agencies, and members remain outside the cities. This must change.

Now is an opportune time for Seventh-day Adventists to act decisively for and in large urban settings. Just as Adventists recognize that the conditions in the world are consistent with our eschatological view and believe that we are called to urgently proclaim the gospel, so should church leaders and educators recognize that these conditions also provide the impetus and opportunity for us to bring hope and betterment to the world through education in urban settings. If we follow the guidance we have received and remain open to the Spirit’s leading, we can improve the lives of people in urban settings through our ministry of...
education in alignment with health ministries and evangelism.

It is time that Seventh-day Adventists become more visible and active in urban affairs. Although Ellen White acknowledged and warned against the perils of city life, she also pointed out that we have neglected God’s command to go to the cities for far too long and must now act in decisive ways. She declared that human beings “were not created to be subject to poverty, disease, and suffering, not for thoughtlessness to attention to their physical and spiritual wants, but for dignity, purity, and elevation of character in this life, and for joy unspeakable and full of glory in the future immortal life.” She also recognized that the task would not be an easy one, but added reassurance that: “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”

The world is crying out for successful wholistic educational models that address the myriad needs in metropolises around the globe. God has provided us with a model of core principles as the guiding charter. Our task is to take united, effective action to address the ever-increasing needs of urban settings and expand the scope of Adventist education in the big cities.

NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. Quinquennial Reports from the divisions of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (2014).

3. Ibid.

4. Conclusion drawn from observations and interviews with church and educational institutional leaders.


8. Ibid., p. xvii–xix.


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26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.


41. Nicole Fulgham, *Schools in Crisis: They Need Your Help (Whether You Have Kids or Not)*, op. cit.


47. Freire, *Pedagogy of the City*, op. cit.

48. __________, *Ministry to the Cities*, op. cit.


52. __________, *Ministry to the Cities*, op. cit.

53. Ibid., p. 34.

Wired magazine’s October 2013 cover shows a 12-year-old girl named Paloma Noyola Bueno from Matamoros, Mexico. She is holding her schoolbooks and looking straight ahead with a serious but serene countenance. Over her in large, bold letters is the audacious title “The Next Steve Jobs,” and the subtitle “Genius is everywhere—but we’re wasting it. How to unleash the great minds of tomorrow.” Paloma’s school stands next to a city waste dump and struggles with challenges such as “intermittent electricity, few computers, limited Internet, and sometimes not enough [for the children] to eat.”

How did the story of Paloma Noyola Bueno capture the attention of a major technology publication? Paloma received a score of 921 on the math section of Mexico’s version of the SAT test, the highest score in her country that year. Nine of her classmates scored above 900 on the same test. How could children from desperately poor families, attending an urban school in disrepair, achieve such high scores?

Paloma’s story shows what is possible to achieve among the urban poor worldwide. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds who suffer from the structural and cultural conditions that perpetuate inequality can still reach high levels of attainment. Replicating Paloma’s story is what Seventh-day Adventist education should be about, worldwide.

Context and Challenges

A recent UNICEF report predicts that “by 2050, 70 percent of all people will live in urban areas. Already, 1 in 3 urban dwellers lives in slum conditions. . . . Children living in slums are among the least likely to attend school.” Around the world, about 100 million children are not in school. The UNICEF report asserts that “every excluded child represents a missed opportunity—because when society fails to extend to urban children the services and protection that would enable them to develop as productive and creative individuals, it loses the social, cultural and economic contributions they could have made.”

BY EDWIN HERNÁNDEZ
How can Adventist schools contribute to increasing the achievement and educational levels of disadvantaged children? What can we do to improve the quality of education in urban settings? These are critical questions facing the Adventist Church. The purpose of this article is to summarize the current thinking and research on these fundamental questions.

**Barriers to Educational Success**

Poverty brings many challenges to the educational task of which Christian educators must become more aware. Poverty is generally understood as economic scarcity, but here we will use Eric Jensen’s definition: “A chronic and debilitating condition that results from multiple adverse synergistic risk factors and affects the mind, body, and soul.” Poverty limits a child’s learning potential because his or her family is burdened with multiple risk factors such as emotional and social challenges; acute and chronic stressors; cognitive lags; and health and safety issues. Poor families tend to be impacted by more than three major risk factors at any one time.

Scholars talk about the cumulative effects of the poverty-related risk factors that make life a continuous struggle. For example, a child’s illness or injury in a family without access to health care can easily cascade into a major crisis, contributing to emotional and cognitive impairment of the child and even premature death, as well as financial disaster for the family. The cumulative effects of poverty will damage a child’s physical, socio-emotional, and cognitive well-being.

Poverty affects cognitive learning capacity. Children raised in a single-parent household generally experience less cognitive and emotional stimulation, resulting in significant cognitive deficiencies. Risk factors for children living in poverty include poor nutrition/food scarcity, parental unemployment, low parental education, poor prenatal care, and unsupportive home life, factors that collectively correlate highly with decreased academic performance. In addition, poverty contributes to “acting out” and other disruptive behaviors that hamper learning environments and classroom control.

Children from poor economic backgrounds start school at a disadvantage in all subject areas, and the achievement gap between them and their wealthier peers increases over time. In the United States, in addition to economic background, the persistence of the achievement gap has also been attributed to race. This is so well established that it recently led two eminent scholars to declare: “The racial achievement gap is an empirical fact that manifests itself in every American school district, at every level of schooling, and on nearly every academic assessment.” The aforementioned risk factors of economics and race keep the gap firmly in place.

Possibly the most important barrier to academic success is school absenteeism. Trailblazing research conducted by Robert Balfanz and his colleagues at Johns Hopkins University has revealed that regular school attendance is a foundational academic success indicator, especially for children living in poverty. Defined as missing 10 percent or more of a school year, chronic absenteeism is a serious problem in high-poverty areas, reaching levels that these leading scholars described as “staggering: on the order of six months to over a year, over a five-year period.”

Chronic absenteeism is more prevalent among poor students for three major reasons: (1) they cannot attend due to illness, family responsibilities, housing instability, the need to work, or involvement with the juvenile justice system; (2) they will not attend to avoid bullying, unsafe conditions, harassment, and embarrassment; (3) they do not attend because they, or their parents, do not see the value of being in school, they have something else they would rather do, or nothing stops them from skipping school.

**International Comparisons**

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) allows countries like Argentina, Peru, Canada, Poland, Korea, and the United States to compare educational outcomes on a standardized achievement test. Every three years, PISA examines how well 15-year-old students understand and apply knowledge in three core content areas—mathematics, science, and reading literacy—to real-life situations.

Findings from the 2012 PISA show that in all three core subjects, American students have performed at the same level since 2003, with lower average scores than 18 other education systems, in both developed and developing countries. The conventional explanation for the poor scores of U.S. students is America’s high levels of poverty and cultural diversity. However, students in Norway, with a low six percent child poverty rate, scored no better than U.S. students in 2009 and 2012. By contrast, Poland’s results have been called “the Polish miracle.” Despite a poverty rate similar to the United States, “Poland’s poorest kids outscored the poorest kids in the United States. That was a remarkable feat, given that they were worse off, socio-economically, than the poorest American kids.” And, while white American students outperformed African-American and Latino students, they scored lower than students from 16 other countries, including Japan, Germany, Belgium, and Canada. Neither poverty nor cultural diversity seem to be insurmountable barriers to achieving educational success for under-resourced children.

**Demystifying Seven Success Factors**

Growing evidence suggests that a number of highly efficient educational practices and cultural characteristics of schools can help minority children from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve at high levels. Here are seven research-based factors or practices that together promise to create high-quality education for urban children:

1. **Caring for the Whole Child**

   Where access to adequate preschool education, health insurance, and other basic social services is lacking, a growing number of innovative schools have embraced a community-
schools model of educational reform to address the many economic, social, and emotional needs of underserved families. For example, the Harlem Children’s Zone schools provide free medical and dental care and mental-health services. They also provide nutritious meals for students and support for parents.24 Parental support includes teaching them to become more involved in their children’s lives, and reinforcing key values and education-related behaviors, such as encouraging children to attend school and read every day (especially during the elementary and middle-school years), and understanding and practicing a “growth mindset.”25

Children living in poverty often lack stable environments and secure relationships with parents and other adults. Growing up as a child of divorce or in single-parent homes often contributes greatly to young people’s poverty and social isolation.26 Creating caring school environments where every child is valued, respected, and nurtured is fundamental for all children to achieve success. Schools that serve high-poverty students must adopt a “whatever it takes”27 attitude and refuse to let children fail. Adventist schools should be good at implementing a “whole student care” framework, which is consistent with our wholistic understanding of the human person.

2. Data-driven Instruction

Understanding the needs and progress of students can only be done using rigorous, data-driven educational practices. For schools to become data friendly, teachers must agree on the value of statistical information to help them teach smarter, creating a culture of continual learning through collecting, analyzing, and applying data.28 Successfully embracing a data-driven culture within a school depends on the quality, accuracy, and timeliness of the data, and whether teachers and principal converse as part of a continuous-improvement process.29

The historic and unprecedented research study called CognitiveGenesis has clearly shown the academic value of an Adventist education.30 Yet, as I have argued elsewhere,31 much research remains to be done. And relevant to this topic is the question, Does Adventist education help to close the achievement gap across racial/ethnic groups and among the most disadvantaged families? Answering this and other relevant questions will require a thorough commitment to data-driven research like CognitiveGenesis, not just in North America but throughout the world. And this could be done by implementing PISA across the Adventist K-12 system worldwide.32

3. Accountability

Principals and teachers at schools filled predominantly with poor children also have to accept responsibility for the learning of those children. Since the evidence says that poor children can learn at the highest levels, educators cannot blame the children for poor performance or for their family’s situation. They are accountable for their students’ learning losses or gains.33

The movement toward greater accountability has led to the development of teacher-evaluation systems.34 A new analytical technique called “value-added analysis” measures academic progress by examining individual scores over time. If the students’ scores grow more than the predicted level of their peers, then the teacher has added to the students’ growth. The technique controls for a student’s background and socio-economic status, and by looking at growth over time, shows the teacher’s influence on learning outcomes.35 Good accountability is the product of a fair, objective, and well-developed evaluation system.36 Teachers in this environment continuously seek opportunities for growth, and principals focus on helping their teachers improve their practices.37

The Adventist moral imperative to educate all children at the highest levels, especially those from poor, urban backgrounds, requires that evaluation systems for Adventist educators be assessed and, if necessary, modified or replaced. Teacher evaluation in Adventist schools should reflect the best practices in the field.

4. Establishing a Culture of High Expectations

Teachers and educational leaders who embrace a view of innate human intelligence may contribute to inequities through what former President George W. Bush called the “soft bigotry of low expectations.”38 This view argues that children are born with certain innate capacities—intelligence, natural aptitudes,
etc.—and they either have them or they don’t. Research on human intelligence over the past few decades has debunked this view, which creates the mindset among teachers that poor children need remedial learning or cannot achieve high standards. This mentality often leads to a culture of low expectations where some teachers prematurely give up on students who, with effective instruction, might succeed. By contrast, a growth or enrichment mindset views all children as gifted, so that teachers, staff, and educational leaders are eager to do “whatever it takes” to ensure that learners succeed.

Schools that serve poor children need to relentlessly focus on achievement for all students regardless of their background, skin color, or language abilities. If teachers and administrators hold high expectations and provide all the needed supports, this will enable their students to succeed. They must not accept excuses that would lower expectations.

A key characteristic of high-achieving schools for children from lower socio-economic groups is that every teacher, staff member, volunteer, and parent works to achieve milestones in the educational journey. Some examples are (1) requiring kindergartners to be readers before they enter 1st grade, (2) making sure 3rd graders are performing at grade level in the areas of literacy and numeracy, and (3) ensuring that 8th-grade students study and pass algebra. Another critical task for schools is ensuring that students—and parents—understand the damaging effects of chronic absenteeism, since accumulated absences can cause significant learning losses and gaps in vital areas. Although the dropout process tends to accelerate in the 9th-grade transition year, schools have a great opportunity at this level to reverse trends that lead to dropouts.

To track progress over time, Adventist schools could obtain key performance indicator dashboards that allow their staff to view at a glance how well individual students (and the entire school) are doing, to ensure that each student stays on track to graduate, and is adequately prepared for college and work.

5. Increased Instructional Time

Successful schools enrolling predominantly underserved children have found that extending instructional time, both in school and out of school, is key to the children’s success. This was Fryer’s finding in his “best practice” research on charter schools. Within a high-expectation school culture, providing enrichment and extra time for learning, support, and enrichment is critically important.

Some schools open on weekends for additional instruction and tutoring, while others extend the school day. Enrichment activities may include arts, drama, music, sports, and field trips to museums, the zoo, and other cultural centers. One benefit of having a school in most urban contexts is the number of cultural and artistic resources available.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity to serve the academic needs of disadvantaged children is in the summer. Learning loss happens to all children, regardless of their family background, but it is more severe and longer lasting for poor children.

6. Human Capital

American education’s declining standing in the world has occurred in large part because of a lack of consistently high-quality teaching for all children. In America, some schools have low entry standards and don’t draw teachers from the top-performing students. Of particular concern: The majority of the worst teachers end up in poor urban schools. Those schools cannot attract or retain effective teachers because research has shown its consistent influence on learning gains, especially for children living in poverty. Adventist colleges and universities need to consider how teacher-education programs train instructors for its system, as well as for urban public schools. What quality standards are being used? Are teachers being adequately prepared to serve culturally and economically diverse populations? Can anything be learned from recent critiques of teacher-education programs?

Critical to raising the academic performance of schools serving predominantly children in the lower socio-economic groups is the quality of the school principal. In particular, leadership that is empowered to make decisions, to hire the best teachers, to support instructional learning, coach teachers, and create a culture of high expectations is of utmost importance. An organization called New Leaders estimates that 25 percent of a student’s success depends on the quality of the principal. A key multiplying effect of good leadership is the ability to attract and retain great teachers.

The Adventist Church runs an impressive array of educational institutions around the world. But does the system produce effective teachers and leaders to serve urban poor populations? Do we hold principals accountable for the results in their schools? Do we apply the best practices in the selection, training, and support of high-performing school leaders?

7. Character Development

Character formation is the factor with the greatest transformative power to influence academic achievement and life success. It is the hallmark of a Christian education, and more specifically, an Adventist education. Within this category fall all of the assets, virtues, and attributes that make an Adventist school a place where characters are nurtured. A growing body of research is showing that religious engagement contributes positively to educational achievement.

We include the spiritual dimension as part of the task of character formation, but the social scientific literature has recently uncovered additional aspects related to character formation. For example, How Children Succeed by Paul Tough argues that the qualities that matter most to academic and life success are character traits such as self-control, perseverance, tenacity, and self-affirmation. These traits are typically cultivated in what some consider to be the strongholds of character education: the church and the family. Unfortunately, some dis-
advantaged children live in homes where there is no affiliation to a church community, and in households where the family structure is dysfunctional. As a result, neither entity exercises an active role in the child’s development, and these children may not be exposed to important character traits such as hard work, honesty, conscientiousness, persistence or grit, creativity, curiosity, self-control, and a love of learning. Adventist schools serving the most disadvantaged children must ensure that the character traits that predict academic success are part of the formal and informal curricular offerings and enrichment experiences.

Conclusion

The story of 12-year-old Paloma Noyola Bueno exemplifies the extraordinary results that children living in poverty can achieve. Her teacher, Sergio Juárez Correa, had high expectations of his students, taught them lessons in persistence and effort, and didn’t allow their family background and circumstances to define them as anything but “gifted” children. And that is what they became—gifted.

This story validates the vision of Adventist education to combine salvation and wholeness with excellent education for all children, especially those who need it most. In the end, what is required to overcome the barriers is a “mega dose” of hope. Hopeful kids try harder and persist longer. The good news, supported by empirical evidence: It is possible to educate the poorest and most disadvantaged children to high levels. To do so takes courage, persistence, and total commitment to pursuing educational excellence with equity at all costs. This responsibility should be embraced by all Christian educators because it is an issue of justice and the development of human potential—restoring God’s image in humankind.

This article has been peer reviewed.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES


6. Ibid.


15. Ibid., pp. 4, 5.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.


20. Ibid., p. 136.


27. Tough, Whatever It Takes, op. cit.
30. CognitiveGenesis assessed the performance of students within the North American Division. See http://www.cognitivgenesis.org to learn more.
34. See the Measures of Effective Teaching site at http://www.metproject.org.
35. See the Value-Added Research Center at http://varc.wceruw.org.
41. Ibid.
51. See, for example, NCTQ’s “Teacher Prep” reports at http://www.nctq.org/teacherPrep/review2014.do.
56. Tough, Whatever It Takes, op. cit.
57. Ibid.
The following article provides a description of Creation Kids Village (CKV), an outreach ministry of the Celebration Seventh-day Adventist Church to urban southwest Orlando, Florida. The description will focus on the program’s mission to reach urban families through wholistic lifestyle-based ministries. This article describes an innovative approach to early-childhood education that may be replicated in other urban areas, and seeks to stimulate readers to find creative ways of reaching urban children and families.

**The Mission of Early-childhood Development**

Scripture makes it clear that early-childhood development (birth to age 7) encompasses the whole person—body, mind, and spirit. Luke’s description of the early development of John and Jesus follow a similar pattern. Luke 2:40 says, “And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him” (NKJV). This developmental pattern is also clearly seen in the early childhood of Moses, Samuel, Josiah, and Joash and continues as God’s desire for every child today.

The biblical model for child development was important to the co-founder of the Adventist Church. Ellen White articulated this commitment: “The lessons learned, the habits formed, during the years of infancy and childhood, have more to do with the formation of the character and the direction of the life than have all the instructions and training of after years.”

From their first breath to their first day in formal schooling, children grow at a rate never again experienced in life as the brain, body, and spirit expand. In the first year, a child’s brain doubles in size; and by age 3, it reaches 75 percent of its adult volume. Fueling this
growth are the neurons, which pass the information being absorbed by the child along an information superhighway via neural connection pathways known as synapses, which are developed at an astounding 700 connections each second during the first five years. It is these connections that shape our capacity to sense, communicate, and engage the world by expressing our feelings and thoughts. As children’s minds expand, their bodies grow rapidly.

During these early years, spiritual development is critical. In “Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions,” George Barna illustrates the importance of spiritual growth in early childhood: “By the age of 13 your spiritual identity is largely set. The probability of someone embracing Jesus as his or her Savior was 32 percent for those between the ages of 5 and 12; 4 percent for those in the 13- to 18-age range; and 6 percent for people 19 or older. In other words, if people do not embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior before they reach their teenage years, the chance of their doing so at all is slim.”

**The Urban Challenge—The Changing Home**

James Brooks, *New York Times* bestselling author, concluded in 2008 that by the age of 5, it is possible to predict with uncommon accuracy which children will complete high school and college. Brooks references Nobel Laureate David Heckman, who has done extensive research on the subject. Heckman identifies “the quality of parenting” as central to identifying young people likely to successfully complete high school and college.

Since the 1960s, the family unit in America has undergone remarkable changes as described in an excellent paper published by Harvard University entitled “The Spread of Single-Parent Families in the United States Since 1960.” For purposes of this article, we will focus on three significant factors in the changing family landscape that have increased the need for quality early-childhood education: the shift toward mothers as the main breadwinner; the urbanization of the United States; and the growth in media viewing by young children.

In the past 50 years, a dramatic shift in the primary source of income for American families has occurred. In 1960, 11 percent of mothers were the main wage earner. By 2011, this number had nearly quadrupled, to 40 percent. This shift also correlated to a decrease in time spent by mothers with their newborns. Recent statistics indicate that 75 percent of U.S. mothers work full-time in the first year of their child’s life. In the United States, maternity leave is typically six weeks or less, which results in a majority of infants entering a childcare setting before they reach 2 months of age.

While it may be necessary for parents to work in order to support their families, the impact on child development, attachment, and learning must be considered. The increased stress experienced to balance work, finances, and parenting responsibilities is further complicated when children are being raised by a single parent and/or in impoverished conditions.

The need for early-childhood care and education has risen considerably over the past 50 years. In 1965, 28 percent of American preschool-age children (3 to 5 years old) were enrolled in childcare. By 2011, that number had grown to 61 percent.

Urbanization, which is the process of increasing population growth in cities and suburbs and usually includes the increase of industrialization, is another major factor that strongly contributes to the need for quality early education. By 2008, 50 percent of the world’s population resided in urban areas, and the United Nations estimates that 4.9 billion people will live in urban areas by 2030. With the global migration into cities, the typical rural network of extended families living in close proximity no longer exists. The isolated family unit with minimal support from extended family has become the norm in urban environments. Research has found that the loss of the rural family support structure has significantly increased the demand for childcare by families in urban areas.

The third major factor differs from the others since it does not drive the need for quality early education; instead, it influences the need for early-childhood programs to implement quality curriculum and instructional approaches. The rise in young children’s media exposure is an area of concern for everyone, but especially teachers and parents. In 2013, a study by Common Sense Media found that 38 percent of children under 2 years old use a mobile device and spend twice as much time in front of a screen than having someone read to them. The University of Michigan reported that, on average, children ages 2 to 5 spend 32 hours a week in front of a TV. The amount of screen time logged by young children can have alarming health implications.

A study in *Pediatrics* noted, “just 9 minutes of viewing a fast-paced television cartoon had immediate negative effects on 4-year-olds’ executive function.” Further, over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates have tripled in the United States. Today, one out of six U.S. children is obese, and one out of three children is overweight or obese with media time serving as a major factor.

In a longitudinal study that evaluated a group of children at age 3 and then again at age 4-and-a-half, researchers found that just by being awake in the room with the TV on, more than two hours a day, served as a leading risk factor for obesity in children. Whether under direct parental supervision and care or in an early-childhood center, the impact of increased media exposure on children must receive intentional focus. Early-childhood educators must model and provide guidance for the intentional and appropriate use of technology and interactive media through both the...
The Power of Early Education

Despite all that is known about the importance of early intentional and purposeful care and education, many children do not receive the preparation needed to ensure the best possible start to a life full of learning, growth, and balance. Childcare centers increasingly have become part of many youngsters’ most formative years, and have had to address the mental and physical health issues brought on by disconnected family dynamics, increased urbanization, and the impact of the technological age. In 2008, Nobel Laureate James Heckman presented compelling research that supports the importance of a wholistic approach to quality early-childhood education.23 He firmly believes in the ability of early education to provide many families with the vital partnership necessary to return quality parenting to the home. Heckman asserts, “Programs that target the early years seem to have the greatest promise. Programs with home visits affect the lives of the parents and create a permanent change in the home environment that supports the child after center-based interventions end. Programs that build character and motivation that do not focus exclusively on cognition appear to be the most effective.”24 These character-based early-education programs have a remarkable economic impact. “For every dollar invested in high quality early childhood education produces a 7-10% per annum return in better education, health, social and economic outcomes.”25

Three further significant studies support the impact of early education on forever changing children’s lives within an urban setting. To view these studies, visit http://www.creationdevelopment.org.26

Creation Kids Village

In the early 1990s, the Disney Development Company (DDC) set out to transform Walt Disney’s vision for EPCOT (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow) into a reality. The goal was to create a town in southeast Orlando, Florida, built on five cornerstones: health, education, community, place, and technology. World-renowned architects took Disney’s vision and designed Celebration as a new and exciting place to live, work, and play.27

With health serving as a cornerstone, Disney solicited bids from around the world for partners to build a world-class hospital. Florida Hospital, part of Adventist Health Systems, proposed to create a city based on healthy lifestyles embraced by Adventists. To inform and fulfill this purpose, the team developed the CREATION Health acronym based on the eight letters in the word and drawn from principles of health established at creation—Choice, Rest, Environment, Activity, Trust, Interpersonal Skills, Outlook, Nutrition.28 This acronym also embraces the components of the historic Adventist philosophy. CREATION Health is an Adventist lifestyle that has been researched, tested, and proved to create healthy habits that will lead to a healthy future.29 Many Americans have reached a level of awareness of the need for health improvement that has given rise to a demand for health-focused early-childhood education.

After evaluating other potential hospital partners, DDC selected Florida Hospital. A vibrant Adventist hospital must be led by skilled Adventist professionals who work and live in the community. This need focused the efforts of both Florida Hospital and the Florida Conference to planting and growing a Seventh-day Adventist church in Celebration. The decision was made to organize the church ministry around CREATION Health. This enabled the church and hospital to share one vision and communicate it with one voice.

The vision for CREATION Health included the Creation Kids Village (CKV), giving it a unique platform for ministry. Orlando is the most visited destination in the United States, with more than 57 million visitors from around the world in 2012.30 Celebration is located in the Orlando Metro area and is the 26th largest city in the United States.31 The Celebration community was designed to provide housing for both Disney management and hourly employees. Accordingly, the 4,060 housing units are split almost evenly between single-family homes and condos/apartments. Thus, while the median income in Celebration is nearly double that of the state of Florida, the reality is a mixed-income community with large discrepancies in income, much like a large metropolitan area.32

In this upper-middle-class Caucasian neighborhood, residents have higher levels of education, pay higher rent, and earn higher per-capita income than people in surrounding areas.33 The town exists within the larger community, which has high levels of poverty, homelessness, and lower faith commitments.34

Faced with great needs and few resources, the Celebration Adventist church congregation prayed for God’s leading and conducted several needs-based studies of both the hospital and the community. They concluded that God was calling them to meet the need for wholistic, quality education and childcare in Celebration.

The next step was to form a planning team, Developing Adventist Excellence (DAE), to create a mission, vision, and strategy. Its early-education center would become the first phase in the development of an Adventist Health Education Campus. DAE determined that wholistic health-focused childcare would provide a wonderful opportunity to partner with families in raising healthy children.
Creation Kids Village officially opened August 1, 2013. As of May 2015, it is at capacity serving more than 160 families with a quality, affordable program. The cost of tuition is on average 15 percent below the typical cost for the area. The center has kept the fees low because of its commitment to create a model of superior and affordable Christian childcare. Further, the 20 percent of participating families who are financially disadvantaged are enabled to enroll their children in the center because of its lower tuition, state-provided programs such as Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK), and the scholarships provided.

The Mission

Creation Kids Village is founded on the mission to grow children in mind, body, and spirit for Christ so they can ultimately live life “abundantly” (John 10:10). This biblical vision of whole-child development forms the foundation of the Adventist philosophy of education: “True education means more than the perusal of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole person, and with the whole period of existence possible to human beings. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers.”

Creation Kids Village is patterned after the Head Start early childhood model, which seeks “to bring about a greater degree of social competence in children of low-income families. Social competence means the child’s everyday effectiveness in dealing with both the present environment and later responsibilities in school and in life.”

Head Start strives to meet not only the educational needs of children, but also their social, emotional, nutritional, and environmental needs. Yet, there is no religious component to Head Start. Creation Kids Village provides the bonus of a Seventh-day Adventist wholistic worldview. Not only are educational and care services provided, but
also on-site counseling and psychological services, pediatric services, parenting support classes, services for children with disabilities, as well as extra-curricular activities such as karate and gymnastics.

CREATION Health serves as the framework for Creation Kids Village. Its principles form the basis for the programming for young children, their families, and the community. Philosophically, CREATION Health also connects the childcare center to the local Adventist church and Florida Hospital Celebration Health. Examples of the ways the center actualizes the CREATION Health principles in the lives of the children are provided below. More information can be found on the Website (http://www.creationkidsvillage.com).

• Choice: This early-education program engages children in age-appropriate character-based learning through an emerging project approach. They learn to make healthy choices about study, play, rest, and food.

• Rest: Time for resting the body and the mind is built into the schedule. Teachers emphasize this principle in a variety of ways. Through example, children establish their own pace according to their needs, learning to slow down and take time to make the best choices. The children are guided to self-monitor in order to manage their emotions and better enjoy their day. CKV provides a place of rest from screen time, which relieves the children’s brains of the effects of constant agitation from TV and mobile-device interaction.

• Environment: CKV’s learning areas are designed to maximize natural light. Its active learning centers incorporate emerging curriculum and project-based learning. Center designers created an 11,000-square-foot garden playscape to inspire children to explore, learn, and play outdoors. Central to the playscape are two “outdoor classrooms”: a butterfly habitat and an organic edible garden. The butterfly habitat is home to a variety of native wildlife, which connect children to the cycles of life and the wonder, beauty, and science of God’s creation. The organic vegetable garden, based on the Back to Eden gardening method developed by Paul Gautschi, allows the children to seed, transplant, grow, harvest, prepare, and eat organic fruits and vegetables. The remainder of the playscape features natural elements (tropical beach, gazebo, forest hill slide, treehouse, music, and art garden) that foster a world of adventure and imagination.

• Activity: The center focuses on the physical health and well-being of the children to ensure that they grow up safe and strong. Motor skills development, coordination, mobility, and exercise all help ensure that they acquire a solid physical-health foundation. The children engage in nearly two hours of outdoor play every day, which helps them grow in a multitude of ways: mind, body, and spirit. The program also integrates several creative-movement workshops focused on getting children active through music, movement, imagination, and discovery. CKV also offers enrichment activities focusing on dramatic play and musical expression. By promoting physical activity, the program also supports the Rest and Nutrition principles by preparing the body and mind for both.

• Trust in God: At CKV, children enjoy a safe, nurturing home away from home.
from home where they can express themselves and appreciate their own unique identities. They gain comfort and confidence through trusting relationships based on the staff’s belief and image of each child as a unique and intelligent individual, strong and beautiful, with dreams, desires, and ambitions. Love, the foundation for healthy children and the building blocks upon which the CKV program stands, empowers children to know God, how He formed them, and why He wants them to live life to the full! Instilling God’s love for each child is the core for the center’s daily routines, lessons, and all other activities.

- **Interpersonal Relationships:** Children communicate with others verbally and nonverbally to engage and create an understanding of the world around them. The children at the center make new friends and gain the confidence, self-esteem, and negotiating skills necessary for a lifetime of healthy relationships. One of the keys to a healthy social life is finding fulfillment through helping others. In a “give me” world, CKV seeks to create giving hearts. Teaching children to move together toward a resolution versus moving back in alienation is the focus. The teachers identify daily learning opportunities where children can work through and understand their actions, consequences, and methods for managing emotions within a relationship. This helps them to develop relationships with boundaries based on love.

- **Outlook:** The children are taught to intentionally seek to meet the needs of others, which not only reduces selfishness and loneliness, but also adds meaning, significance, and purpose to their lives. The center emphasizes Conscious Discipline, which integrates social-emotional learning, discipline, and self-regulation. Through these important life skills, the teachers help children learn how to manage lifelong stress with grace and to find solutions that transform everyday problems into life lessons. By establishing a culture of com-
passion, the employees build positive connections that positively affect family relationships and the community.

• Nutrition: Creation Kids Village seeks to promote healthy eating habits while demonstrating how to enjoy good foods. CKV serves a vegetarian menu focused on organic foods. The meals are prepared daily by a chef and enjoyed family-style in the classroom, which enhances relationships and builds social skills. The children help plant, grow, and then harvest the fruit and vegetables from the center’s organic garden. This edible schoolyard provides a great environment where children can learn where food comes from, and what best fuels their body and mind.

Meeting a Need

CKV serves families on both ends of the socio-economic spectrum in the urban Orlando area. The diversity of its clientele encourages the staff to stretch their abilities to meet the needs of children and families from all walks of life. Some of the center’s practices that have made a significant difference include the following:

• A Mutually Embraced Philosophy Throughout the Program Culture: Because CREATION Health permeates every aspect of this program, this allows leaders to focus on those things that unite them. Additionally, it enables the center to connect its program to the homes of clients. As the principles of CREATION Health are modeled and taught, the staff hear from parents how they are implementing some of the principles at home. Local families within the community say that they treasure health, values, and comprehensive services as the main factors in deciding where to place their children. The majority of the families whose children are enrolled in CKV are non-Adventists yet strongly favor the center’s instilling the CREATION Health principles in their children. Most of the families are non-vegetarian, but they want the best for their children and thus favor the center’s emphasis on a natural, organic, plant-based diet.
• **One-Stop Shop:** The leadership of CKV recognizes that while the center plays an important part in the lives of children and families, it is only one of many communities in which children and families interact. Recognizing the frenetic pace of the lives of most of the families, the center has subsumed many of the services that families would typically use under one roof. Thus, the CKV has developed relationships with CREATION Health Kids, Tupperware, DoTerra Essential Oils, Celebration Fitness Centre, X-Factor Gymnastics, Les Mills, Creative Workshops, a pediatric physician, and a family and developmental psychologist, several of which are located at Creation Kids Village so they can provide immediate services to the families while concurrently expanding the CKV’s revenue sources. Thus far, the staff members of CKV report that local families are increasingly seeking quality care and development for their children that is provided by a childcare center. Because the parents have little quality time to spend with their children, they are pleased to have a wide array of services provided in one location, which increases the time they can spend with their children.

• **Community Outreach:** The personnel at CKV regard the center as an integral contributor to the local community in which they reside and serve. They are intricately involved in local activities, such as marching in the Fourth of July parade, and work closely with the Celebration church community. For example, in order to better reach the community, the church transitioned its children’s Sabbath school programs into the CKV facility. These are advertised locally and at the center as a Saturday morning story hour. This has resulted in an increase of quality programming and resources, and greater participation by both church families and community members. In addition, a rising number of CKV families attend the Sabbath Story Hour, finding it convenient to spend Sabbath morning in a familiar location with familiar teachers so their children can learn more about the Bible.

• **Partnerships:** The staff of the CKV center believe that working collaboratively will enable them to accomplish much. Thus, administrators work closely with Florida Hospital and the Celebration Adventist church. In a broader collaboration, the center is partnering with the North American Division (NAD) to launch the CREATION Kids Early Childhood Curriculum and spread the message of CREATION Health to many of the approximately 200 NAD church-based childcare programs in the U.S. and Canada, as well as thousands of faith-based programs around the world. CKV has been chosen to serve as the demonstration and training site, modeling the most effective and developmentally appropriate practices in early-childhood education as well as the most successful approaches to integrating the principles of CREATION Health within an early-childhood program.

**Challenges**

While there have been numerous successes, program development has not been without its challenges, a significant one of which is recruitment and retention of quality teachers. CKV’s commitment to excellence begins with the hiring of caring, nurturing, and
competent staff. It is able to do so by providing competitive wages, benefits, and professional development, as well as opportunities for growth. Minimum qualifications for lead teachers in early-childhood education typically include a minimum of 90 hours in child development; however, in addition to the minimum, the center seeks candidates with experience and training in the preferred methodologies in addition to those who are interested in advancing their education. The majority of CKV teachers have an associate’s degree; lead teachers hold bachelor’s degrees.

One of the greatest challenges, however, has been funding. Opening such a center with the Celebration Adventist church’s limited financial capacity, in a city with extremely expensive land and building costs, seemed like an overwhelming challenge. After exploring alternatives, it was decided to form the Creation Development Foundation (CDF), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that could raise the money to finance the project and obtain the credit to obtain a loan.

CDF’s organizational structure is patterned after other types of Adventist philanthropy. In partnership with the conference, hospital, and local church, CDF raised the necessary funds to build Phase 1 of CREATION Health Education Campus, the 20,000-square-foot Zwart Learning Center that is home to Creation Kids Village. Through philanthropy, the project has raised $2 million since 2010 from Adventists and non-Adventists because the donors believe in the vision. A growing portion of the funds raised is now channeled into scholarships for disadvantaged families.

Conclusion

Against the backdrop of the urban setting and challenges of modern parenting, we believe that the model at Creation Kids Village can serve as a platform to prepare and invigorate families to experience the fullness of life in Christ. The Creation Kids Village is currently collecting assessment data by surveying its key stakeholders, early-childhood assessment measures, and holding ongoing meetings with parents and staff to solicit their thoughts and opinions. More specifically, the leadership is attempting to determine the lifestyle impact on children and their families due to increased outdoor activity, strong interaction with the natural environment, establishing a relationship with God, and a natural vegetarian diet. As the program grows, this data will enable the center to improve its services to both children and their families.

It is our hope that the Creation Kids Village model will serve as a catalyst for Adventist churches around the world, and inspire our educators to consider the potential of reaching cities worldwide through providing quality education, care, support, and ministry to young children and their families.

This article has been peer reviewed.

The authors wish to express appreciation to Davenia J. Lea, Ph.D., of the North American Division Office of Education for her contributions to this article.
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1. Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
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The Seventh-day Adventist Church throughout its history has valued education as key to its prophetic mission. From the early years of the church, the spirit of the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), which called for education to be primarily centered in the family, has been the prevalent underlying philosophy of Adventist education. Ellen White summarized this view by stating: “The education centering in the family was that which prevailed in the days of the patriarchs. For the schools thus established, God provided the conditions most favorable for the development of character.”

George Knight notes that the educational system was the last institution to be formalized in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (starting in 1872). The reason for this delay in organizing Seventh-day Adventist schools was rooted in the belief that the church’s focus needed to be invested in the second coming of Jesus above all else.

Early Adventist educators were not insensitive to the educational developments of their time. In fact, in an effort to overcome the bookish, traditional approach to education that had characterized the Western world, Adventist educators were influenced by educational reformers such as Horace Mann (1796-1859), whose social reforms were intended to make elementary education available to all children in the United States. Also, the promotion of manual labor in institutions of higher learning, as modeled by Oberlin College in the 1830s, was adopted by proponents of Adventist education. Pioneer Adventist educators were well acquainted with the relevant educational movements of their time and strove to develop a system of education in harmony with the demands of their contemporary society while maintaining an unwavering and uncompromising commitment to biblical truth.

Adventist education’s pioneers sought to emphasize the need for schools to be established outside of the cities, thus allowing students to be given “an opportunity to train the muscles to work as well as the brain to think.” In general, early church leaders believed that education would best take place...
in the home and in a rural environment. However, the realities of ever-increasing growth of cities\(^5\) have created a logistical dilemma for the leadership of the church. What should be done to provide a Christian education for children of families who cannot leave the cities?

**Proliferation of Cities in the Early 20th Century**

Education at the end of the 19th century and the turn of the 20th century was largely influenced and shaped by the social trends of the time: the changing role of schooling, the authority of the school in connecting the home and society, the development of cities, and the industrialization of Western nations. The proliferation of printing houses and improved transportation made education at all levels more accessible to the average citizen.\(^6\) (See Figure 1.) With the rise of industrialization in America, vocational training flourished in urban areas, while agricultural training was predominant in rural areas.\(^7\)

However, toward the end of the 19th century and the dawning years of the 20th century, there were factors that contributed to the deplorable conditions existing in many cities around the world, including poverty, lack of proper sanitation, and lack of proper health care. These factors were further exacerbated by the gradual moral decline prevalent in urban centers. In writing about the cities of her time, Ellen White noted, “The world is full of iniquity and disregard of the requirements of God. The cities have become as Sodom, and our children are daily exposed to many evils.”\(^8\) Her concern focused on the plight of the children of Adventist families whose hearts were easily impressed. She opined that unless their surroundings were of the right character, Satan would use the neglected children in the neighborhood to influence those who were carefully trained.

The warning to Adventist parents was that their children who attended public schools “often associate with others more neglected than they, those who, aside from the time spent in the schoolroom, are left to obtain a street education. The hearts of the young are easily impressed; and . . . . [t]hus, before Sabbath-keeping parents know what is being done, the lessons of depravity are learned, and the souls of their little ones are corrupted.”\(^9\)

An alternative for these Adventist families needed to be provided by the church. “The church has a special work to do in educating and training its children that they may not, in attending school or in any other association, be influenced by those of corrupt habits.”\(^10\)

Church leaders were encouraged to recognize that much more needed to be done to save and educate the children of families who “at present” could not get away from the cities.\(^11\) The establishment of church schools in the cities was always intended to rely on the foundation of spiritual nurture in the home. This ideal must continue to be integral to Adventist education in the 21st century.

**Urban Realities Today**

Throughout the world today, life in cities is characterized by unprecedented economic disparities. While poverty is more rampant in some geographic areas of the globe, it also weighs heavily on the world’s wealthiest nations. Poverty has complex ramifications, often interfering with children’s access to quality education. Children living in affluent neighborhoods have far greater access to quality educational opportunities than do children growing up in disadvantaged neighborhoods. With such disparities be-
tween the learning opportunities of rich and poor, the academic achievement of underprivileged children is greatly inhibited.

J. N. Kincheloe\textsuperscript{12} describes the realities confronting public education in the 21st century. Along with density of population, cities tend to contain a higher concentration of poverty, greater racial and ethnic diversity, larger concentrations of migrant populations, linguistic diversity, and high rates of student mobility. These lead to structural challenges for public education systems, which must combat persistently low student achievement, lack of instructional coherence, inexperienced staff due to high teacher turnover, dysfunctional practices in educational administration, and worst of all, low expectations for student performance.

**Mission Focus**

In recent decades, increased interest in community service initiatives has propelled many church organizations to create partnerships with their surrounding communities. Research provides empirical evidence for the significant relationship between community service involvement and the spiritual growth of the volunteers involved in humanitarian projects.\textsuperscript{13} Findings reveal that not only does the community benefit from volunteer service, but the volunteers themselves also experience transformation that leads to spiritual growth. Thus, community-service ministries exert a positive impact on the recipients as well as on the service providers, resulting in a win-win situation.

In their report *Ministering With Millennials*, Dudley and Walshe\textsuperscript{14} suggested that one of the best ways the church can nurture young people’s spiritual growth is to become “a service organization.” “We should be known in our communities,” they stated, “as the church that feeds those who are hungry and clothes those who are naked. Mission programs with a practical focus rather than an evangelistic focus should be stimulated, encouraging our youth to build relationships and through these relationships share what difference Jesus is making in their lives.”

As part of the Adventist Church’s current global emphasis in reaching the cities with a message of hope and wholeness, greater efforts are being made to plant churches in major cities around the world. Traditional evangelistic strategies are used to establish churches in communities that have heretofore had little or no Adventist presence. In the midst of this rapidly orchestrated urban effort, the Adventist Church needs to provide Adventist Christian education for the children of members as well as the children of families who are being nurtured in the Christian faith through the presence of the church.

Unfortunately, too often our Adventist schools and teachers are ill prepared to meet the social, religious, political, and economic realities confronting the community at large and specifically, the needs of their urban students, families, and communities.\textsuperscript{15} In part, our churches and schools are hindered from achieving their full potential as transformational agents in the wider community because, despite their being planted in the community, they are not of the community. They are often seen as (using the botanical term) an invasive species attempting to break into the community that does not see itself as part of the community.

As Bell has pointed out, “Christian organizations find themselves designing and implementing practices that value comfort over change or service.”\textsuperscript{16} In most church plants, teachers and school staff members are not neighborhood residents and do not understand the cultural, racial, ethnic, and socio-economic realities of the local community.

Too often, a potential church or church school plant is not preceded by community assessments with known leaders in the community that help stimulate the passion of the church planters to meet the felt needs of the neighborhood. Community assessments\textsuperscript{17} help the church to identify the good things that are already being done and which organizations help provide stability in the neighborhood. Our churches and schools need to recognize and partner with these leaders since often they are the gatekeepers that see us as nameless intruders rather than passionate servants.

Since research has shown the value of connecting the school with the community, teacher-education programs must prepare pre-service teachers to create partnerships within the community. An example of this appears in Noel’s article in the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*,\textsuperscript{18} which outlines a three-step “authentic community engagement” model for urban teacher education.

According to this model, the first step is to develop trust-based partnerships between the school and the community to ensure that community-service initiatives are not sporadic but continuous, becoming an integral part of the school curriculum. Second, teachers are encouraged to learn about and from the community and to assess the needs of the people in order to serve them better. Third, teachers are advised to be involved in authentic community-service activities.

Identifying fellow stakeholders who contribute to the much-needed positive social action of the community helps local churches and the schools they sponsor to identify needs that are not being met in the community at large and prevents the church from duplicating the good things that are already being done in the neighborhood. This helps to develop mutual respect and ensures that the full impact of the mission focus of the church and its school can be felt. The medical profession has a mantra that says, “Diagnose before you treat.” Maybe those seeking to bring hope and wholeness to the cities of the world should adopt this motto also.

Adventist teachers who immerse themselves in experiencing and understanding the community around the school will more readily grasp the bigger picture of the helping community rather than feeling overwhelmed that they have to do everything. By identifying partners in the community, teachers and school administrators will discover which agencies can help fulfill the needs of students and parents that are outside the scope or resources of the local church school.

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs,

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\textsuperscript{13} M. H. and S. L. N. A. K. incheloe

\textsuperscript{14} J. N. and K. Walshe

\textsuperscript{15} J. N. and K. Walshe

\textsuperscript{16} E. B. Bell

\textsuperscript{17} E. B. Bell

\textsuperscript{18} E. B. Bell

\textsuperscript{19} E. B. Bell
and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”™9 If we truly want to achieve the potential of Adventist education in urban neighborhoods, we must remember that the anchor of our mission is our love for the people we are called to serve. It is Christ’s love that constrains us™8 to focus on mingling, desiring their good, showing genuine sympathy, and ministering to their needs (rather than selfishly focusing exclusively on our own needs). That will win their confidence sufficiently to give us the right, as loving neighbors, to invite them to follow Jesus.

When a church school is seen as an asset to the neighborhood, it earns the right to step forward boldly to provide its students and parents, as well as neighbors unconnected to the church, with spiritual and educational tools to nurture family life and provide children with strategies that will help them succeed in school and throughout their lives. Every church school that has developed social capital in the neighborhood should develop outreach ministries to help them collaborate in addressing safety issues, food insecurity that leads to poor performance in school, as well as language and ethnic barriers that prevent people from connecting with and caring genuinely for one another. Families with no church affiliation will begin to see the church as a place where they can meet, receive help, or be referred to existing resources.

Small church schools do not have the human resources to meet all of the local needs, but if they develop a network of professionals in the church and in the neighborhood, they, too, can make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of their community.

**Strengthening Family Units**

Over the years, religious educators have recognized that one of the best means of nurturing the spiritual growth of children and young people is to enlist the support of parents and primary caregivers as partners in planning school activities.™21 Smith and Denton confirmed the findings of numerous studies in the sociology of religion that “the most important social influence in shaping young people’s religious lives is the religious life modeled and taught to them by their parents.”™22

Adventist church schools that seek to function successfully within the soil of the neighborhood must procure, facilitate, and/or provide essential education for parents both inside and outside of the church. By sharing skills and strategies for deal-
ing with family finances, nutritional awareness, food security, health practices, interethnic and interracial dynamics, cooperative action, and advocacy to reform social ills in the community, etc., they will strengthen the fabric of the homes of their neighbors and church families, and make a significant investment in changing the world.

However, research findings indicate that in recent years, the number of American adolescents who report being Christian has been gradually declining, and religious participation declines with age. Studies provide evidence that the religious life of American youth is characterized by individualism, subjectivism, and a consumerist mentality. On the other hand, a greater number of American teenagers are becoming more religiously pluralistic. With the reality of an increasing number of young people becoming religiously disengaged, what approach can Christian educators take?

Adventist church school personnel must seize and create opportunities to teach families in the church and in the neighborhood how to live dedicated Christian lives that energetically pass the torch of Christian commitment from one generation to the next. Many families are hungry for living, biblically based instruction on how to live consistent Christian lives. They desire to learn how to internalize Christian values, model moral virtues, teach biblical principles, show discipline in daily living, celebrate life in Christ, make choices that glorify God, and serve joyfully and unselfishly. Our message needs to emphasize the fact that “Children must see in the lives of their parents that consistency which is in accordance with their faith.”

Ministries such as those described in this article will result in the establishment of winsome influences that strengthen the church and enhance the world around it.

The leadership of the Greater Sydney Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (headquartered in Epping, New South Wales, Australia) understands that education is a form of evangelism and recognizes the importance of reaching the family. As a result, they have implemented an approach to collaboration between the conference office, Adventist schools, and local churches with the objective of growing disciples and delivering evangelistic ministries to the local communities where their schools and churches are located. The key goal is to create opportunities to share Jesus and to explain the Adventist message to families whose children attend our schools as well as with those who live in our communities but are not yet connected to our church.

Although essential to the wellbeing of local communities, certain ministries are too complex and costly for a single church school, or even a school system, to provide. In such cases, the Adventist Church administrators for the local area can partner with other agencies to provide essential development services through education. An example of this is a project that the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is currently implementing in Somalia. After assessing communities in Mogadishu (population 1.6 million) and in Galmudug state, ADRA Somalia, in partnership with the European Union (EU), the Comitato Internazionale por lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP), the CFBT Education Trust, Save the Children, and the Somali Educational Directorate of the Ministry of Human Development and Public Service, is providing Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) to help individuals and families improve their socio-economic future; thus creating more stable communities and opening avenues to strengthen ties with local entities. More and more urban centers desperately need vocational education that will lead to stable communities and pave

Collaborative Initiatives in Sydney, Australia, include the following:

- Providing chaplains in all schools.
- Establishing churches on local school campuses so pre-Adventist students and families can be nurtured.
- Making Sabbath a continuation of the school Week of Spiritual Emphasis, giving families the opportunity to see what their children have been learning all week and providing opportunities to all families to join in worship and fellowship.
- Hosting a Fun Day for neighbors living near the school with the purpose of developing relationships (includes food, petting zoo, jumping castles, face painting, balloon sculpting, kids’ games, and much more).
- Parenting seminars for moms’ play groups that meet weekly at a school.
- Local church events and ministries like Adventurers and Pathfinder clubs, which are promoted in the local schools’ newsletters, inviting all to join.
- Summer camps with more than 40 percent of juniors and teens who attend coming from pre-Adventist homes.
- Home-Grown Strategy: An initiative by conference ministries, schools, and churches developing tools to help families analyze the daily patterns of their homes and determine their next steps to shape an overall faith plan.

*The Journal of Adventist Education • Summer 2015*
1. The Australia and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) Day Service at Hills Adventist College in Sydney, Australia, 2015. ANZAC Day commemorates and recognizes all armed forces who have fought on behalf of Australia and New Zealand.

2. Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Wahroonga Adventist School expansion held at the Wahroonga Adventist Church in Sydney, Australia, in July 2015. Established in 1905, the school currently serves grades K-6. The high school program will commence in 2016.

3. The Sydney and New South Wales Spiritual Retreat, 2014. La Dean Malifa, departmental assistant for the Sydney Adventist Schools, along with band members from “Endless Praise,” helped lead praise and worship services.
the way for generations of families who can think beyond mere subsistence in order to focus on nurture and service.

In an increasingly post-Christian world, Adventist education—particularly in the urban setting—must position itself to lead families toward realizing their rightful role of establishing nurturing homes, which will draw on the DNA of the Shema: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Remember that “the well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences.”

Isaiah 58:12 sheds light on the impact that service can have on the lives of people beyond our inner circles. It reads: “Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the aged foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.” Wow, think of it!—churches and church schools that actually transform the world on the lives of people beyond our inner circles. It reads: “Your walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. ” Remember that “the well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences.”


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27. Deuteronomy 6:4-9, NIV. All Bible verses in this article are quoted from NIV. Scripture quotations credited to NIV are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.


2. A woman undergoing tailoring assessment in the Nasteh Adult Learning Centre, Burkinie, Puntland State.

3. A consultant conducting an interview with TVET Director Abas Abdilkadir Hassan, Galmudug Region, Somalia.
Authentic Christian education must be redemptive and transformative, seeking to restore the image of God in every student. My favorite definition of leadership comes from Jesus, who said, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (NRSV).1 “Let” means we make a conscious decision. “Your light” is the influence we exert for kingdom purposes. “Shine before others” indicates the arena of our witness. This mandate applies to the Seventh-day Adventist educator, whether a teacher or administrator. Missional educational leadership recognizes the transformative power of committing to personal engagement with students and continuing improvement as professionals. These twin commitments are anchored in the Matthew 5:16 command.

A missional approach to education is by its very nature spiritual. Educators do not effectively influence students by inundation or indoctrination. Instead, missional spirituality, within the context of Christian education, implies devotion driven by a biblical call to address the general and specific challenges in students’ lives. This approach to educational leadership must be contextualized to the environment, whether urban or rural. With God’s blessing, missional educational leadership within the context of urban living and specifically, the education of urban students, produces transformed lives.

The duty of the Christian educator is to facilitate the restoration of God’s image and character in students’ thoughts and actions. The first great commandment given by Christ—loving God with all one’s heart, soul, and mind—displaces love for the worldly and prepares the Christian for eternal life eternal (1 John 2:15-17). The intellect of the missional educator
is developed through vigorous exercise of mental processes, purposeful and diligent application, and sustained action. Missional spirituality and leadership seek to disciple both the heart and the mind while delivering learning rooted in biblical spirituality. The work of Christian education is to develop biblically grounded, intellectually vigorous, and thoughtful students whose characters reflect that transformational learning has taken place.

The Urban Educational Context

Urban schools and communities struggle to deliver education within environments that frequently are plagued by poverty, dysfunctional families, homelessness, malnutrition, teen pregnancy, mental-health issues, illicit drugs, street violence, and underpaid, burned-out teachers—many of whom are inexperienced and/or poorly prepared to serve in urban settings. These documented social factors and conditions can seriously disrupt the learning process.

With urbanization being the defining phenomenon of the 21st century, schools worldwide must now address what was previously the domain of elected officials. Poverty has become urbanized as students in cities disproportionately continue to fall behind in educational outcomes compared to the growth in academic achievement by students in suburban areas, with the undereducated facing increasingly dire prospects in the job market.

Despite the severity of these challenges, the Adventist Church has a wonderful opportunity to impact urban students with transformational Christian education.

In 2014, urban areas accounted for 54 percent of the total global population, up from 34 percent in 1960. Ninety percent of urban population growth, in absolute numbers, is concentrated in less-developed regions. It is estimated that by 2017, the majority of people will be living in urban areas. According to the World Bank, throughout all developing regions, except Europe and Central Asia, urban poverty is growing, with 70 to 75 percent of urban residents in Africa and South Asia categorized as poor. In Latin America, more than half of the poor (totaling more than one billion people) live in urban areas, which continue to expand.

An array of challenges and opportunities face educators in urban centers. Therefore, public and private education providers must rethink how education is delivered in urban environments to students at all levels—primary, secondary, and tertiary.

Transformative Education

Mrs. White appeared to chastise the missional priorities of her day when she wrote: “There is means now tied up that should be in use for the unworked cities in Europe, Australia, and America, and in the regions beyond. These cities have been neglected for years. The angels of God are waiting for us to give our labors for their inhabitants. From town to town, from city to city, from country to country, the warning message is to be proclaimed, not with outward display, but in the power of the Spirit, by men of faith.” Adventist education, then, is transformative. While urban centers were obviously fewer (and smaller) in the 19th century, compared to the 21st century, compared to the 21st century, compared to the 21st century, the warning message is to be wide awake, that, as the way opens, we may advance the work in the large cities.

Missional Educational Leadership

Missional education seeks to transform the lives of individuals and communities. In 2014, the global Seventh-day Adventist educational system included 7,946 schools, colleges, and universities, with 96,388 teachers and 1,942,828 students. The system functions amidst parochial schools, public schools, and the burgeoning for-profit private-school industry, which currently implements a business model for schools that focuses on career/job preparation and profits, to the neglect of character development. The absence of character development within the curriculum of these schools provides the Adventist Church with an opportunity to provide missional education targeted to the personal and societal challenges faced by students living in urban centers. Rather than simply communicating book knowledge, Adventist educators can cultivate character and intellectual resiliency in their students. They can challenge students to contemplate their surroundings and propose possible solutions to challenges. Students will be equipped to implement God-honoring and creative solutions to the problems faced by their communities.
technical instruction needed to acquire a job. Character development will inspire students with “principles of truth, obedience, honor, integrity, and purity—principles that will make them a positive force for the stability and uplifting of society. He [God] desires them, above all else, to learn life’s great lesson of unselfish service.” So, for example, to the college student, “we offer education not simply across four years, but an education that will make a difference across their next forty years and their next 4,000 years.”

Missional educational leadership, then, creates the environment for transformative education. Imagine if business and economics professors taught their students how banking affects lives and communities. And, going beyond the theories, if they challenged their students to create and manage a bank, using the principles taught and incorporating biblical admonitions about the way Christians ought to relate to money. This would empower students to address problems in their communities and participate in finding practical ways to improve their quality of life.

A Personal Story

I will never forget Jason and Conrad, two of my academically outstanding college students. When I met them on the first day of class, I could tell—from their detached, “cool at all cost,” attitude, fluency in urban jargon, and clothing—that they had grown up in tough urban environments. Considering their fashion awareness, they could easily have been students in Jakarta, Jamaica, London, Manila, New York, or Tokyo. But I could also see that they wanted something more. After all, here they were, sitting in my business management class—their textbooks open and their eyes straight ahead. I wanted to get to know them, to connect, to learn their stories. In the classroom, I was called to help them to persist to graduation and to understand God’s purpose for their lives.

Conrad idolized his tough-talking, drug-running father who had been killed in a gang shootout. Jason told me about his preteen years, before his mother had been able to move to a better neighborhood and enroll him in a higher-quality school. Conrad hated gangs because of the emotional scars they created when the bullets came ripping through the walls of his home, so he wore certain colors to protect himself from the wrath of rival gangs.

Jason always remained vigilant while eating in the university cafeteria—never sitting with his back to the door. Over time, we developed a good relationship. I described what I saw, and Jason interpreted his behavior for me: “Doc, I guess I developed that in school. You would not know what it was like to eat in my school cafeteria or even at home. You see, at any time, gunfire could break out, and I would have to grab my food and run or drop under the table. And at home, it was the same thing, when the gangs were shooting, which was every week, you had to be ready to drop and hide. So, I hover over my food while on the lookout, but I don’t know anything else.”

I was amazed because those descriptions matched experiences shared by my military colleagues in active combat zones and my international friends in war-torn areas of the world. What I heard from Conrad and Jason seemed depressingly similar to stress disorders. Yet, learners with these types of problems often remain undiagnosed, lacking coping skills and are often relegated to classrooms where teachers stereotype inner-city or stressed-out students as non-learners. Both in and out of the classroom, I desperately sought ways to connect, to understand these two promising young men.

Four years later, imagine my joy and gratitude when, sitting with fellow faculty members, I heard Jason and Conrad cheered by a large crowd of family and friends as they marched across the stage to receive their diplomas—the first in their families to earn college degrees. On that day, with tears in my eyes, I said to myself, “Thank you, God, for this calling to the ministry of teaching, and thank you for the gift of touching lives.” For Adventist education to be relevant and transformational for our students, we must seek to make practical applications that connect with their lives.

Practical Application Makes Education Relevant

So often, it is easy for teachers to use textbook curricula and examples rather than designing their own illustrations based on information and examples from contexts familiar to their students. But missional education is contextualized to ensure that students achieve mastery, understand the usefulness of the learning, and experience transformation in their own lives that they can share with their communities.

As teachers broadly apply these principles, “every study may become an aid in the solution of that greatest of all problems, the training of men and women for the best discharge of life’s responsibilities” whatever their calling—producing not just ministers of the gospel, but also ministers of medicine, teaching, research, and so on.

Developing Spirituality, Character, and Leadership

Whether educating urban students or equipping people to live and work in the cities, Adventist educators must be passionately committed to teaching, learning, and providing missional leadership. We must get to know each student in our classrooms, attempting to educate minds and hearts, not just lecture. We must understand the context of our students’ lives.

Missional leadership in education requires that we understand the issues
Mrs. White appeared to chastise the missional priorities of her day when she wrote: “There is means now tied up that should be in use for the unworked cities in Europe, Australia, and America, and in the regions beyond. These cities have been neglected for years. The angels of God are waiting for us to give our labors for their inhabitants. From town to town, from city to city, from country to country, the warning message is to be proclaimed, not with outward display, but in the power of the Spirit, by men of faith.”

and challenges that originate outside of school because they must be addressed before learning can commence. Employing research-based teaching methods and providing real-life applications will result in more effective learning. Missional leadership seeks to (1) understand the socio-economic conditions of students; (2) comprehend the attitudes and behaviors of students who are being disciplined; and (3) examine the lives and home environments of the learners in order to devise and implement effective strategies to enhance their academic experiences.

Urban schools in high-poverty areas, like other educational settings, need redemptive education supported by transformative learning experiences intended to restore the image of God in students. Missionally minded educators are called to engage students, parents, and community members in a shared commitment to change. This commitment requires five elements: vision, contextualized behaviors, empowerment of students and others, intentional transformation, and God-honoring commitment.

1. Visionary Leaders

Visionary, missional leaders are like Habakkuk, standing on the city wall, ready to receive the vision while looking toward God for direction. Like Joseph, they rely on God for wisdom to interpret and plan for the future. They maintain a vigilant outlook, examine the evidence, and safeguard the interests of their schools and communities.

A. Watchtower Leadership—Like Ezekiel and Nehemiah, watchtower leadership is positioned at the city wall, observing inside and outside the community. In the 21st century, watchtower educators envision a secure future and maintain that vision throughout day-to-day activities by studying and monitoring the health of the institution, by examining the individual and school-wide achievements of the students, and by recognizing the service contributions of graduates to the church and the world.

B. Evidence-based Leadership—Like Arioche in the Book of Daniel and the Moses-Jethro team, evidence-based leadership collects evidence to examine the current state of affairs and the existing and desired capabilities. Missional education leadership must do the same, and then chart an evidence-based course of action.

C. Engaged Leadership—Like Nehemiah, engaged educational leaders realize that they cannot do it alone. Engaged leaders come close to students, parents, and community members, engaging them in problem-solving, vision casting, and implementing solutions. They build two-way connections with all critical stakeholders in order to collaboratively devise meaningful educational solutions.
2. Contextualized Leadership

Contextualized leadership will seek strategies that are appropriate to solving specific educational problems in a given environment. These educational leaders do not simply apply pre-constructed strategies or transport curriculum and instructional approaches from one classroom to another, but carefully study the needs of the given environment and build the curriculum, select appropriate pedagogical tools, and employ other resources appropriate to the needs. The following leadership practices will effectively assist in defining the context for learning:

• **Appreciative Inquiry**—This approach employs the art and practice of asking questions to strengthen the school’s teaching capacity because it leads educators to a deeper understanding, anticipatory thinking, and commitment to reinforcing behaviors that improve the school’s potential. Missional educators identify individual and community needs and aspirations. Like Jesus, even if they know the answers, they ask questions to understand the perspectives of those they are called to serve, in order to appreciate differences in culture, language, and life experiences, and resist stereotyping, relying on “isms,” pejorative behaviors, or subtle expressions of cultural arrogance. The appreciative approach to teaching, learning, and administering is a purposeful and solution-oriented way to approach community engagement. It respects the knowledge and experience of students, other educators, and the community. This evenhanded approach seeks to protect missional educators from their own implicit biases and prejudices, which otherwise can create difficulties, even when the leader is a member of the local community.

• **Reflective Leadership**—Effective educational leaders understand how to best address the issues that challenge learning. Because they are reflective learners themselves, they know how to nurture the inventive abilities of students and the community as a whole. Jesus led the Samaritan woman to understand her situation and that of her community by guiding her into self-reflection. Reflective learning deepens awareness, which leads to transformation. This approach is illustrated well in the implementation of service learning. When meaningful community service is integrated with instruction and reflection, this enriches the learning experience, teaches civic responsibility, and strengthens communities.

3. Empowering Leaders

Like the apostle Paul, empowering educational leaders do not view themselves and their expertise as the solution; rather, they create solutions in and through others. They do the following:

• **Lead by Example**—living exemplary lives, 21 engaging others, contextualizing decision-making, and employing character-grounded and mission-focused activities. 22

• **Empower Others**—helping others to learn to think and to do, to become
problem-solving educators and appreciative inquirers, both inside and outside the classroom.\textsuperscript{23}

4. Transformative Leaders
Transformative educational leaders use Jesus’ life as a model in seeking to create learning environments that nurture God-honoring transformation of individuals, homes, and communities\textsuperscript{24}—sometimes one student, one classroom, or one school at a time. Change is their mantra as they endeavor to transform others to become people of character; inspire students and colleagues to embrace the school’s mission to develop themselves and others; and empower others to learn through service to God and to their communities.

God-honoring Committed Leadership
Above all, the educator and leader commits to honoring God and holding an unwavering commitment to the Bible as the foundation for the curriculum, as well as the guide for all school activities, policies, and procedures.

For the missional educator, building learners’ characters begins with an understanding of the purpose of education from a godly worldview and results in transformed attitudes and behaviors. In Raise a Leader (God’s Way), I argued first for values education that originates from the Bible, for parents to be the first and primary developers of character, but also for the home and school to partner in the development of character.\textsuperscript{25} Missional educational leadership requires engagement with students, their families, and the community, but also necessitates a commitment to improvement. This type of leadership seeks to implement reforms that ensure sustainable and systematic improvements in educational processes and outcomes.

Christian education is redemptive in nature—it transformative purpose consists of restoring human beings—in this case, students—to the image of God, our Creator. What a joy and extraordinary calling! ±

This article has been peer reviewed.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES
1. Matthew 5:16, NRSV. Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright ©1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.
13. Ibid., pp. 29, 30.
14. Leslie Pollard, president of Oakwood University, Huntsville, Alabama, says when talking about the investment to gain a Seventh-day Adventist university education, “It is not just four years but 40 years [implying the commencement of eternity].”
15. This story highlights the conditions of urban students, the power of transformative engagement, and the leadership influence of Christian educators. The names and profiles are a composite of various students encountered and should not be construed as representing any individual student.
16. White, Education, op. cit., p. 239.
18. See Genesis 40 and 41.
20. See Exodus 18.
22. 2 Timothy 2 reminds missional educators of their calling to teach God’s transformational lessons, to integrate biblical truths in the disciplines they teach.
23. The mandate is stated in Education, page 30 and is directly aligned with Paul’s empowering counsel to young Timothy, recorded in 1 Timothy 4:12.
The mission of our Seventh-day Adventist Church “is to proclaim to all peoples the everlasting gospel... leading them to accept Jesus as their personal Savior and to unite with His church, and nurturing them in preparation for His soon return.” Furthermore, the vision of our church for urban cities is “that every city will have an influential Adventist presence actively engaged in a comprehensive mission, using Christ’s method of ministry.”

If we are to believe that our schools are also called to the fulfillment of this mission, then we too are called to lead, unite, nurture, engage, and to evangelize or minister to all peoples with an influential presence in every city, utilizing Christ’s method of ministry. What a tall order to fill! As we, as an educational system, begin to examine our role and responsibility in fulfilling this mission, a first good step is to lay a foundation by broadening our knowledge base and understanding of the complexities of urban education. This special edition of the Journal on urban education has superbly laid the foundation, dispelled myths about urban education, and provided varying approaches to better meeting the needs of children and youth who live in poor urban communities.

And now we must begin asking ourselves some questions. Questions can help shift the way we think about something and can serve as a catalyst to bring about change, writes Warren Berger in his book, A More Beautiful Question. Berger, a longtime journalist and author, has spent his career asking questions. He has interviewed and studied hundreds of the world’s leading innovators, designers, and creative thinkers to analyze how they ask fundamental questions, solve problems, and create new possibilities; and in the past few years, he has zeroed in on the power of questioning in other organizational structures such as education. Berger states that we can benefit by grappling with questions that encourage us to reconsider ways to reimagine our programs. Asking questions such as Why, What If, and How, in that order, can help one advance through three critical stages of problem-solving and can actually be
equated with taking action. Thus, it is recommended that our next step in better understanding and meeting the needs of children and families in poverty-ridden environments should be to question our practices and engage in dialogue about where we go from here.

A few questions that I have pondered are as follows: As Adventist educators, do we fully understand the charge presented before us? Do we embrace and accept this charge? Are we prepared to lead this charge? More specifically, do we understand the life and struggles of the children we are trying to reach? Are we equipped with the resources and support needed to meet the extensive needs of these children and their families?

Sadly, the stories presented on pages 43 to 45 aren’t uncommon, as we are living in a critical time in which the “least among us” (Luke 9:49, NIV) are growing at an alarming rate. As these stories illustrate, it’s not just poverty that plagues and challenges children and youth in poor urban cities; poverty is oftentimes compounded by political uncertainty, war, violence, drugs, anger, hopelessness, dependency, and despair. The students we are commissioned to nurture, engage, lead, and serve have complex needs, and as we prepare for this ministry, we need to answer these questions:

• What is the charge presented to us as a worldwide Adventist educational system?
• How do we embrace and accept this charge?
• Are we prepared to lead this charge?

Imagine with me for a moment. What would it truly mean for your school community if the children mentioned in the boxes on pages 43 to 45 were accepted into your school? How would the learning experiences be different? How would the other students and parents respond to them? Does your school have the resources to meet their needs (safety, academic remediation/specialized instruction, assistance with drug dependency, release from a gang, adequate housing, spiritual development, counseling/therapeutic needs, etc.)? Even if their tuition is paid through scholarships or donors, how will the additional expenses be covered (field trips, mission trips, tutoring, extracurricular activities, school uniforms, etc.)? What “worldly” influences might be introduced into the school’s culture (music, inappropriate language, violence, occult practices, etc.)?

**Educating and Serving Inner-city Children and Youth**

The purpose of this reflective summary is not to rehash the issues raised in the previous articles; rather, the intent is to move us onward toward compassion for and a commitment to educating and serving children and youth in poor, urban communities. As our faith is confronted with the reality of the urban poor, we are challenged to seek answers to the questions posed.

**Is Our Mission Clear?**

While we as a church may be aware of the needs in urban communities, are we clear on our role as an educational system within this mission? Do we believe that all children have a right...
to a Seventh-day Adventist education? Are our educational institutions seen as significant and effective instruments for ministry? Research indicates that much more than curriculum or funding is needed to meet the challenges of poor urban children and youth—it’s a school’s culture that determines their future.6

If we are to be a part of the mission to the cities, our educational institutions must be recognized as more than establishments of academic achievement. They should respond to a higher calling. Our “first object of education is to direct our minds” and those of our children to God’s revelation of Himself.7 Ellen G. White further suggests that “The great principles of education are unchanged . . . for they are the principles of the character of God. To aid the student in comprehending these principles, and in entering into that relation with Christ which will make them a controlling power in the life, should be the teacher’s first effort and his constant aim.”8 This should be our first and foremost priority: educating with the purpose of leading children and their families, including those in poor urban communities, to Christ. Our message is timely for poor urban communities, and our educational institutions can play an integral role in sharing this message of hope. However, before we can embrace this mission, we must (a) understand exactly what needs of the poor urban communities are, and (b) collectively agree that we have a role to play in meeting the needs.9

Do We Have the Right Tools for the Job?

Once we have clarified and embraced the mission, we must then determine if our schools are equipped with the training, resources, and support needed to educate, engage, nurture, and serve. We give extraordinary attention to the pedagogical preparation of our educators; however, do we provide the necessary training needed for evangelism? Are our educators valued as evangelists or as ministers? Are our educators intentionally prepared not only to educate but also to minister through service or to share the love of Christ by reflecting the love of Christ? Additionally, since the needs of children, youth, and their families in poor urban communities are complex and extensive, we must determine whether we are equipped to meet the financial, social, psychological, educational, and spiritual needs of these students. How will they access our schools? How will they afford to attend? Will they have access to extracurricular activities? Will additional support such as tutoring, mentoring, or counseling be available? Do we have partnerships and relationships within the local communities as well as within the church so that services and resources are coordinated and streamlined?

Who’s on Board?

If we are clear on our mission and have the necessary resources, do we have strategic plans in place for getting buy-in from our students, parents, and constituents? How will we equip our students (those in the church not living in poor urban communities) so that they are prepared to minister? How do we assure parents and constituents that our Adventist values, standards, and principles will continue to be upheld? How do we assure them that our educational programs will continue to be of high quality and that this mission will be mutually beneficial?

Where Do We Go From Here?

As we strive to meet the needs of children and youth—and their families—we must first initiate the conversations and begin to explore how our educators can infuse ourselves into the mission. Here are a few suggestions for further consideration. Once again, more questions are raised than solutions; however, the questions posed can ignite the discussion and prompt us to engage collaboratively as we move forward into the ministry.
1. We must re-examine the funding structure of our Adventist educational system. How will our schools be accessible to children, youth, and families living in poor urban areas? How will we fund and provide for the additional resources and services needed (counseling, social work, tutoring, etc.)?

2. As our church strives to define its role in urban ministry, it can refer to programs or models within our educational system that are already meeting the needs of children, youth, and families in poverty. Identifying these schools/programs and then conducting research to better understand the programs, their services, successes, and challenges could provide us with valuable information for developing guidelines, support, and programs.

3. As our institutions of higher education lead in research and train the future professionals who will meet the needs of poor urban children, youth, and their families, they can serve a major role in conducting research, establishing institutes/foundations on urban education, creating degrees/programs that specifically focus on urban education and ensure that the professionals they train are equipped to meet the needs of the poor.

Fulfilling Our Mission: Engage, Educate, Serve

“True education . . . has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers.”10 Such harmonious development is found in the study of God’s law, the Bible, nature, service to others, and “useful occupation.”11 Hence, the “first object of education is to direct our minds” and those of our children to God’s revelation of Himself.12 An education of this kind imparts far more than academic knowledge. It is a balanced development of the whole child with time dimensions that span eternity. Deprivation in any one of these dimensions has a deadening effect on the other dimensions, since all parts are interrelated and interactive. When we determine that our mission is to meet the wholistic needs of poor urban children and youth, we must make a long-term commitment, recognizing that this race will not be a sprint but a marathon.

The book and movie about the true life story of Antwone Fisher, a young man who confronts the hurt of his past in order to move forward into his future, is a true depiction of what life is like for some in poor urban cities. Fisher entered the Navy as an angry young adult but learned to express himself through poetry. Reprinted in the second column is his poem, “Who Will Cry for the Little Boy?”13

This poem is Fisher’s plea to the world and could easily be a plea to us: Will we cry for the little boys and girls who feel hopeless, abandoned, alone, and worthy? Is the mission to the cities one that we understand and embrace within our educational system? Are we prepared to extend help without stripping those in poor urban cities of their dignity? Are we prepared to assist while empowering? Are we prepared to offer help while instilling hope? Are we ready to answer the call?

Who will cry for the little boy, lost and all alone?
Who will cry for the little boy, abandoned without his own?
Who will cry for the little boy? He cried himself to sleep.
Who will cry for the little boy? He never had for keeps.
Who will cry for the little boy? He walked the burning sand.
Who will cry for the little boy? The boy inside the man.
Who will cry for the little boy? Who knows well hurt and pain.
Who will cry for the little boy? He died again and again.
Who will cry for the little boy? A good boy he tried to be.
Who will cry for the little boy, who cries inside of me?

Everything is so hard—math, science, reading—especially reading. I try and I try, but now I’m too tired to try anymore. Nothing I do helps me learn, and I don’t even know if it’s important anymore. I don’t want anybody to think I’m stupid, so it’s easier to be the “bad kid.” So I finally got kicked out of my school. They have no idea how behind I am, but at least I don’t have to be reminded every day just how stupid I am. And I thought I was home free. But now, my dad got me into this Seventh-day Adventist school. And I start on Monday! The other school couldn’t help me, maybe this one can?—A Child With a Learning Delay, Anywhere Across the Globe.
Davenia J. Lea, Ph.D., serves as an Associate Director of Education for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland. Dr. Lea earned her doctorate in early childhood and special education from the University of Maryland and worked as an early interventionist for 10 years in the public school system. Her experiences in higher education include serving as a professor and Education Department chair at Towson University in Towson, Maryland, and Dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies at Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park, Maryland.

NOTES AND REFERENCES
1. This statement was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at its Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, on October 13, 2009: http://www.adventist.org.au/about-us. Websites in the endnotes were accessed June 23, 2015.
4. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 21.
12. Ibid., p. 16.

Continuing Education (CE) courses will no longer be available through The Journal of Adventist Education® (JAE).

CE courses will now be delivered by The Adventist Learning Community (ALC), http://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com/, in partnership with the North American Division Office of Education (NADOE). If you have outstanding tests that need to be completed or would like to receive credit for CE courses taken through JAE, then materials must ordered by August 31, 2015, and submitted by November 1, 2015. No orders or submissions will be accepted after these dates.

Contact the following individuals to receive more information. Ordering Tests: Lolita Davidson Campbell at loldtadavida@gmail.com or (909) 583-3661. Receiving CE Credit: Union Conference Certification Registrar. ALC Course Delivery: Adam Fenner at Adam.Fenner@nad.adventist.org.
nicity, cultural identity, and religious discrimination in both developing and developed countries. We invite you to respond to the “Call for Papers” at the bottom of this page to report successes and lessons learned from initiatives that schools (pre-kindergarten through postgraduate) in your conference, union, or division have implemented in urban centers. Ultimately, our goal is to inspire action through education that takes seriously Adventism’s mission to the cities.

The authors of this guest editorial served as co-coordinators for this special issue on urban education and Adventist schools. Dr. Ella Smith Simmons serves as a General Vice President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland. Dr. Davenia J. Lea serves as an Associate Director of Education for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland. The JAE editorial staff express heartfelt appreciation for the many hours Drs. Simmons and Lea devoted to selecting topics, obtaining peer reviewers, providing input on article content, as well as their prompt response to the editor’s questions during the planning and production of the issue.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES
6. “Mission to the Cities” is the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s wholistic approach to sharing the gospel among the growing populations the world’s large cities. Initiatives include the establishment of Life Hope Centers, neighborhood events, seminars, small groups, and evangelistic meetings. Inaugurated in 2012 with support from the worldwide church leadership, the initiative was launched in 2013 in New York City followed in 2014 with each of the church’s 13 world divisions focusing on at least one large city in its territory. For 2015, each union will focus on a city in its region: http://missiontothecities.org/. See also Ellen G. White’s Ministry to the Cities (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 2012).


To further explore ways that Adventist education is making an impact in urban centers in the 21st century, the special issue of the Journal will focus on the following topics:

• Professional development models, collaborative endeavors with church organizations and community partnerships;
• Workshops/conferences that train teachers and educational administrators;
• Outreach or mission programs (i.e., school-based domestic and international service-learning projects; “centers of influence, life, hope”);
• Curriculum and instruction resources designed to engage students and their families, and enhance the learning environment in under-resourced urban schools;

• Research specifically studying Adventist urban school populations.

The Journal of Adventist Education is the professional publication for Seventh-day Adventist teachers and educational administrators worldwide. Theoretical or practical articles submitted for publication should address topics of interest to that group. The English edition of the Journal is published five times yearly, with approximately eight articles appearing in each issue.

Review Process Format: Articles, including references, charts, figures, and tables, generally should not exceed 10 pages. Papers should be double-spaced, using 12-point type, and standard margin and paragraph indentation. For additional information, visit http://jae.adventist.org/authors.htm#form.

Notification of receipt will take place upon submission; notification of acceptance will take place after the submission deadline. All papers will undergo double-blind peer review.

*To read more about the goals and accomplishments of the Mission to the Cities initiative, visit http://missiontothecities.org/lifehopecenters.org/.
With the new school year rapidly approaching, one of the most valuable resources you can have at hand is *The Journal of Adventist Education*, an award-winning publication that is still just **$18.75 per year**! (Add $3.00 outside the U.S.)

Each issue of the *Journal* features informational and practical articles on a variety of topics relating to Christian education. Occasional theme issues also deal with practical applications of best practices in Adventist education, principalship, teaching philosophy in Adventist schools, special education, spirituality, urban education, and training for school board members and trustees.

The magazine is published five times each academic year—from October-November to the following Summer—and you can still purchase individual issues for $3.75 plus shipping for yourself or a friend, your pastor, a colleague, or educator using MasterCard or Visa.

For more information on receiving the *Journal*, and to order an annual subscription or purchase an individual issue, contact the *Journal’s* Office Assistant, Chandra Goff, at (301) 680-5069 or by e-mail: goffc@gc.adventist.org.