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EDITORIAL

Adventist Education— For Every SDA Child?

For years we have asserted that "all Adventist children should be able to benefit from an Adventist education." While attempts have been made to fulfill this ambitious objective, it has not truly become a reality.

There are many reasons why children are not able to enroll in an Adventist school.

These reasons have to do with teacher preparation, physical facilities and equipment, perceptions of school administrators, and other difficulties. While we believe that Adventist education is an integral component of the church's mission, we must also deal with the reality, sad as it may be, that Adventist education cannot meet the needs of all people.

For example, many parents find that distance and finances play a major role in determining whether or not their children are able to attend an Adventist school. In this issue of the JOURNAL we are confronted with another challenge—providing for those who have learning disabilities and physical handicaps.

In 1982 the North American Division Curriculum Committee approved, after three years of study and consultation, a document entitled "Guidelines for Working With Exceptional Students in Seventh-day Adventist Schools," which is designed to assist teachers in the classroom. It was prepared on the premise that much can be done to meet the needs of exceptional children by "mainstreaming." It presents spiritual foundations, principles, and practical suggestions to aid the teacher and staff in facilitating the development of these children.

Since there are so many small schools and classes in the Adventist system of education, it is believed by many that much more could be done than what is presently being accomplished to facilitate this important phase in the ministry of education.

If it is necessary to reach outside the classroom for special assistance or services provided by the government, it should be understood that this is not aid to the school. Services provided by public agencies are for the child and should not be construed as acceptance by the school or the church of government aid.

In order to better serve the learning disabled, the recently revised SDA teacher certification requirements now include professional education in working with the exceptional child.

The church through its educational system seeks to minister to all—including the exceptional. By example, Christ has shown us the importance of dealing with each individual according to his or her need. The Department of Education shares this concern, as our guidelines for dealing with the exceptional indicate. We recognize that there are obstacles, yet we feel that with careful study and support from sensitive school boards, we can better help our teachers to address the needs of all Adventist children.—F. R. S. □