

SUCCESS

is within reach

By Diane Vyskocil

Carol

Eighteen-year-old Carol marched determinedly out of the counselor's office the day after spring break. School wasn't doing anything for her, and she was tired of being put down for trying. She would be happier helping her mom babysit.

What distressing events in Carol's life caused her to drop out of school? She tells her story:

I was always a slow reader—the words moved around a lot and were sometimes even backwards. I had to concentrate so hard that often I couldn't remember one word that I'd read.

In grade three I was tested for special education and qualified for a remedial reading program. Regular students referred to this as the dummy class; they often called me stupid. Reading was *so easy* here, but extremely difficult in the "normal" classroom.

I was retained that year; moreover, I was expected to perform *better* since I was a year older than my peers. My fears were paralyzing me, and I continued to feel nervous the whole time because I wanted to get things right.

A blackboard incident in grade four terrified me. The teacher made me work a problem in front of the whole class, and she said I couldn't sit down until the answer was correct. I got in serious trouble for not succeeding.

Junior high offered no reprieve from my anxieties. I hated my English teacher—literature was a nightmare. It made no difference if comprehension questions were repeated louder or softer. I simply didn't understand. I began to understand that good students were teacher's favorites.

I sat in class terrified of being called on to respond. It was becoming more obvious to me that I could neither read nor write. There were four strikes against me with this teacher:

1. She didn't know about my problem.
2. She acted irritated with me because my slowness translated into laziness.
3. She covered my papers with horrible red

marks and comments of, "You can do better!"

4. She put me on probation, declaring her intent to kick me out if I didn't perform according to her standards.

I loved math and science because there were no spelling mistakes to ruin my grade. I was also a good athlete, but unfortunately I hung around with losers. We all had something in common—failure. When my peers put me down for making the basketball team, I promptly quit. Continued acceptance by this crowd was definitely more important at this sensitive time in my life.

In grade 10 I got a four-hour-a-night job cleaning carpets. My boss praised me for doing such thorough work. Even though I often found myself in school after having only a few hours of sleep, it felt really good to me. At least this job brought me success along with plenty of positive reinforcers.

Now, 15 years later, Carol has completed her education. She is an instructional assistant in a school system where she successfully works with teachers and students in a highly academic situation.

The difference? Carol has learned strategies that work for her. She writes thank-you letters to sponsors of her son's Little League baseball team, but not before she makes a brief outline to organize her thoughts. She composes a rough draft and then carefully edits it, looking for one type of error at a time.

First, she looks for run-together sentences. Then she examines sentence beginnings and endings. Finally, she corrects misspelled words. Reading the material aloud helps her to hear mistakes that she might otherwise overlook. Although Carol still reads slowly, she is motivated to read a variety of magazines and books.

In reminiscing about her school experiences, Carol makes some suggestions:

I could deal with short reading assignments. For example, reading one brief page, answering specific questions with immediate feedback would have been a reasonable expectation. I felt so behind the regular classroom. I'd missed out on all the grammar. I

wished that I'd had extra help, yet kept up with the regular class.

I'd like to have seen a good grade just once, on one of my papers, based on my struggles, my effort. After laboring a long time to prepare a good paper, it was so discouraging to see all the bad marks. Could it be possible to earn a grade based on effort? I badly needed some encouragement.

Carol would have preferred guided assignments in the regular English textbook, modified and explained by the resource room teacher. If the class was studying nouns and it was late fall, she could have done a seasonal English assignment listing familiar Thanksgiving nouns. If *tukey* (turkey), *7-pu* (7-Up), and *vegechomols* (vegetables) were written on her paper, she could have merited a good English grade, demonstrated a level of mastery on nouns, and learned the correct spelling later.

Rich

In grade two Rich was diagnosed by special services as having a learning disability. Within the resource-room setting, he received help in reading, math, and language arts.

"Sure, I felt dumb when other kids got moved into another book," Rich says openly. "I wanted to do normal things like other kids. Sometimes the kids called me 'retard.'"

However, Rich's resource-room experiences helped to build his self-confidence. He took daily three-minute math timings on numbers up to 12. No more than 70 of these problems were printed on a page. He recorded his daily scores on a simple, manageable bar graph that resembled stair steps.

Since Rich's self-esteem was extremely low, he received rewards for short-term, as well as long-term, goals. He was given a special sticker for each 100 percent and a pizza lunch for completion of all addition and subtraction facts.

Rich was fascinated by a 1936 bound newspaper volume. He earned free time to browse through its pictures and prices. The teacher then asked him to compare the prices with those in a current newspaper. This proved to be an interesting method of practicing regrouping, both for addition and subtraction problems. For example, Rich compared the price difference between a 1936 and a 1991 man's suit.

Rich's vocabulary improved as he listened to read-a-long tapes about famous athletes. He relied on a book marker to keep his eyes focused on the sentences. Reading books with plenty of pictures seemed less formidable than solid blocks of type. Oral reading was embarrassing, but listening to his teacher read aloud daily was a strong motivator.

During his middle school years, Rich became active in sports. To motivate him, his teachers incorporated materials about sports into his math and reading assignments. The resource room teacher incorporated study skills into his curriculum, including writing down class assignments, note taking, and outlining.

When Rich reached high school, he had only one hour a day in the resource room. The assistance he received in rereading and rewriting his earth science notes helped him earn a passing grade in this demanding subject.

A high school class called World Problems challenged Rich's study skills. Guided by his resource-room teacher, he read the assigned *U.S.A. Today* news articles and passed each weekly test. His final test required him to write a 15-page report on a topic of his choice. He joined his class in the library, examined models of former reports, studied the list of necessary items to include. Next, he stated his main idea and concluding sentence, prepared a simple outline, and finally wrote an acceptable report.

A near-fatal car accident at the beginning of Rich's senior year almost ended his involvement in sports and postponed his graduation. However, he took the attitude, developed in special education: "Let people say what they want; I'll just work harder." This speeded the tedious rehabilitation process. Not only did Rich graduate on schedule; he also put his team into overtime during the state tournament, and *he* made the winning basket!

Rich says of his school life: "I always had a strong figure to admire; someone approachable was there to listen. My special-education records followed me through each school level, and it gave me confidence to know that a teacher was tracking me all along."

David

David was diagnosed in the second grade as learning disabled. He had difficulty following directions; words appeared to be backwards for him. Sentences became tangled fragments knotted into various shapes. Usually David's oral answers to test questions were correct, but his written answers were inaccurate and illegible.

In grade 5 David was fitted for glasses to cure his myopia. This enabled him to see the blackboard, calendar, and bulletin boards in his classroom, but it didn't cure his learning disability.

What helped David learn to read and write? "Repeating aloud while writing the words helped me a lot," he recalls. "It's boring, but it works!"

David traced each word carefully from a list that the teacher had written on triple-lined paper. (The broken middle line was the upper boundary for

short letters.) This penmanship paper had been folded into three vertical sections. After David said the word, he named each letter while tracing it. Then he moved into the next column and wrote it again, covering the original word with his left hand and saying each letter softly to himself. Finally, he checked to see if he'd written it correctly, before writing the same word again in the third column.

Attaching silly stories and ridiculous gimmicks to spelling words made an otherwise somber subject more fun for David. It was easier to remember "Georgie Evans' old grandmother rode a pig home yesterday" than to position isolated letters together to spell *geography*.

David's different style of learning required intense drill and practice, repeating and using words in the same or at least very similar setting. In order to learn new vocabulary words, he had to talk about them, write about them, and draw pictures or see pictures illustrating them; then they would become "set" in his mind. Reading specialists call this a "Whole Language Approach." Linguists label it the "Total Physical Response."

David remembers wanting badly to read aloud in class. He kept asking the teacher and raising his hand, waiting to be called. Finally he was allowed to read a short paragraph. "I was very nervous," he recalls. "I didn't do a good job and people made fun of me, but I was so glad that I'd read!"

Like David, other students can be very insightful about their own needs. They may describe these to teachers if they're given the opportunity.

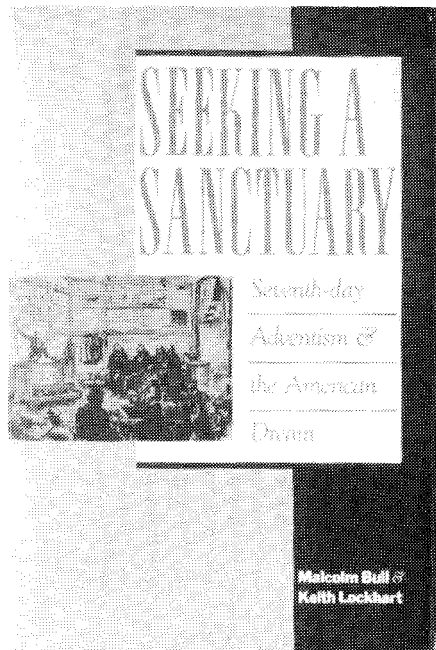
What kept David striving to succeed? He felt comfortable with his easy, high-interest, low-vocabulary reading materials. David preferred personal recognition from the teacher, rather than stickers. He liked the teacher to focus on very specific actions: "David, not only did you spell this difficult word correctly, but you made your tall letters *tall*, and the short letters *short*!"

By the time David reached high school, he'd learned good study skills. He knew how to listen carefully for directions and how to process them in a step-by-step sequence. Many times he had repeated to the teacher, "The first thing I'm going to do is..." "the next step is..."

During his senior year David gathered together his collective library-study skills to compose a long report. He received a good grade from the regular classroom teacher, plus a generous dose of parental recognition. He was amazed at the finished project, and kept repeating to himself, "These are *my own* words!"

Some things are still a challenge for David. However, he is pursuing a suc-

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of historical and sociological methodology, it is also such a good read that many people have found it hard to put down. Adventist scholars and educators will doubtless wrestle with the book's arguments for years.

The authors boldly state their central argument as follows:

America had offered sanctuary to generations of immigrants from Europe: Adventism sought to provide a sanctuary from America. By presenting itself as an alternative to the Republic in this way, the church rapidly came to operate as an alternative to America in the social sphere as well, as Adventists replicated the institutions and functions of American society (pp. IX, X).

Bull and Lockhart then apply this thesis brilliantly to the separate themes of Adventist theology (including eschatology, God, and salvation), experience (such as church structure, growth patterns, religious liberty, and art), and subculture (women, blacks, ministers, doctors, educators, and the self-supporting movement).

The role of Adventist education provides a major buttress to their central argument. Adventists have primarily drawn their converts from marginal socioeconomic elements in society. The church has enabled those individuals, through its educational system, to leave their low status behind and join higher-status occupations.

In Bull and Lockhart's model, the individual member, upon first joining the church, becomes an aspirer, then a sustainer, and finally, through what they call "the revolving door," a transformer who exits the church. At each stage the Adventist school is critical in socializing the young to Adventism. However, the authors write little about the critical role Adventist boarding academies have played in this process, choosing to con-

centrate more on higher education.

The model described in this book obviously applies to many Adventists, but it fails to take into account the vast majority of church members who live outside North America, or those who do not live in large Adventist educational and medical centers but rather attend small, struggling churches, many of them without a church school. However, for many highly educated Adventists, this model is persuasive and must be dealt with.

Bull and Lockhart also explore extensively the internal philosophical struggles in Adventist education. As they analyze the founding of Adventist schools, they find no driving educational philosophy at the start. Instead they see a need to replicate all of society's institutions within the church. So, when Ellen White advocated a new philosophy, elementary church schools attempted to implement her views, but colleges—in their drive for professionalism—never changed. Instead, colleges, with the strong encouragement of church leaders, focused on becoming as good as colleges on the outside.

Into this setting came the self-supporting movement, which rejected the original basis for having schools, in order to realize Ellen White's unrealized goals. This movement serves a role similar to that of Roman Catholic monasteries. It ultimately functions within Adventism in the same capacity as the church relates to America—with discomfort and suspicion.

In reading this book, one has to exert caution not to get so caught up in the creativeness of the thesis and the clever writing as to lose one's critical capacities.

Adventist educators do need to study this book in order to challenge their own thinking about the church's origins and current structure in the United States. College professors should expose their upper-division students to the important sociological elements of the book. Bull and Lockhart's study should offer insight and guidance into church sociology. It may prove a helpful companion study to such studies as *Valuegenesis*, as the denomination attempts to close its revolving door.—Richard Osborn. □

Dr. Richard Osborn is Director of Education for the Columbia Union Conference, Columbia, Maryland. He has recently completed a Ph.D. in American History at the University of Maryland.

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cessful naval career, and now reads for pleasure. He especially enjoys science/adventure stories.

Carol, Rich, and David are similar to millions of other learning-disabled students. Carol dropped out because no one recognized her problem or tried to help her. Rich and David were luckier. They connected with skillful teachers who recognized their individual needs. The result? Teachers made the difference for the *different learner*. □

Diane Vyskocil is Director of Special Education and a member of the Administrative Team for Blaine, Washington, Public Schools. Blaine Elementary School was one of six schools to receive the James Madison Model School Award given by the U.S. Office of Education in 1988. Ms. Vyskocil is a Clinical Affiliate Professor for Western Washington State University. She is also a member of the Project Affirmation Committee for the General Conference of SDA and of the Board of Education for the Washington Conference of SDA.

MATH-RELATED PROBLEMS AND DYSLEXIA

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including mathematics. Many instructional methodologies can be used to enhance student achievement and to

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deal with language disabilities. But most important, an understanding, caring attitude, and fair treatment will inspire the student to *want* to improve. □

Prema Gaikwad is a Doctoral Student at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. She is working on a Curriculum and Instruction degree with a cognate in reading. Ms. Gaikwad taught mathematics for 13 years at Spicer College, Pune, India, at the secondary and college levels. When she returns to Spicer College, she will direct a reading center there.

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