



Faith-Ann McGarrell



## Navigating a New Path

One of my favorite pictures is of a path winding precariously through a verdant, wooded forest. The path is rugged; it weaves its way through rocky crevices, loose stones, and mossy soil—at times level, at times steep. The image is one I have used with my curriculum students as we deliberated the meaning of the word *currere*—the path upon which we “walk, skip, jump, and perhaps run,”<sup>1</sup> while navigating the process of teaching and learning. The resulting discussions often led to contemplations about the inevitability of change, the necessity of honing our navigation skills for life’s challenging moments, and the power of stories—our own and those of others—to support us along the way.

This image is just as relevant for me now as we begin this new journey together. My relationship with THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION began early in my teaching life. As a beginning English and Language Arts teacher (Grades 7-12), I stood in the middle of the proverbial rocky path, confronted with an energetic, creative group of students—some of whom proved to be avid readers and writers, while others struggled. Receiving a copy of the JOURNAL’S theme issue dedicated to teaching writing and developing cognitive skills offered hope. Articles such as “The Write Stuff” and “Creative Writing—Making Meaning” were like tools in hand. At last, this was not just theory; it was the real deal—theory joined with practice.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the thought of implementing these ideas seemed daunting! The process felt precarious, like navigating the rocky crevices; the practice tenuous, like walking on loose stone; and the support uncertain, like walking on mossy soil. Fortunately, each article presented perspectives on how to proceed.

How do we as practitioners in the field venture unto new pathways, engage with ideas that challenge us, or reconsider the boundaries of the known? In essence, how

do we move from what we know to something new? What do we do with advances in technology that have the potential to revolutionize our paradigms by changing the way we access and produce information? How do we maintain standards when all around us standards are changing? How do we validate our stories when our lived experiences differ? How do we as teachers and administrators prepare for risk? This is the new—and there is still so much that we do not know. Yet, here are a few things that we can know with certainty:

For 75 years, THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION has served as a mainstay for Seventh-day Adventist educators. The recent past editor, Beverly Robinson-Rumble, served for 43 of those years, establishing a path for this publication and sustaining commitment to the mission that every teacher, in every school, in every conference, union, and division receive a copy of the JOURNAL.<sup>3</sup> This vow, upheld by the General Conference Department of Education, comprises the core of our mission statement.<sup>4</sup> Through this periodical, we transmit<sup>5</sup> what we know about Seventh-day Adventist Christian education—its goals, aims, and values, research-based methods of instruction, and effective approaches for assessing and planning for learning.

We also know that the JOURNAL has served as a venue for transactional discourse,<sup>6</sup> which builds upon good practice and provides support to practitioners in the field—beginning and seasoned professionals alike. The JOURNAL will continue its mission to connect and keep teachers, administrators, and individuals vested in education active in conversation. As an educator, I receive several journals from multiple perspectives and voices—*Education Digest*, *Educational Review*, *English Journal*, *The Language Arts Journal*, the *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, and many more—and so do each of you. Yet, I look forward to one that represents my dis-

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tinct, unique voice as an Adventist educator. The JOURNAL speaks with that voice; it propels me to reflect upon my discipline through the lens of my faith, and ponder new avenues for teaching and learning. In turn, I, too, engage. My personal experience as a beginning teacher, along with insights gained from reading and abstracting JOURNAL articles while serving at CIRCLE, led to incorporating the JOURNAL in my teaching, actively writing for the JOURNAL, and encouraging others to do the same. Let's keep the conversations going!

An erudite thinker once said: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others? Living is a form of not being sure, not knowing what next or how. The moment you know how, you begin to die a little."<sup>8</sup> And recently, a well-known theorist in education technology noted that "we are facing a future in which 'knowing' may be obsolete."<sup>9</sup> The concept of "knowing" has become a point of vulnerability in our world today. Both statements propel us to think deeply about what our stories teach and how we interact with new ideas. In order to grow, we must be willing to explore new pathways, create new trails, and conquer our fear of the rocky crevices, loose stones, and mossy soil.

The articles in this issue present a variety of perspectives, each one an example of undertaking something new, facing risks, and carving a new path. Veering away from the known can be risky—and at times, controversial! David Steen helps us navigate the GMO controversy in light of our commitment to knowledge and faith. Beverly Christian's article, an adapted chapter from the book *Developing a Faith-based Education: A Teacher's Manual*, provides powerful ideas on values transformation and faith formation. Dennis Plubell and Carol Campbell discuss the new *Standards for Student Learning in North American Division Seventh-day Adventist Elementary and Secondary Schools*. Shared ideals provide a foundation as we explore new paths.

Yet, shared ideals and shared stories are not synonymous. While our stories differ, they matter. Stories paired with reflection can be powerful sources of insight. Barbara Fisher explores biblical narratives and metanarratives, and the power of stories to inspire and transform. Jason Hinze and Phil Fitzsimmons address the "nature and nuances of the narratives we each tell ourselves"<sup>10</sup> within the context of pre-service teachers and their professional experiences.

Ultimately, venturing out means facing the unknown, preparing for the unexpected. How do we navigate the unforeseen? Arthur Blinci and Tim Northrop offer a comprehensive guide to managing risk and making sure plans are in place to protect tangible resources. Yet, how do we prepare for the intangible risks that come with new ideas, or stories that challenge our thinking and our faith? Articles in this issue provide perspectives on how we can equip ourselves to engage with new ideas and prepare learners to do the same.

As a single entity, the JOURNAL is incapable of transforming<sup>11</sup> any one teacher/professor, principal/president, board member/trustee, or other vested individual. Instead, we partner with and commit to working under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

We seek to become a conduit that inspires and initiates a desire for transformation—from teachers to students, administrators to parents, and organizations and institutions. We proclaim a unique and distinct message with a clear, unapologetic voice.

As we journey together, I envision the JOURNAL in the hand of every teacher and as a venue for conversation and dialogue amongst professionals and scholars. Our collective paths do not end here, however, and in this sense, the JOURNAL'S mission is prophetic<sup>12</sup>: to participate in the transformation of individuals<sup>13</sup>—students, teachers, and administrators—as we prepare for another school, the Eden School above "where the students should thus be fitted more and more fully to reflect, throughout endless ages, the light of the knowledge of His glory."<sup>14</sup> Let the journey continue!

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**Faith-Ann McGarrell** is the Editor of THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION. Prior to this appointment, she served as an Associate Professor of Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Over the past 17 years, Dr. McGarrell has taught English in grades 7-12, Basic Writing and Freshman Composition at the college level, and Curriculum and Instruction at the graduate level. She also served as Program Director for Curriculum & Instruction at Andrews University. McGarrell holds a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, and an M.A. and B.A. in English Literature.

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#### REFERENCES

1. A variation of the Latin definition of the word *currere* used in the International Association of the Advancement of Curriculum Studies Conference program materials, Tampere, Finland, 2006. *Currere* and curriculum are often linked.
2. *The Journal of Adventist Education*, Volume 60, Issue 3, 1998. A theme issue dedicated to teaching writing and developing cognitive thinking skills.
3. *The Journal of Adventist Education* Mission Statement: <http://jae.adventist.org/mission.htm>.
4. Voted at the Annual Council of 1976: "To request employing organizations (conferences, academies, colleges, and universities) to provide *The Journal of Adventist Education* for all teachers at all levels," both in NAD and overseas. Action of 1976 Annual Council (October 21, 1976), GC Committee Minutes, 76-400.
5. John P. Miller and Wayne Seller, *Curriculum: Perspectives and Practice* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1990). Introduced the curriculum development process of transmit, transact, and transform.
6. Ibid.
7. CIRCLE ([circle.adventist.org](http://circle.adventist.org)) is the Curriculum and Instruction Resource Center Linking Educators clearinghouse for teachers and administrators, worldwide.
8. Martin Luther King, Jr., Montgomery, Alabama, August 11, 1957, speaking on the occasion of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The speech charged listeners to move beyond the comfortable and challenge the status quo.
9. Sugata Mitra, 2013 TED Talk, *Build a School in the Cloud*, [https://www.ted.com/talks/sugata\\_mitra\\_build\\_a\\_school\\_in\\_the\\_cloud](https://www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_build_a_school_in_the_cloud).
10. See page 32.
11. Miller and Seller, *Curriculum Perspectives and Practice*, op. cit.
12. The concept of the "prophetic mission of the *Journal*" is one I have embraced after conversations with Beverly Robinson-Rumble over the past several months.
13. 2 Corinthians 3:18; Titus 3:5.
14. Ellen G. White, "The Eden School," *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1952), p. 22.

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