



Carol Tasker

T E A C H E R S :

Committed Adventist teachers who are passionate about God and His children are Adventist education's most valued asset—treasures of inestimable worth. How do I know? Because when I was attending primary school and high school, there were no Adventist schools near my home. I went to government schools where I learned how to read and write and to get good grades, but where I felt isolated because I could never attend the school's weekend events on Friday nights or Saturdays. My school world did not connect with my home and church beliefs and values. I felt as if I didn't belong, and each week I subconsciously negotiated a life lived between opposing goals and life directions.

From my first year of primary schooling, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. I'd heard of Avondale College, our Seventh-day Adventist tertiary institution in Australia, and I wanted to go there. At the end of high school, my five summers of work provided the cash portion for my first semester fees. It looked as if my college education might take 20 years! My parents couldn't help me financially. Their contribution to my Christian education: sheets, blankets, a set of the *Conflict of the Ages* books, and a battered tin trunk to carry my belongings on the train to Avondale College.

However, my first taste of Adventist education was captivating—and it was because of the teachers! My teachers prayed before they started their classes, and frequently mentioned God in English, history, and science classes. This was very new to me. My first Sabbath, I was surprised to see my respected history teacher serving as a deacon in the college church—welcoming me to the service and passing the offering bag to my row of seats. I'd never imagined this kind of

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thing could happen in a school. But there was more. . . . Sunday morning brought the voluntary “Operation Blueprint” program, where faculty and students worked side by side on the campus, dressed in our “garden clothes,” sharing stories, and getting our hands dirty. It was my history teacher turned deacon and now gardener who taught me how to transplant cabbage seedlings into the freshly cultivated soil.

Ellen White captured the significance of this type of activity and its long-term impact: “the attention required in transplanting—so that not even a root or fiber is crowded or misplaced—the care of the young plants, pruning and watering, weeding and controlling pests, not only teach important lessons concerning the development of character, but the work itself is a means of development. Cultivating carefulness, patience, attention to detail, and obedience to law, imparts a most essential training. The constant contact with the mystery of life and the loveliness of nature . . . tends to quicken the mind and refine and elevate the character. The lessons taught prepare the worker to deal more successfully with other minds.”¹ This teacher-in-training was discovering a rich education apart from books and lectures and assignments, for which I will be forever grateful.

Have you thought about the range of skills that the ideal teacher-training program provides for its students? Some of these include the following: organization, communication, management, spiritual leadership, measurement, assessment and evaluation, problem-solving, administration, strategic thinking and planning, decision-making, negotiation, counseling, and people skills. Above all, these programs cultivate in future teachers a sensitivity to individual differences in student capa-

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bilities and skills, interests, and needs.

Finding ways to mentor and nurture teachers in their first years of teaching, to affirm and validate mature teachers while providing ongoing professional development opportunities is crucial for every Adventist educational institution, and for every level of our education system. If we don't achieve these goals, there are countless organizations and institutions just waiting for our well-equipped, work-ready teaching graduates to pursue other careers, and our system will be poorer for it. Seeing Adventist-trained teachers recruited for other careers in Papua New Guinea in the past 20 years makes me wonder if we should double our teacher-trainee intake, so that we could employ half the teaching graduates in our schools while the others become the salt and light for positions in the church, government, businesses, and NGO's—contributing to the country's overall growth and development and openness to gospel initiatives.

Adventist teachers trained in programs that place wholistic emphasis on the spiritual, mental, social, and physical aspects of schooling will impact the lives of those in their spheres of influence for eternity. This is what makes our education system unique. Teachers committed to God have enormous opportunities for modeling what God is like to students and their families.

Our vision is to have **committed Adventist teachers nurturing student disciplers in quality Adventist schools.** Spiritually, teachers will be connected with God every day; mentally, they will see themselves as lifelong learners seeking professional growth and development; and socially, they will be relationship enhancers, modeling good interpersonal skills as they interact with their families, students, and fellow staff. Physically, “the better the health the better will be the work accomplished.”² Ellen White acknowledged that “so wearing are teachers' responsibilities that special effort... is required to preserve vigor and freshness.”³ When teachers demonstrate a positive commitment to all four areas of life, their students observe a valuable model for life.

The articles in this issue showcase a variety of interests and are authored by individuals passionate about providing quality Adventist education that is Bible-based, kingdom-directed, and service-oriented, with Christ at the center.

John Wesley Taylor's article provides a comprehensive exploration of biblical examples, processes, and principles for research. Michael Harvey concludes that institutional leaders need to be intentional and deliberate in their efforts to effectively introduce IFL in the classroom. Charity Garcia and Charissa Boyd, who have had broad local and global experience, explain Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) and its impact on culturally diverse school populations.

Betty Bayer shows how school boards can enhance profes-

sional learning opportunities for teachers, while Daniel Gonzalez-Socoloske introduces environmental ethics issues, inviting both students and teachers to inform themselves and to become engaged in global initiatives to save the planet. Kayla Gilchrist-Ward offers a number of best-practice teaching strategies to enhance writing, journaling, verbal skills, and project-based learning; and finally, Katia Garcia Reinert introduces the *Youth Alive* program as a resource for Adventist schools to help build resilience in young people.

A well-known quotation often attributed to William Butler Yeats says: “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”⁴ I believe Spirit-filled teachers are the ones who light that fire with eternal results. When we look back on our own education, we remember those teachers for who they were, not just their methods and techniques. Teachers, indeed, are at the center of real learning—for now and for eternity. Adventist teacher-training programs for beginning and in-service teachers, and professional resources like this JOURNAL are designed to nurture their commitment as they impact the lives of those they serve and light a fire with eternal rewards.

Carol Tasker, PhD, is Associate Director of Education for the South Pacific Division (SPD), which includes Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and 10 other island nations of the South Pacific. Her 45 years as an Adventist educator has included teaching in schools in the SPD, as well as in Taiwan, Myanmar, Philippines, and Chile. She served as Dean of the School of Education at Pacific Adventist University (Papua New Guinea) and as a lecturer at AIIAS (Philippines). Dr. Tasker holds a doctorate in Religious Education from Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A., and considers herself a lifelong learner. She believes that the character of the teacher has an inestimable effect on students.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ellen G. White, *True Education* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2000), 67.
2. *Ibid.*, 172.
3. *Ibid.*
4. This quotation is often attributed to the poet William Butler Yeats: https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/william_butler_yeats_101244; however, some have attributed it to the philosopher Plutarch: <https://www.beaninspiner.com/education-spark-that-lights-up-mind/>.

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