



Richard Sabuin

Discipling Students

The Great Commission for Northern Asia-Pacific Division Schools

sensed a spiritual atmosphere as I entered the campus of Youngnam Sahmyook Middle and High School, Youngnam City, South Korea, in the Korean Union Conference (KUC). Two times a day, Principal Han Ki Tae would climb the 65-step stairway to the prayer garden to pray for the school, teachers, and students. “This is my secret in leadership,” he said.

“We bring it to our classroom every morning to read it,” they explained.

This is just one of many stories about how schools in the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) focus on nurturing students to become disciples of Christ. “Discipling Students” was the aim for all NSD schools during the past quinquennium (2015-2020). This aligns with Christ’s Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19, NKJV),* and the quinquennial strategic plan of the world church: “Reach the World.” This aim has been emphasized in school evaluations and supervision visits. Strategies adopted to reach this aim include teacher training, upgrading programs, spiritual-life programs, mission initiatives, and other school activities.

Teacher Training

Teachers in the NSD are trained in the integration of faith and learning (IFL). This is important for all students, including the 70 percent of about 21,000 students in our schools who are not Adventists. These students are the responsibility of nearly 1,200 teachers of 58 schools in NSD. They need to learn about faith in all subjects.

Sahmyook University (SYU) and Sahmyook Health University (SHU), both located in South Korea, have conducted IFL training every year since 2016 in collaboration with NSD and KUC. Professors at the two universities, as well as primary and high school principals in KUC, also attended these training sessions. During this past quinquennium, the main speakers included education leaders from the General Conference as well as pro-



Picture on the wall of the Mathetes Club, which initiated a Bible-reading program for students at Sahmyook Health University in South Korea. Photo courtesy of the NSD Department of Education.

Later, I met three middle school students who were not Christians. “Do you have a Bible?” I asked them. “Yes, we do,” they replied in good English. “Who gave you the Bible?” I inquired. “We bought it,” they enthusiastically replied. “Do you read your Bible?” I was curious. “Yes, we do,” they confidently confirmed. “When?” I inquired.

fessors and scientists from different Adventist universities. Similar training was also conducted for professors at Hong Kong Adventist College (HKAC) and for teachers of several secondary schools in Mongolia Mission (MM), Japan Union Conference (JUC), Chinese Union Mission (CHUM), and Taiwan Conference (TWC).

The NSD also scheduled two division-wide meetings for educators. Approximately 200 teachers attended the NSD teachers conference held on August 9 and 10, 2018, at the Korean International Exhibition Center (KINTEX), in Ilsan, South Korea, in conjunction with the International Mission Congress in which more than 4,000 people participated. In Kathmandu, Nepal, on July 22 to 25, 2019, approximately 50 educators attended the Creationism, Faith, and Science Conference, which featured speakers from the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI) and General Conference education leaders.

NSD teachers have also been learning about the philosophy of Adventist education by reading *Educating for Eternity* by George R. Knight. All teachers in KUC and JUC have received a copy of this book, which has been translated into Korean and Japanese.

Scholarship Programs

In addition to regular scholarship programs such as bursaries and educational aid, NSD has received spe-

cial funds from the General Conference to upgrade (sponsor) four students from the Unorganized Territory (UT) of the China Union Mission. These students have been studying toward a PhD in religion at Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) in four different areas: Old Testament, New Testament, Missiology, and Systematic Theology. Upon completing their studies, they will serve as professors at the Chinese Adventist Seminary (CAS), which trains pastors to serve Chinese communities in Asia and beyond. CAS is located on the campus of Hong Kong Adventist College and recently has been accredited by the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (AAA).

Campus Spiritual Life

Chaplains play an important role in the spiritual life of NSD schools. The larger the institution, the more chaplains are needed. Sahmyook University, for example, has 30 chaplains to serve 5,000 students, and Sahmyook Health University has six chaplains to serve 1,200 students. The school chaplains prepare spiritual master plans focusing on discipling students through many different activities.

All NSD schools conduct weeks of prayer at least twice each year. At Hiroshima Saniku Gakuin Academy, Japan, in addition to conducting week of prayer



School chaplains attending chaplaincy training sponsored by the Korean Union Conference. Photo courtesy of the NSD Department of Education.

three times a year, teachers also give Bible studies to the students. At Tusgal Adventist School, Mongolia, the teachers study the Bible together during morning worship. Administrators and the chaplain lead out in presenting the church's fundamental beliefs. In November 2019, one of the non-Adventist teachers accepted Jesus Christ and was baptized.

NSD schools emphasize Bible reading. At Sahn-yook Health University, about 50 Adventist students are members of the Mathetes (Disciples) Club, a core group of students who provide support and leadership in spiritual programs. The club has initiated a Bible-reading program for the members of the club and other students. A big black-and-white picture is posted on its office wall that includes different groups in the club. Individuals and groups who have read specific Bible chapters color portions of the picture. Students at Taiwan Adventist College (TAC) organized a hermeneutics club, which meets regularly to study and interpret the Bible, utilizing the historical-grammatical method of interpretation.

In order to address the need for curriculum materials in this area, the Korean Union Conference has developed elementary Bible textbooks. Spearheaded by a committee of school chaplains and Bible teachers, the process took two years and was approved by the union.

Many spiritual-life activities have been initiated to ensure that students receive maximal spiritual benefit from the time they spend in our schools. Some of these activities include chapel programs and Sabbath worship services that address the needs of different groups of students and teachers participating in service in local churches, and small-group discipleship programs for students from different cultural backgrounds. On average, 1,000 students were baptized every year of the quinquennium as the result of all these initiatives.

Mission Initiatives

Almost all schools in NSD organize regular mission trips when they reach out to others through community service. Some schools have done even more:

- Hong Kong Adventist Academy organized an enrichment seminar for parents called "Principal's Parenting Principles." About 70 parents, most of them

non-Christians, came to the meeting and listened for several hours to the lectures. This proved to be a successful way of building bridges to reach them.

- Kitaura Adventist Junior High School participated in the All Japan 2018 Maranatha evangelistic program. Students oversaw the evangelistic meetings; they coordinated all planning and preparation and spoke for the meetings. As a result, 12 were baptized during the meetings, and 15 more continued to learn and to consider baptism.

- Taiwan Adventist College initiated Total Student Involvement (TSI) in 2017, in response to the TMI initiative of the world church. Some 50 students, one-third of the on-campus population, participated, along with faculty. For about four months, participants un-



Taiwan Adventist College students and faculty praying before being dispatched for the Total Student Involvement Evangelism program. Photo courtesy of the NSD Department of Education.

derwent intensive training that included how to preach the gospel, present health messages, sing songs, and present Bible skits. They would wake up at 4 a.m. to read their Bibles and to practice preaching their sermons. Some spent entire Sundays practicing their sermons! Many of them were first-time preachers.

The night before the students were dispatched to the mission fields, an all-night prayer meeting took place. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, they launched the evangelistic initiative. As a result, in 2017 and 2018 alone, they conducted 175 evangelistic series, both in Taiwan and in the vast Unorganized Territory, resulting in more than 23,000 attendees and 2,452 persons being baptized. In 2019, 14 faculty members and more than 100 students participated, resulting in 508 baptisms.

Reaching the Unreached

NSD is reaching out to the unreached education field in UT. On July 10, 2016, 15 graduates with a BA in Theological Studies from a CAS Center in UT took part in the CAS graduation. They are the first fruit of the bachelor programs offered by CAS in that vast territory. In the same year, TAC also graduated 56 students from the same region.

Many Adventist children in that region have not had access to parochial education. For that reason, a home school in Chinese for both primary- and secondary-level students has been established. The education department of NSD and CHUM have provided training to the core teachers of the homeschool program to help them understand the philosophy and standards of Adventist education. Some of the teachers have participated in several AAA visits, which has helped them understand how Adventist schools are operated. We want to make more disciples through this homeschooling program.

The NSD also has plans to reach Mongolia through Adventist education. Tusal has been the only Adventist school in Mongolia. Last October 2019, Tusal was named as the best private school among 30 schools in Chingeltei District, Ulaanbaatar. More schools are needed. On June 9, 2019, the Mongolia Mission held a groundbreaking ceremony to build the Gateway Project. This project includes an international academy and a vocational school. The construction is still going on. When completed, it is hoped that this school will be a channel of God's salvation for many young people in the country.

Remaining Challenges and Future Focus

We are not challenge-free, but we see those challenges as our future focus. There is a need to increase the number of Adventist teachers in some schools. Church members need greater access to Adventist education for their children. In several regions of NSD, we need to establish Adventist primary schools.

We will continue to disciple our students. This takes effort, energy, and resources, and beyond this, it takes faithfulness and prayer. It is our hope that these students, when they have become disciples of Christ, will say, "I Will Go: Reach the World." ✍️

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Baptism at Sahmyook Health University after a Week of Prayer program. Photo courtesy of the NSD Department of Education.