



Edgard Leonel Luz

Strengthening Communion, Building Relationships, and Reaching the World With Mission

Communion. Relationship. Mission. These three approaches guided the Department of Education of the South American Division (SAD) during the 2015-2020 quinquennium. Working in harmony with the plans put forth by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the SAD Department of Education classified projects aligned with the division's goals, namely: *communion*: more students and teachers studying the Bible and devoting more time to personal devotion and prayer; *re-*

lationship: more students and teachers actively involved in small-group ministries and sharing their faith; and *mission*: more teachers giving Bible studies and bringing people to the feet of Jesus. Through approaches that support spiritual and mental development and integrative strategies and management processes, the SAD Department of Education has forged ahead with several initiatives designed to spread the good news of the gospel.

Spiritual Development

Several approaches were used to help foster spiritual development within Adventist schools in the division. Tools and initiatives such as the Spiritual Master Plan, 10 Days of Prayer, mission projects, and Spirit of Prophecy books were essential to the department's plans for spiritual development.

- *Development of the Spiritual Master Plan.* The Spiritual Master Plan (SMP) is a tool to assess and nurture the spiritual atmosphere of a school. It is a way of determining what a school should accomplish to satisfy the spiritual needs of its students and educational personnel, and it promotes the development of faith and Christian maturity through its various activities. The SMP helps schools plan and implement activities that will help



The Spiritual Master Plan and 10 Days of Prayer are some of the tools used to nurture the spiritual atmosphere of schools in the South American Division. Photo courtesy of the SAD Education Department.

accomplish the spiritual goals for the educational institution. Topics within the plan are determined based on the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Fundamental Beliefs. They are used to instill in the educational community—teachers, administrators, and students—the importance of biblical principles and values to daily living. The SAD Department of Education has prepared developmentally appropriate resources and activities for each age group, which are promoted at each academic level.

- *Bible Study.* The SAD educational community is actively involved in sharing God's Word among students, parents, and extended families. Until the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 2,109 active small groups in our schools. Currently, most of these groups meet in private homes, with follow-up by our school chaplains.

- *10 Days of Prayer.* Looking for God's guidance is essential, and Adventist schools in the SAD actively participate in the 10 Days of Prayer initiative at the beginning of every year. It is exciting to witness how every school highlights this wonderful and inspiring initiative in different and creative ways. Schools host massive prayer drives that involve teachers, students, parents, and friends of the school community.

- *Hope Impact.* Every year, students, teachers, and educational administrators get involved in this book-sharing project, distributing about 600,000 books to the families and the community surrounding the school.

- *Spring Baptism.* At schools within the SAD, baptisms occur throughout the year, especially during the semi-annual weeks of prayer. However, every September, baptisms resulting from Adventist education where students, relatives, and teachers give their lives to Jesus are celebrated.

- *Mission projects.* The SAD Department of Education helps students in our schools fulfill the mission of serving through various mission projects. Students and teachers reach out to the world by participating in mission projects to several regions and cultures in our division (Amazon population, Native communities, extreme poverty areas, etc.), as well as to countries beyond our territory (Africa, Asia). It is inspiring to witness the increasing growth in the missionary spirit within our students as they begin to understand the importance of sharing God's Word and taking it to many places where there are physical and spiritual needs.

- *Spirit of Prophecy Books.* Adventist education promotes student discipleship through the reading and study of the Spirit of Prophecy books, such as the Conflict of the Ages series written in contemporary language. These books are made available to students in Adventist schools and are an essential part of their spiritual development.

Physical Development

Developed in 2017, the goal of the SAD's Health Master Plan is the physical development of students, teachers, and administrators within the Adventist educational system, with the belief that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. The plan is based on the eight principles of health to foster a healthy lifestyle: nutrition,



Schools throughout the SAD hold baptisms throughout the year, during weeks of prayer, and annually in September. Photo courtesy of the SAD Education Department.

exercise, water, sunshine, temperance, air, rest, and trust in God.

In addition to the Health Master Plan, other resources were created and shared with Adventist educators. During the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Education also produced a video series entitled "Tips to Take Care of One's Health," which was well received by our students and their parents. The video series included eight videos in Spanish and Portuguese using professionals who discussed each of the aforementioned eight health principles and provided clear guidance on how to make the most of them.

Mental Development

To further strengthen and support mental development, the SAD has developed several resources, in-

cluding textbooks, evaluation programs, professional-development training programs, and virtual and language-learning programs. All are made available to Adventist schools throughout the division.

Textbooks. All textbooks used in the SAD educational primary and secondary school system include the Adventist philosophy of education and faith-and-learning integration; these resources are printed by our publishing houses Casa Publicadora Brasileira (CPB) and Asociación Casa Editora Sudamericana (ACES).

- *PAEE and PAAEB.* In addition to preparing textbooks used in our schools, the SAD Department of Education measures the academic quality of schools through the Adventist Educational Assessment Programs, also known as *Programa Adventista de Evaluación Educativa (PAEE)* and *Programa Adventista de Avaliação da Educação Básica (PAAEB)*. PAEE and PAAEB evaluations are carried out in the following areas: critical thinking, mathematics, language, and the sciences. In addition, these programs allow educational leaders within the division to evaluate the socio-demographic-emotional states of both students and teachers, as well as to implement strategies for carrying out ongoing improvements in our schools. Responses gathered during the evaluation process help generate a pool of questions, which are then shared when conducting various research initiatives.

- *Adventist Academy.* In addition to textbooks and continuous evaluation, the SAD provides professional-development training and continuing education for all Adventist educators, administrators, support staff, stu-

dents, and the community through Adventist Academy. To date, Adventist Academy has offered 126 courses, with 116 instructors, and close to 20,000 students in 12 countries. Visit <https://adventistacademy.me> for more information.

- *Virtual Learning Environment.* Virtual learning is carried out through two platforms: Patmos and E-Class, developed by Peru Adventist University and Brazil Publishing House, respectively. The E-Class platform receives, on average, 3.8 million visits per day and has 671,000 active users. In addition, E-Class Play is an open educational resource that facilitates the sharing of educational videos that can be used to augment learning.

- *Bilingual Education.* English-language learning takes place in 45 bilingual schools, using resources prepared by the Adventist Language Institute in South Korea and shared with permission by the SAD Department of Education.

Integration Strategies

Several initiatives were developed and launched throughout the 2015-2020 quinquennium that relied on integrating various areas of content and building networks through collaboration. These included field schools, conferences, marketing strategies, and informational technology (IT) security.

- *Field Area Consortia for Higher Education Schools.* With the goal of expanding an exchange of knowledge for faculty and students by providing opportunities for them to share experiences, and in an



A sample of the textbooks published by the SAD publishers Casa Publicadora and Asociación Casa Editora Sudamericana. Photo courtesy the SAD Education Department.

effort to combine curricular models and focus on internationalization, consortia were created in a variety of areas such as health: Consortium of Adventist Educational Healthcare Institutions (CIEAS); informational technology (IT): Consortium of Adventist Educational IT Institutions (CIEATI); and business administration for education: Consortium of Adventist Educational Business Administration Institutions (CIEACE).

- *Adventist Education Scientific Research Conferences.* The organization of research conferences for faculty and students contributed to the strengthening of research skills and increased awareness of the importance of research. In June 2019, the SAD Department of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Science and Technology at River Plate Adventist University, organized the Third Scientific Research Conference in Adventist Education held in Entre Ríos, Argentina, at River Plate Adventist University. Attendees represented Adventist institutions in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, the United States, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and Portugal.

- *A Logo for Adventist Education.* In 2019, the SAD Department of Education approved a logo to be used by every Adventist educational institution in the division (primary, secondary, and tertiary). The logo will be phased in over the next several years in primary and secondary schools, and within five years in colleges and universities. It is used on buildings, student uniforms, and in general communication and advertising.

- *IT Hackathon.* As part of the Consortium of Adventist Educational IT Institutions Conference, which took place at Brazil's Adventist University in São Paulo, Hortolândia Campus in September 2018, the first Hackathon, or technological marathon, was organized. This initiative led to the development of systems that may solve problems related to information management.

Management Processes

In addition to using multiple strategies to collaborate, the SAD Department of Education continued to provide opportunities for education leaders to gather, discuss, strategize, and plan ways in which to fulfill mission.

- *Meetings With Union Education Directors and Adventist University Presidents.* Once a year, the SAD Department of Education personnel meet with educa-

tional directors from the 16 unions across the division in order to vote on strategies and integration projects for primary and secondary education. In addition, every year there is a meeting of the division's tertiary leaders, attended by the presidents of each of the 12 Adventist higher education institutions. At this annual meeting, participants discuss the current status of higher education, trends, exchange initiatives, and setting of work strategies for integration and internationalization.

- *Meetings of Student Resident Directors and Chaplains.* Beginning in 2009, several meetings of student resident directors and chaplains have been held, including during the 2015-2020 quinquennium: 2017—COTIA (Training Center) in São Paulo, Brazil, with 167



A student presenting at the IT Hackathon (technology marathon) at Brazil Adventist University in São Paulo (Hortolândia Campus), September 2018. Photo courtesy of the SAD Education Department.

attendees; and 2019, with 159 attendees.

- *Councils of Higher Education.* In 2019, the SAD Council of Higher Education was created with the goal of discussing specific topics to support the growth and integration of the division's higher education institutions. The council includes the participation of union presidents and treasurers whose territory includes at least one higher education institution, as well as the schools' presidents.

- *Geoscience Research Institute (GRI)/SAD.* With the goal of strengthening the biblical position of Earth origins, the SAD's Geoscience Research Institute Center was created in 2017. In this area, we are exploring how to offer greater relevancy to the topic of creationism in the various countries and institutions across the SAD territory.

- *Construction of new schools.* The SAD Department of Education is committed to launching new institutions so children and youth can not only learn about God, but also build a relationship with God as Savior and Friend. During the 2015-2020 quinquennium, 25 new primary and secondary schools were built across the South American Division. Other schools were remodeled, especially some of the older ones that needed a facelift.

Research and Development of Creation Resources

During the 2015-2020 quinquennium, the South American Division gave significant study to creationism. Several ground-breaking resources were developed to strengthen and support training about and understanding of this biblical account of origins. Key events included general and research conferences, and the development of significant resources for schools such as conferences, museums, research centers, and documentary films.

- *Research Conferences on Creation.* Strengthening the understanding of creationism can be achieved through the training of Adventist educators and students. For this reason, beginning in 2016, and every other year since, two sequential events have been organized that culminated with participants attending

the South American Conference on Faith and Science.

The first training program for researchers on creationism, and the first South American Conference on Faith and Science took place in the Galapagos Islands, July 18 to 23, 2016, attended by 96 professors and researchers. The second training program took place in northern Brazil, in Juazeiro do Norte, September 2 to 6, 2018, with 78 researchers attending. The most recent training program took place February 28 to March 5, 2020, once again in the Galapagos Islands, with 114 professors, students, and researchers participating. At that event, the new Creation Center, Origins: Museum of Nature, officially opened. The museum represents the efforts of a united church striving to meet the goal of sharing the biblical account of origins. Besides spreading creationism, the center is designed to support the carrying out of research projects.

Teaching Project “Adventures in Galapagos.” With the financial support of the South American Division and the General Conference Faith and Science Council, it was possible to develop a teaching project for the strengthening of the creationist worldview across the network of Adventist schools throughout the South American Division employing four educational resources:

1. *Adventures in Galapagos* was filmed in the Galapagos Islands as a series with a creationist theme. It was



The Origins Museum of Nature in Galapagos was inaugurated on February 29, 2020. Photo courtesy of the SAD Education Department.

produced in two episodes and launched in 2020. The film received more than one million views online at Feliz7Play and is currently available through Amazon Prime in the United States and the United Kingdom. It is available in Spanish, Portuguese, and English, and soon will be translated into Hindi, Arabic, and German.

2. After the experience of filming the movie *Adventures in Galapagos*, Brazil Adventist University (UNASP) developed a documentary film entitled *How to Make a Movie*. The documentary that will serve to train students who are interested in producing videos on creationism and other topics.



Instructors teaching Brazil Adventist University students how to make documentary films. Photo courtesy of the SAD Education Department.

3. The teaching magazine for *Adventures in Galapagos* was prepared with the goal of promoting the use of the film in schools and offering teachers options for practical and interdisciplinary work. The magazine includes 20 study topics based on the film, with a focus on creationism.

4. A creation video contest was conducted through a staged process at the level of school, mission conference, and union. Sixteen videos were selected for the final contest, one from every union, out of a total of 1,703 videos that were created throughout South America.

Creation Centers. The goal is for every school to have a creation center. With that goal in mind, the *Organization of Creation Centers Handbook* was created

to guide schools in creation of such new spaces. In 2020, 97 certificates were issued. During the week coinciding with Creation Sabbath, 29 creation centers opened. With funding from the Faith and Science Council, two additional creation centers are being built, one at Bahia Adventist College (FADBA), Cachoeira, Brazil, and the other at River Plate Adventist University (UAP), Entre Ríos, Argentina.

Creation Week. Every year, special activities take place during the week just before Creation Sabbath. The events culminate in a big celebration to our Creator. Events, conferences, symposia, and seminars take place across all Adventist higher educational institutions in the South American Division, reaching approximately 150,000 people.

Origins Website. The Origins website, <http://www.origenesweb.org/>, was created with the goal of sharing the topic of creation and offering teaching resources for Adventist education. In 2020, the site was enlarged to include new resources. It has significantly contributed to the understanding of and strengthening of belief in Creationism across our schools.

Conclusion

The Lord has provided us with great blessings and victories, and we are sure that He always has been and will always be with Adventist education. We are immensely thankful for that, and we find comfort in knowing that “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”* ✍️

Edgard Leonel Luz, ML, is the former Director of Education for the South American Division of Seventh-day Adventists in Brasilia, Brazil.

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* Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1957), 359.