Teachers

The People Who Make the Difference in Adventist Education

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Carol Tasker

TEACHERS:

The People Who Make the Difference in Adventist Education

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 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-

A Biblical Perspective for **Research**

R esearch is purposeful and systematic inquiry that seeks to advance knowledge and understanding. While viewed historically in academia almost exclusively as a function of higher education, research has been advocated more recently as relevant and necessary for students at all levels,[1] mainly in terms of helping them understand and experience core elements of scientific inquiry.

This view is particularly appropriate for Seventh-day Adventist education. Ellen White, who wrote prolifically on the topic of Adventist education, broadly stated, "Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation."[2]

While the Bible is not a textbook of research methodology, it does lay a foundation that can enable us to conduct research from a biblical frame of reference. Scripture not only provides examples of individuals who engaged in core activities of research, but also describes key elements found in several types of research, while highlighting a number of research principles.

Examples of Research

Throughout the Bible, various entities are depicted as engaging in research. The Holy Spirit, for example, conducts in-depth inquiry. While the Spirit, as a member of the Godhead, certainly has knowledge of all things,[3] Paul also wrote, "These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10, NRSV).[4] While it may not be entirely clear why an omniscient being would engage in investigation, perhaps the Holy Spirit's examination

BY JOHN WESLEY TAYLOR V

of all things has more to do with how to most effectively transmit aspects of this deep knowledge to others, which in itself is an important phase of the research process.

The Old Testament also mentions human beings carrying out or advocating research activities. The patriarch Job stated, "I was a father to the needy, and I investigated the case which I did not know" (Job 29:16, NASB).[5] Apparently, Job's ability to respond appropriately to the needs of others was based on inquiry, seeking to know and understand the facts of each case.

As he considered "the days of old," David declared, "I meditate within my heart, and my spirit makes diligent search" (Psalm 77:5-6, NKJV).[6] David seems to indicate that in the process of making an inquiry, he reviewed existing knowledge, including perhaps his own prior experience, in an endeavor to make sense of life situations.

Influenced perhaps by his father, Solomon held inquiry in high regard, declaring that it is "the glory of kings . . . to search things out" (Proverbs 25:2, NRSV). Furthermore, Solomon conducted his own research, stating: "I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things" (Ecclesiastes 7:25, NIV).[7]

Perhaps one might expect that a prophet, having been given a direct conduit to divine truth, would not require the rigor of research. The apostle Peter, however, observed, "Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care" (1 Peter 1:10). The prophet Daniel is a case in point. When he received a vision indicating, "'It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated,'" Daniel was perplexed as to the meaning of this time period. "I was appalled by the vision," he reported. "It was beyond understanding" (Daniel 8:14, 27). In an endeavor to resolve the mystery, Daniel searched historical documents. He then reported, "I found from studying

the writings of the prophets that the Lord had said to Jeremiah, 'Jerusalem will lie in ruins for seventy years'" (Daniel 9:2, CEV).[8]

In the New Testament, the believers in Thessalonica listened to Paul and readily assented to what he taught. In Berea, however, the followers of Christ did not simply accept matters at face value but tested Paul's

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teaching against the standard of existing Scripture, a comparison of new data with existing knowledge. The author of Acts found this approach commendable, noting, "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11).

Christians, more broadly, are to participate in data gathering, careful

analysis, and the formulation of sound conclusions. "Examine everything carefully," Paul wrote, "hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21, NASB).[9] This harmonizes with a prime purpose of research—to discern what is appropriate and of value, to distinguish truth from error.

Types of Research

In addition to cases of individuals engaged in research-related activities, the Bible documents various approaches to research, including aspects of historical, descriptive, quasi-experimental, and qualitative methodologies.

The historical approach. In the biblical canon, the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts appear to have been the result of historical inquiry. This two-volume set was written by a physician, Luke, and presented to an individual addressed as "most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), likely a person occupying a prominent position in the Roman society.[10] In his introduction to the first volume, Luke observed that "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses." He then added, "With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:1-4). Notice that in these statements, Luke highlights the use of primary sources and the organized presentation of findings.

While Solomon had wide-ranging interests, including "plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls," as well as "animals and birds, reptiles and fish" (1 Kings 4:33), a portion of his three thousand proverbs (verse 32) may have resulted from historical research. Ecclesiastes notes, "Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs" (Ecclesiastes 12:9).[11]

In the New Testament, the writer of the Book of Hebrews appears to have conducted a review of Old Testament history. In chapter 11, beginning with Abel, the author presents a multi-case analysis across the lives of 10 individuals, concluding that faith was a recurring theme in each person's experience (Hebrews 11:39).[12]

The descriptive approach. The Bible documents a descriptive approach to inquiry. When Moses sent representatives of the 12 tribes to search the land of Canaan, he directed them, "'Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. See what the land is like'" (Numbers 13:17, 18). This statement could be viewed as defining the delimitations and purpose of the study.

Then Moses instructed these individuals to find out "'whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not?'" (Numbers 13:18-20). These aspects, the characteristics of the inhabitants, towns, land, and vegetation, were the facets or variables of the study.

Moses concluded his assignment to the spies by requesting those carrying out the study to gather a sample: "'Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land'" (vs. 20). In all, a well-designed approach to descriptive research. Incidentally, as further illustrated in this case, data must also be interpreted. As evidenced in the team report, various researchers can review the same data and yet reach quite different conclusions, depending on their assumptions and worldviews (see Numbers 13:26-33).

The quasi-experimental approach. The Book of Daniel presents what may be one of the earliest examples of a quasi-experimental approach to research, a single-factor posttest design.[13]

When confronted with Nebuchadnezzar's dietary regime, Daniel and

three fellow students at the Royal University of Babylon proposed a comparative study. First they set out the research protocol: "'Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see'" (Daniel 1:12, 13). The independent variable was type of diet, with two levels: simple food versus the royal food. Daniel and his three friends formed the treatment group, while the "other young men" were the control. The test was a question of difference. As a result of the study, there were to be findings and conclusions (see Daniel 1:14-16).

The study, by the way, seems to have included a longitudinal component. Three years later, when the students rendered their comprehensive

exam, Daniel and his three friends were found to be 10 times wiser than the magi of the realm (Daniel 1:20), a group, incidentally, that included their instructors.

The qualitative approach. In addition to examples of historical, descriptive, and quasi-experimental research, the Bible also presents instances of naturalistic inquiry. Luke, for example, became a participant observer in Paul's missionary journeys, reporting events that he experienced. Notice the transition to the first person beginning in Troas until Philippi, and then several years later, from Philippi onward to Rome (see Acts 16:10-40; Acts 20:6 onward).[14]

Cases of direct observation may be found in Peter and John's examination of the tomb where Jesus had been

buried (John 20:1-8), Gideon's observation of the wet and dry fleece (Judges 6:36-40), and Nehemiah's nocturnal inspection of the ruins of Jerusalem, through which he corroborated interview data (Nehemiah 1:2, 3; 2:11-17). In His day, Jesus remarked that persons would make predictions based on qualitative observations of natural phenomena but were not applying a similar process to the "'signs of the times'" (Matthew 16:2-4).[15]

As has been noted, the Bereans triangulated what they heard with document analysis (Acts 17:11). This crosscheck of data sources fits well with the biblical injunction that a matter is established with evidence from two or three witnesses.[16] Even the witness of the apostles was based on the triangulation of what the Bereans had seen and what they had heard (Acts 4:20).

Principles of Research

In addition to referencing various approaches, the Bible highlights core concepts within research. These include the following principles, among others:

Inquiry is linked to discovery. Jesus spoke of this relationship when He said, "'Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find'" (Matthew 7:7). While a spirit of curiosity is a key trait in inquiry,[17] the process of inquiry itself requires an investment of personal effort. Solomon remarked, "If you seek her [wisdom] as silver, and search for her as *for* hidden treasures; then you will . . . find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:4, 5, NKJV).

Research builds on prior knowledge. Bildad the Shuhite, for instance, advised, "'Ask the former generations and find out what their ancestors learned'" (Job 8:8). In a similar line, Paul wrote: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us" (Romans 15:4).[18]

Research encounters limitations. There are matters that transcend the capacity of research. The Book of Job asks, "'Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?'" (Job 11:7,

NKJV; see also Deuteronomy 29:29). God Himself reminds us, "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. . . . As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isaiah 55:8, 9). Part of the problem is that we "see in a mirror, dimly" and we know only "in part" (1 Corinthians 13:12, NKJV). Beyond these limiting factors, however, there are simply matters that

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" . . . no eye has seen, . . . no ear has heard, and . . . no human mind has conceived" (1 Corinthians 2:9), questions on which even the best designs may come up short.

Research can inform decision-making and guide practice. When David needed to identify qualified personnel, "a search was made in the records, and capable men among the Hebronites were found at Jazer in Gilead." David then placed these individuals "in charge of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh for every matter pertaining to God and for the affairs of the king"

(1 Chronicles 26:31-32). In another example, Moses warned that if, upon entering Canaan, it was rumored that some of the Israelites had begun to worship pagan gods, research was to precede action. "Let a full search be made, and let questions be put with care" (Deuteronomy 13:14, 15, BBE).[19] Only if the report was found to be true was action to be taken.[20]

Finally, it seems that *research is a divine directive.*[21] Jesus stated that every "'disciple of the kingdom of heaven'" is to be like "'the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old'" (Matthew 13:52). While all that proceeds from the storehouse is of value, some of the treasure is to be fresh knowledge, perhaps a result of research. Solomon also implies that research carries a divine endorsement. After stating, "I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven," Solomon added: "This burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised" (Ecclesiastes 1:13, NKJV). Stated perhaps another way, God has given us the difficult assignment of research, with the intent that we should actively engage in it.

Conclusion

We have briefly examined some instances, approaches, and principles of research that we find in Scripture. The prophet Daniel, as he surveyed the broad scope of history, was told by an angel that an increase in knowledge would be a defining characteristic of "'the time of the end'" (Daniel 12:4), suggesting a surge in research in the times in which we live.

Given the role of research in contemporary society and in educational practice, linked with the perspective that all activities are to be carried out from a Christian frame of reference (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17), an examination of research from the perspective of Scripture can perhaps serve as a starting point for enabling students to view research as a valuable tool in discovering God's truth.

Or to summarize the foundational concept in the words of Ellen White, "In order to understand the truth of God, there is need of deep research."[22] ✎

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See, for example: Pamela Fraser-Abder, *Teaching Emerging Scientists: Fostering Scientific Inquiry With Diverse Learners in Grades K-2* (New York: Pearson, 2010); Douglas Llewellyn, *Inquire Within: Implementing Inquiry-based Science Standards in Grades 3-8* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2014); _____, *Teaching High School Science Through Inquiry and Argumentation* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2012); National Research Council, *A Framework for K–12 Science Education: Practices, Crosscutting Concepts, and Core Ideas* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2012).

2. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 17.

3. See, for example, Job 21:22; Psalm 139; 147:4, 5; Isaiah 40:13, 14, 28; Acts 15:18; Romans 11:33; Hebrews 4:13; 1 John 3:20.

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8. *Contemporary English Version*, Copyright © 1995 by the American Bible Society.

9. It should be noted that Paul does not state that we are to ingest everything, but rather that all things should be examined. In the physical realm, for example, the goodness of some things can be predetermined by sight or smell. The key concept seems to be that while all things should be subject to analysis, not everything that we examine needs be assimilated.

10. Luke records Paul's use of the phrase "most excellent" when he addresses the Roman governors, Felix and Festus. See Acts 24:3 and 26:25.

11. See also Ecclesiastes 1:10, where the author states, "Is there anything of which one can say, 'Look! This is something new'? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time."

12. Other examples of historical research include the discovery of the lost book of the law during the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22, 23; 2 Chronicles 34), as well as the priests' injunction to Nicodemus, "'Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee'" (John 7:52, NKJV). Incidentally, the prophet Jonah was from Gath Hepher, a town in Galilea (2 Kings 14:25). Biblical passages that seem to allude to aspects of historical research include Psalm 87:6; Isaiah 28:10; and Romans 15:4.

13. An explanation of how this example could be utilized as the basis for a research class activity is found in a monograph prepared for the 35th International Faith and Learning Seminar (2007) by Nicceta Davis, titled: "The Bible and Research: Reflections for the Christian Researcher." The monograph may be accessed at http://christintheclassroom.org/vol_35a/35a-cc_037-056.pdf.

14. David's invitation to experience God's goodness also seems to suggest the researcher as an instrument: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" (Psalm 34:8, NKJV). Tasting, particularly, is direct, personal, and intimate. Notice also that the outcome seeks to establish God's trustworthiness, another key construct in qualitative inquiry. Eve at the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3) may be a further example of experiential inquiry. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve accepted false assumptions and doubted the trustworthiness of God.

15. Another example may be found in Jesus' instruction to the two disciples of John the Baptist, who had brought the question from John, "'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'" After they stood by for a time, waiting for answer, Jesus told them, "'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor'" (Luke 7:18-22).

16. See, for example, Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28.

17. Some biblical examples of a spirit of inquiry and curiosity include Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3:2, 3), Herod's desire to meet Jesus (Luke 9:9; 23:8), the Athenians' quest for new knowledge (Acts 17:19-21), and the multitude's desire to meet Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead (John 12:9). See also Genesis 32:29; Judges 13:17, 18; Daniel 12:8, 9; Matthew 24:3; Luke 13:23; John 3:4; 12:20, 21; and Acts 1:6, 7.

18. See also Deuteronomy 4:32; 32:7; Psalm 44:1; 78:3; 1 Corinthians 10:11.

19. Samuel Henry Hooke, trans., *The Bible in Basic English* (London: Cambridge Press, 1965).

20. Another example may appear in the Book of Esther. Although not technically research, Xerxes' review of the book of the chronicles of the kingdom brought to light the fact that when two of the king's officers had conspired to assassinate the king, Mordecai, who had uncovered the plot and saved the king's life, had never been given due recognition (see Esther 6). Beyond the fact that research and sleepless nights seem to go together, this event highlights the concept that activities associated with research can contribute to policy change and ultimately impact people's lives.

21. Certainly, there may be other principles in Scripture applicable to research. These might include: ethics in research (Matthew 7:12), topic suitability (Numbers 1 and 2; 1 Chronicles 21; Psalm 64:6), care in the use of sources (Jeremiah 8:8; Mathew 4:6, 7; Revelation 22:18, 19), hypothesis testing (Malachi 3:10; 1 John 4:1), and the writing of results (Habakkuk 2:2).

22. Ellen G. White, "Imperative Necessity of Searching for Truth," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 69:45 (November 15, 1892): 706, 707. In a similar vein, White also states: "The word of God must be studied, and this requires thought and prayerful research" ("Timothy," *The Youth's Instructor 1852-1914* [Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, Inc., 2017], 977). "Scientific research opens to the mind vast fields of thought and information, enabling us to see God in His created works," *The Signs of the Times* 26:11 (March 14, 1900).

The Importance of Training Faculty to Integrate

FAITH

WITH LEARNING

All institutions of learning must have and operate on a philosophy that informs teaching practice. This includes methods, content, and instructional delivery.[1] For the school that intentionally aims to offer Christian education, the ideology of such an institution includes biblical principles in the teaching and learning process. The Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL) is "the raison d'etre for Christian schools."[2] Educators in Christian schools have the responsibility of presenting biblical truth while knowledge is being attained, all with the intention of transforming the heart and mind of the learners so that they reflect Christ's character.[3] This practice is "the quintessential component linking mission with content, with teacher, and with student."[4]

Thus, where these interplay and linkages do not occur, IFL is unlikely to occur. "The integration of faith and learning remains the distinctive task of the Christian liberal arts college [university]."[5] Furthermore, there is no reason for the existence of a Christian college campus if faith and learning are not integrated into all of the learning experiences.[6] For K-12 schools, the same principles apply.

Education that fuses knowledge about God with information relevant to the acquisition of some valuable skill or preparation to enter a profession is life changing and restorative, thereby resulting in the development of "better people, citizens and employees."[7] "Wholistic education," a term some may consider clichéd,[8] remains the aim of true education. With this in mind, James Tucker questioned whether education pedagogy can address the individual's wholistic needs (mind, body and soul) when there is no perception of a Savior.[9]

However, where faith is incorporated into students' learning experiences, the aim is to cultivate men and women who have firm characters and exemplify strong values such as integrity, compassion, emotional strength, honesty, honor, humility, discipline, and moral firmness.[10] Hence, the student

BY MICHAEL H. HARVEY

does not simply complete a grade or course of study, but more importantly, emerges as an individual of high caliber with laudable character strengths; one who will thus be empowered to fulfill his or her duty to God as devotedly as he or she fulfills duty to humanity.

This is what the student who has completed an Adventist education (one where faith is integrated with learning) should be like.[11] The Adventist philosophy of education has at its core the goal of nurturing "thinkers rather than mere reflectors of others' thoughts; to promote loving service rather than selfish ambition; to ensure maximum development of each individual's potential; and to embrace all that is true, good, and beautiful."[12]

Why Assessing IFL Practice Is Important

Because of the influence of secular culture on Christian education systems worldwide, integrating faith into the learning experience is becoming an endangered practice. Further, as government/state accreditation requirements increase, colleges place demands on secondary level schools for what students will need to be college ready and to gain admission to higher education.

As a result, the teaching profession faces increased pressure based on the continuous need to meet these requirements and match industry changes. In Christian schools, this means students often do not benefit from IFL experiences because teachers are hurrying to cover the content for each course.

In addition, advances in knowledge have increased the amount of material that teachers must present and students must master to graduate (and get good scores on required tests) in order to prepare for college and a career. Although administrators may acknowledge that IFL is important, for many there have been no regular assessments that examine their level of proficiency or the extent to which it is being practiced. Further, a search for literature on factors that influence proficiency in implementing IFL, such as training, modelling, and other demographic variables, reveals a limited number of resources.[13] There is a need therefore to systematically and periodically assess what is currently being done to integrate faith and learning in the classroom and to provide training where deficits have been identified. It is only through this approach that the real impact of IFL and challenges, if any, will be understood.

What the Literature Reveals About IFL and Worldview

Harry Poe's assertion that faith, from a Christian perspective "means faith in Jesus Christ,"[14] suggests that Christian education should be centered on the life and character of

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Jesus Christ. Thus, the root of Christian education is integrating faith into learning so that students' worldviews can be influenced as they are encouraged to adopt a wholistic lifestyle based on biblical truths.[15]

However, a number of Christian colleges/universities have simply added chapel services and religious classes to the secular educational structure without embracing a Christian philosophy.[16] Therefore, Christian institutions need to evaluate and align their core beliefs with Christian principles, while Christian educators must make sure that what happens in the classroom is unified, integrated, and centered on Christian philosophy.[17]

Douglas Phillips suggested that the attempts by some supporters of "classical Christian education" to have the writings of pagans taught to students as wisdom and "true knowledge" ought to be rejected.[18] However, a theological perspective may dictate otherwise; for while the Scripture is true, not all truth and knowledge are contained or deducible from this source.[19] Instead, the Scriptures present us with sufficient principles to guide our faith and conduct. Therefore, for the Christian educator, the integration of faith and learning is foundational, and the Bible should be considered "the focus of integration for all knowledge, because it provides a unifying perspective that comes from God, the source of all truth."[20]

A biblical perspective is relevant to all aspects of education because it provides a worldview from which all other bodies of knowledge can be interpreted, and in fact provides meaning to the vast number of facts and data uncovered by science. Knowledge would in itself be irrelevant and incomplete if it did not reveal something of the One who created it all.[21] Christian education embraces this truth, and upon this basis, promotes the sort of education promoted by the very pillars of Adventist perspectives on education: the salvation and the restoration of God's image in each person.[22] However, according to Tucker, this position is not a global one in secular society; and, even in some Adventist communities, there is a proclivity toward secular education that is embedded in worldviews of naturalism and postmodernism in lieu of a biblical worldview.[23] However, true education, instead of merely being "the pursuit of a certain course of study," also must include the "harmonious development of the physical, mental, and spiritual powers."[24]

It is only in contemporary eras that faith is viewed as separate from education, for from the beginning of time, faith and learning have been inseparably intertwined.[25] Furthermore, the creative capacity of humanity is a reflection of the creative

power of God.[26] Robert Harris asserted that "the meaning of knowledge involves religious assumption."[27] Hence, the interpretive framework of all knowledge is connected to an individual's particular ontology (his or her theory of what exists) and epistemology (his or her theory of knowledge).

For some, there is a lack of understanding of the importance of integrating faith and learning in Adventist education, and perhaps, too, what IFL really is and what such an integration involves or looks like. Foremost in the literature is a clarification of what integration entails and how the two concepts, "faith" and "learning," are combined in a new way. Dawn Morton conceived of integration as the process whereby faith and learning are combined so that "both need to be understood as complementary. They are not in competition with each other but working side by side."[28] The error of a disjointed approach to faith and learning is manifested in schools where religious education courses are distinct from the rest of the curriculum and are approached as simply another subject to be learned rather than a way of life to be applied and exemplified within each student.[29]

Shawna Vyhmeister's work explains the complexity of integrating faith and learning in school curricula by describing the numerous challenges to be faced, such as the rampant secularism and sinfulness of the world itself; the superficiality of some educators in their attempt to engage in faith-based instruction; and the perception of young persons that the church is judgmental and critical rather than warm and accepting.[30]

In order for IFL to be properly assimilated into the formal curriculum, the process must begin with the teachers—who should be Adventists, since Adventist education cannot exist without Adventist teachers.[31] George Knight explained that just as a Christian teacher is armed with the right tools to execute Christian education, so too, is the Adventist teacher armed with what is necessary to deliver Adventist education and its most important objective: leading students into a personal saving relationship with Jesus.[32] These teachers should view their subjects as a part of the pattern of God's truth.[33] There is also the need for teachers to demonstrate a Christlike character in their unconditional support and regard for students.[34]

Research on IFL Integration at an Adventist University in the Caribbean

A study conducted October 2014-March 2015 at an Adventist university in the Caribbean sought to examine and ascertain the faculty members' proficiency in implementing IFL. A quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design was used. Data were collected once for this study using a two-part questionnaire. From a faculty complement of 250, convenience sampling was used, and 100 members of faculty were surveyed. Section A of the instrument contained demographic questions, while Section B contained the Integration of Faith and Learning Survey (IFLS). The demographic survey consisted of six questions concerned with the respondents' gender, religious affiliation, years of service in a Christian school, attending a Christian school while growing up, the discipline in which they were teaching, and training in IFL. The questionnaire used in this study was a modification of Eckel[35] done by Peterson.[36]

The IFLS had 28 items, all of which were measured on a five-point Likert scale. Faculty proficiency in the integration of faith and learning was measured based on four subscales: *Level, Equipped, Ability to Do,* and *Intentionality.* Each scale measured very different things. For example, the *Level* subscale of the integration of faith and learning measured a teacher's general knowledge and preparedness to practice IFL in the classroom; the *Equipped* subscale measured a teacher's instructional skills and approaches as well as resources to practice IFL, while the *Ability to Do* subscale measured a teacher's capacity to practice IFL based on both external and internal factors. Lastly, the *Intentionality* subscale measured the teacher's conscious or purposeful implementation and wilful desire or intent to improve in his or her classroom integration of faith and learning. This scale also measured the teacher's coordination with other instructors to amplify or maximize the impact of the integration of faith and learning on students in the classroom.[37]

The researcher examined the level of faith and learning integration between the colleges and schools of the university. This sample included 65 respondents, representing all the colleges of the faith-based institution. More than half (58.89 percent) of the respondents were practicing Seventh-day Adventist Christians (see Table 1). Interestingly, 50.77 percent of the informants had not attended a Christian school growing up. The largest subgroup of the faculty surveyed (29 percent) were from the business college, with the college of social sciences accounting for 23 percent, and another 19 percent from the college of education and leadership. The majority of the faculty surveyed (63 percent) stated that they had received some form of training in the integration of faith and learning (see Table 2).

Table 1. Religious Affiliation (N=65)					
Religious Affiliation (SDA)		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	58	89.2	89.2	89.2
	No	7	10.8	10.8	100
	Total	65	100	100	

Table 2. Faith and Learning Training					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	41	63.1	63.1	63.1
	No	24	36.9	36.9	100
	Total	65	100	100	

The research questions for the study assessed and compared the level of faith and learning integration occurring among faculties in the academic disciplines at the university.[38] The researcher divided the research questions and created a summary of the findings for each of the two questions. The research questions were as follows: (1) What is the level of proficiency among faculty at the university in the integration of faith and learning? (2) To what extent is there a difference in proficiency in IFL based on: (a) academic discipline (b) training in IFL?

The study could not delineate among the colleges the level of competencies relating to the four areas (*Level, Equipped, Ability to Do,* and *Intentionality)* based on the

Table 3. Level Proficiency: Descriptive Statistics					
	N*	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
L2. I know what IFL is.	55	1	5	4.40	.915
L4. I know how deliberate IFL will affect classroom content.	55	1	5	4.18	1.056
L3. I know how to integrate faith and learning in my classes.	55	1	5	4.15	.931
L6. I am sufficiently prepare to help other faculty with IFL.	55	1	5	3.51	1.332
Level	55	1.00	5.00	2.4182	1.64081
L5. I was prepared to do IFL before teaching at the school.	55	1	5	2.93	1.562
L7. School administration trains me in IFL.	55	1	5	2.42	1.257
Valid N (list-wise)	55 *N=sample				

Table 4. Equipped: Descriptive Statistics					
	N*	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Equipped	55	2.00	5.00	4.2364	.99933
E4. I am self-reflective in my application of IFL.	55	2	5	3.87	1.001
Equipped	55	1.00	5.00	3.8727	1.13944
E3. I have revised my instructional approaches to practice IFL.	55	1	5	3.56	1.288
E6. I know where resources are available for IFL.	55	1	5	3.00	1.491
E7. Institutional leadership at my school equip me for IFL.	55	1	5	2.47	1.136
E5. I meet regularly with other faculty to plan IFL.	55	1	5	1.76	.999
Valid N (list-wise)	55 *N=sample				

assessment of the results generated from the one-way ANOVA. Hence, there was no need to do the post hoc test, which would only show where the differences lay. However, further analysis through descriptors and central tendency statistics of descending order of mean on each of the competencies showed that there were some weak areas within each of the four levels (see Tables 3-6). The data showed that faculty had a fair knowledge of IFL and knew how deliberate IFL would affect classroom content (see Table 3). The weaknesses that appeared in *Equipped* showed that faculty did not meet regularly with their peers to plan IFL, institutional leaders didn't equip faculty for IFL, and faculty did not know where to obtain resources

for IFL (see Table 4). The data showed that faculty possessed the ability to do IFL and had the necessary authority to implement IFL in the classroom (see Table 5). The data dealing with the competence of intentionality revealed that members did not coordinate with their peers to maximize the impact of IFL. Notably, they did not share with other colleges within the institution the benefit of IFL since no framework existed to do so; furthermore, they did not seek or receive feedback from students on IFL in the classroom. Conversely, the data revealed that faculty were making efforts to implement IFL (see Table 6). Further assessment of question one under the equipped competence showed that there was a statistically significant difference among the colleges. This meant that some faculty did not possess the skills necessary to effectively manage IFL in the classroom.

A large "F" statistical value was evidence against the null hypothesis, since it indicated more differences between groups than within groups (see Table 7). The colleges of nursing, natural and applied sciences, and education and leadership at the institution surveyed had the greatest

Table 5. Ability-To-Do: Descriptive Statistics

	N*	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ability	55	1.00	5.00	4.6727	.88306
ATD1. I actively practice IFL in my classroom.	55	2	5	4.09	.948
ATD2. I am able to do IFL in my classroom.	55	1	5	4.07	1.069
Ability	55	1.00	5.00	4.0182	1.02724
Ability	55	1.00	5.00	3.9273	1.10310
ATD7. My school administration enables me to do IFL in my classroom.	55	1	5	3.49	1.451
ATD4. I monitor the effect IFL has on my students.	55	1	5	3.16	1.151
Valid N (listwise)	55 *N=sample				

Table 6. Intentionality: Descriptive Statistics

	N*	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Intentionality	55	1.00	5.00	4.2000	1.29672
I3. I deliberately decided to implement IFL this year.	55	1	5	4.02	1.284
I4. I have examined ways to improve IFL in my classes.	55	1	5	3.78	1.182
I1. I implement IFL in my classroom based on student feedback.	55	1	5	2.91	1.143
I6. I would like to tell other departments about the benefit of IFL.	55	1	5	2.78	1.384
I5. I coordinated IFL with other teachers to maximize the impact.	55	1	5	1.78	1.013
Valid N (listwise)	55 *N=sample				

deficit in the skills teachers needed to effectively manage IFL in the classroom (see Table 8).

Discussion of Findings

While the findings from the study may not be unique to the specific institution investigated, the findings may not be generalizable because only one institution with unique Caribbean cultural and social factors was studied, and convenience sampling may not necessarily allow for adequate representativeness of the population. Given that this study has employed the use of that sampling technique, the findings should therefore be generalized only with caution, as the willing participants may not adequately represent the population. One of the greatest challenges of self-reporting is credibility due to the tendency of respondents to exaggerate or understate the description of their own actions. Also, faculty members, due to time constraints, may be

tempted to randomly respond to items without attending to the content.[39]

Addressing the level of proficiency among faculty in the various colleges, the data revealed that faculty were not prepared to teach in an integrated manner before coming to the university and that the university administration had not provided training for faculty in how to integrate faith and learning. Conversely, the data showed that faculty had a fair knowledge of IFL and knew how deliberate IFL would affect classroom content.

Further findings revealed that there were weaknesses that appeared in the *Equipped* competency because faculty didn't meet with other faculty to plan IFL, institutional leaders didn't equip faculty for IFL, and faculty did not know where to obtain IFL resources. Notably, further assessment of question one under the *Equipped* competence showed that there were statistically significant differences among the colleges, which means that some of the faculty did not possess the skills necessary to effectively integrate faith and learning in the classroom.

Further analysis of the question using descriptive statistics revealed that faculty in the colleges of allied health and nursing, natural and applied sciences, and education and leadership showed the greatest deficit in skills needed to effectively manage IFL in the classroom. However, the data show that all those surveyed possessed the *Ability* to do IFL and had the necessary authority to implement IFL in the classroom. Moreover, the data dealing with the competence of Intentionality revealed that faculty didn't coordinate with their peers to maximize the impact of IFL. Notably, faculty did not share with other colleges and schools the benefit of IFL since no framework to do so existed, and further, they did not seek or receive feedback from students on IFL in the classroom. Conversely, the data revealed that all of the ones surveyed were making an effort to implement IFL.

General Recommendations

Institutional leaders need to be intentional and deliberate in ensuring that training is provided to equip faculty with the skills necessary to effectively implement IFL in the classroom. The author further recommends that a faith-and-learning committee be established at the institutional and union levels with the responsibility to execute the following:

1. Create a conceptual framework/model to implement the integration of faith and learning beginning with Adventist primary schools so that when students reach university level, they will have had the foundation laid;

2. Implement a developmental process and competency scale to measure faculty knowledge, skills, and dispositions for faith integration monitored within the Faith Integration and Faculty Evaluation System: and

3. Incorporate faith integration in the curriculum, and provide clear learning outcomes for faculty to include in course planning.

Mentoring

As far as equipping faculty with the resources and skills needed to successfully practice IFL is concerned, a mentor-

Table 7. ANOVA E1. I am concerned about my skills to manage IFL in my classroom.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14.897	5	2.979	2.644	.034
Within Groups	55.213	49	1.127		
Total	70.109	54			

Table 8. Descriptive: E1. I am concerned about my skills to manage IFL in my classrroom.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum
Education & Leadership	12	1.92	.900	.260	1.34	2.49	1
Natural & Applied Sciences	8	1.50	.756	.267	.87	2.13	1
Allied Health & Nursing	6	1.33	.516	.211	.79	1.88	1
Humanities, Behavioral & Social Scences	11	2.45	1.293	.390	1.59	3.32	3
Business & Hospitality Management	17	2.53	1.231	.298	1.90	3.16	1
Religion & Theology	1	4.00					4
Total	55	2.13	1.139	.154	1.82	2.44	1

ship program in which more competent IFL-practicing faculty members are paired with those needing support may be useful. Such a mentorship program could be further enhanced by quarterly workshops on IFL as well as formal continuing-education courses and units specially designed to target the four subscales. Faculty members may be more inclined to integrate faith and learning if they feel more supported and believe that administrators have a keen interest in their instructional proficiency and development. Educational administrators should therefore ensure that there is budgetary allocation for IFL resources for faculty members; and where necessary, additional funding is obtained through fundraising activities and other types of sponsorship.

Collaboration

Given the need for collaboration and coordination in IFL, it would be prudent to develop a system of inter- and intra-departmental sharing of best practices in integrating faith and learning at higher education levels. At the K-12 level, this system may also take the form of bimonthly meetings to review lesson plans and instructional delivery approaches/strategies and may incorporate the use of technology such as video-recorded sessions for critique and feedback. Additionally, an IFL newsletter outlining tips, emerging trends, news, and updates may be published for the benefit of all administration and faculty.

Evaluation and Assessment

The impact of systems, programs, or procedures is best measured by appropriate assessment mechanisms. Against this background and within the context of the findings of the study, a detailed monitoring and evaluation instrument should be developed by administrators to assess, among other things, the extent to which the integration of faith and learning takes place; the impact of IFL on students as well as faculty, the areas where improvement is needed, based on identified gaps in the knowledge; and the competence of all faculty to perform self-assessments.

This study should be extended to include a larger population of faculty, administrators, staff, and students. Further, it could include the use of projective techniques (direct and indirect ways of identifying motives and intentions), observation, and direct qualitative techniques of focus groups combined with in-depth interviews.

Conclusion

With these thoughts in mind, college and university academic administrators must look for ways to provide opportunities for faculty to learn how to effectively integrate faith with learning. Orientation seminars, professional-development training sessions, small-group collaboration, or even a teaching-and-learning center on campus that provides resources and assistance as faculty develop their competency, are all ways this could be done. A trained teaching faculty will be able to create classrooms that integrate faith with learning in meaningful ways to the benefit of students. ✐

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Engaging in Culturally Relevant Teaching:

Lessons From the Field

Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) is a popular topic for discussion and research, and it continues to gain more traction through practical application in classrooms worldwide. Certainly, as many teachers look around their classrooms, they recognize that demographics are changing, and student populations are becoming increasingly more diverse. It is more likely than ever that teachers will not look like or have the same cultural or linguistic background as many of their students.[1] This means that some students will be entering classrooms with valuable learning strategies developed within their home communities, but these strategies may be very different from what their teachers are accustomed to using.

As mid-career Adventist educators, we (the authors of this article) have each experienced unique opportunities to be challenged, to reflect, and to continuously grow in our approaches to CRT. It has been both a journey of discovery and a reminder to approach CRT from a posture of humility. We have come to recognize the importance of owning our own cultural identities and acknowledging

their impact on how we think, teach, and live.

We also value spiritual development and believe that the Adventist teacher has a unique calling and privilege to help students integrate their faith, learning, and life with rigor and perspective. As Adventist educators, we have an ethical responsibility to ensure that all students are provided with a redemptive education, one in which they are treated with dignity and respect while being encouraged to become "thinkers, not mere reflectors of

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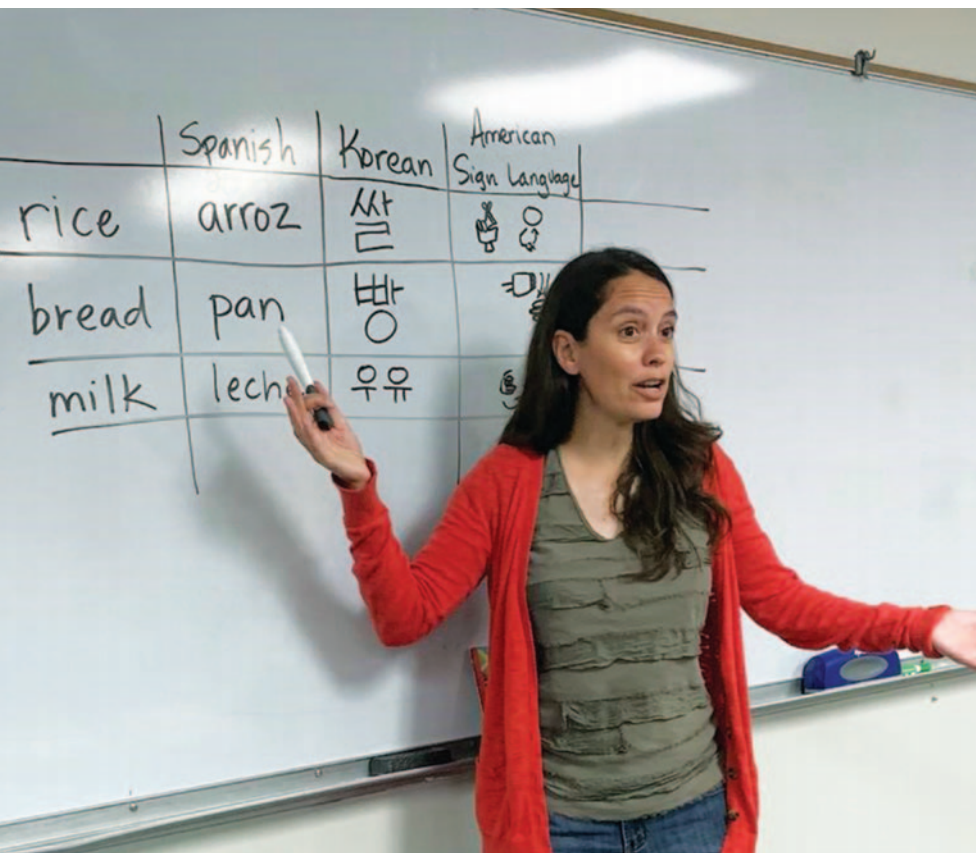
Charissa Boyd demonstrating multilingual language instruction.

other people's thought."[2] Therefore, we must go beyond stereotypes and assumptions about ourselves and others to proceed with purposeful action. Culturally Relevant Teaching provides one avenue we can use to immerse ourselves in this work.

While how this is implemented will look different around the globe, we will share our experiences as teachers who have worked in a wide range of educational settings in the United States and other countries. The tips provided in this article have been drawn from core concepts, implementation strategies, and lessons learned while in the field. Throughout the article we will include our own personal experiences as we discuss the tips. These tips are foundational to the successful implementation of CRT by Adventist educators, and emerge from three interrelated foundational components of culturally relevant teaching—setting, curriculum, and engagement.

What Is Culturally Relevant Teaching?

So, what is Culturally Relevant Teaching, exactly? CRT is a term coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings to describe "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes."[3] It was birthed out of Ladson-Billings' research to identify what made American public school teachers successful within low socio-economic, primarily African American school districts. Through her research, she identified three core criteria of CRT: Students must do the following: (1) experience academic success; (2) maintain or develop cultural competence; and (3) develop a critical consciousness through which they can challenge the status quo of the current social order.[4]

Tip 1. Consider the setting.

Globally, a growing number of classrooms contain students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Positioned within both school and community contexts, educators must ensure that this dual context is reflected in their work. They can do so by honoring the history and voice of communities represented in their classrooms through reinforcing their commitment to excellence and high expectations, and through integrating students' home languages within the classroom.[5] Since communities differ, it is the teacher's responsibility to assess and evaluate his or her setting through careful observation, listening, dialogue, and reflection. And, since the setting will change with each new school year or semester, this type of reflection must be ongoing.

Tip 2. Make peace with your own identity.

In order to understand and identify with others, a teacher needs to understand himself or herself. We (the authors) each committed to exploring our individual identities, knowing that we would be teaching students whose experiences differed from our own. A primary way that we have done this work is to come to terms with our own racial and ethnic identities (see Sidebar 1). Once a teacher has committed to self-reflection and identity work, he or she is well-positioned to incorporate the other elements of CRT.

Tip 3. Embrace and maintain high expectations for both academics and behavior.

I (CG) start each school year having high expectations of my students. It is maintaining those expectations throughout the year that often poses a challenge. In order to maintain this as a priority, I've found a few practices helpful:

• First, establish a connection between the commitment to excellence

Charissa's Reflection

It was during my Master's studies that I first began exploring my racial identity as a white American. For most of my life, I had generally avoided the topic of my own race, going even so far as refusing to enter my race on census forms or job applications. But as I prepared to teach immigrant students, I realized that the face my students would see every day at the front of their classroom was a white face, and I would be immediately classified in their minds accordingly. What did it mean, then, to be white?

For me, understanding myself as a white teacher required both thorough research on the racial experiences of non-whites and a search for my own white identity. I spent a considerable amount of time uncovering the stories of my ancestors from Europe, Mexico, and Africa. They traveled by boat or walked across borders. Some came for economic opportunity or religious freedom. Others came through no choice of their own. Some became U.S. citizens, some chose not to, others were not allowed to. Taking the time to explore how I came to be here has given me a vivid understanding of how my success is deeply rooted in the "success" of those who came before me and the loss of those who came before and alongside of them.

Throughout this journey, I needed to find heroes in white anti-racist activists, people who could demonstrate for me what an identity rooted in justice and social transformation looks like. I found those people in historical figures like Jane Addams,[1] modern educators like Gary R. Howard,[2] even in my own great-grandmother Eunice Klopfenstein. They modeled a whiteness of which I can be proud.

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Charity's Reflection

I grew up curious about my racial identity. While one side of my family line could be traced to the early 1400s in Spain and through Mexico into the United States, the other could not be traced past my mother's closed adoption. Due to the assimilationist approach to immigration at the time, my grandparents ensured that the Spanish language did not get passed on to their children. This meant that while some traditional Hispanic cultural components remained, I was taught how to benefit from what researchers now define as "white privilege." When I began my teaching career, students of color quickly classified me as white. They refused to acknowledge my Hispanic heritage until I had built a trust relationship with them.

For me, then, not being able to define my racial and ethnic identity has made it difficult to make peace with it. While I have found much joy in having my primary identity be that of a Christian, in an effort to learn more, I took a DNA test recently. It reaffirmed my Spanish and Mexican roots, expanded my identity to include Native American bloodlines, and deeply challenged me by identifying a 30 percent English/Irish heritage. The results brought forward a more focused dissonance as I seek to bring together what others have already seen me to be with who I see myself to be personally and professionally.

within the local cultural and community history and the high expectations being set for students.

• Second, keep expectations visible. Designate a prominent space in your classroom where you display curriculum standards that apply to the content being taught. The behavior code of conduct should also be visible. One way to do this is to laminate a large version of your classroom code of conduct (written in student-friendly language), and have all students sign it. Display it along with motivational quotes.

• Third, be consistent. Use rubrics to evaluate assignments so that all student work is assessed using the same criteria. This will mean teaching for mastery while providing instructional scaffolding for those who need it. For behavior codes of conduct, hold students (and yourself!) accountable when the code of conduct is broken.

Research tells us that teacher expectations have a significant influence on student performance, both positively and negatively.[6] Seventh-day Adventist educators have a unique opportunity to live out the foundational biblical belief that all people are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and that "Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do."[7] In many public schools in the United States, students of color are overrepresented in special-education classrooms[8] and underrepresented in advanced-placement classes and gifted-education programs.[9] In contrast, many students in Adventist schools have limited access to such services, and therefore teachers and administrators must advocate for and support those students who need additional resources (special education, advanced placement, and gifted-education programs), keep the bar set high, and scaffold students' learning for rigorous and successful goal attainment.

Tip 4. Embrace multilingualism.

In my personal experience, I (CB) quickly learned that one of the most powerful tools for creating a culturally relevant classroom environment is to integrate the native languages of my students into the studies in every way possible. Even the implementation of simple steps in this direction gave my students permission to show pride in their heritage and to be their whole selves, not just their "English-language selves," in my classroom. Students who initially refused to speak at all started participating in classroom discussions when they realized that their voice/language was not going to be silenced.

There are multiple ways to incorporate your students' native languages into day-to-day classroom activities:

• Multilingual word walls and bulletin boards.[10]

• Scaffolding tasks (allowing students to use their native languages for tasks like online research, note taking, first drafts of writing assignments, etc.).[11]

• Dual language and translation projects.[12]

• Language study (comparing vocabulary words in multiple languages or setting aside a week or a month for learning specific words and phrases in the native language of one or more of the students).[13]

These strategies can be used in classrooms containing several students who speak different languages, and even in classrooms that have only a few students. The language-rich environment that results from multilingual word walls, bulletin boards, or dual-language projects will benefit all learners, even native English speakers.[14]

Tip 5. Examine curriculum and learning materials for bias.

Examining the curriculum from a culturally relevant teaching perspective will help teachers engage students in critical thinking, encourage them to invest in intentional opportu-

Charity Garcia demonstrating Circles of Interest to help students communicate in various social settings.

nities for every student to develop his or her voice, and empower all students to engage with education as a way to seek justice and reconciliation.

Textbooks or other provided learning materials used to teach in Adventist schools are often examined and approved by the union or division office and mandated for use. Even so, it is necessary for teachers to review the resources for bias or omitted perspectives. When teachers use these curriculum resources without taking the time to examine them for bias, they may miss valuable opportunities for students to engage in critical conversation and to experience empowerment. I (CG) made this mistake my first-year teaching World War II history to Navajo middle school students. I read aloud the textbook's one paragraph on Navajo Code Talkers and spent less than five minutes on the topic. Subsequent student am-

bivalence clearly indicated that I had missed a valuable opportunity for these middle schoolers to feel empowered by their tribe's pivotal role in the outcome of the war. I began to realize that Navajo Code Talkers were not just part of "Navajo history"; they were part of *United States history*. After learning this lesson, I adjusted future unit planning—not only for World War II but also when dealing with other concepts such as Manifest Destiny.

Tip 6. Seek out multiple perspectives.

Closely related to Tip No. 5, teachers should examine curriculum materials from multiple perspectives. Where he or she identifies bias in curriculum documents, it is the teacher's responsibility to include other perspectives—particularly the

ones that otherwise would not be part of the conversation. This is especially important when seeking to understand the community in which the school exists from a strengths-based perspective (identifying positive assets within a community such as people and resources) rather than from a deficit model (seeing only what the community lacks).[15]

I (CG) have found developing a strengths-based community-asset map[16] to be invaluable—highlighting museums, historical landmarks, businesses owned by active community supporters and students' family members, community-development organizations, key stakeholders, and more. I recommend that teachers make friends with the local librarian, who can also be a good resource. He or she will either be able to locate primary or secondary resources within your topic/content area or connect you to people who can.

Teachers should keep in mind that the more often students see the faces of people from many different cultures at the front of their classroom, the more they will be able to see reflections of themselves within the educational culture. When given the choice, I (CB) have purposefully sought substitute teachers, teacher's assistants, and guest speakers whose cultures and experiences were similar to those of my students. These people provided learning opportunities for my students that I would never have been able to provide.

Tip 7. Commit to using a variety of processes for learning.

Along with a setting and curriculum that meet the needs of a diverse classroom, the methods and strategies used to engage students in the process of learning are equally influenced by culture. Students' cultures shape the way they interact with one another, teachers, and the learning material. And although no student can be completely defined by his or her culture, it is wise for teachers to familiarize themselves with some of the ways that culture manifests itself in the classroom and influences how students think about the learning process and how they actually learn.

The cultural values of individualism and collectivism shape how students involve themselves in the learning process. While individualist cultures emphasize individual success and personal choice, collectivist cultures focus on relationships and the advancement of the group.[17] A teacher may find that students who come from more collectivist cultures (which make up the majority of the world's populations) tend to listen rather than speak, thrive during cooperative tasks, and express interest in social-skills development as part of their education. Those from more individualistic cultures tend to be galvanized by personal achievement, dialogue, and competition. Since teachers will have students from collectivist and individualistic cultures, both types of learning tasks must be incorporated into classroom instruction to accommodate the needs of all students.

I (CB) learned that students from collectivist cultures often responded to my questions with silence. Using an active pause ("wait time")[18] gives students time to think before responding, a behavior that is highly valued within their culture. Putting them in small groups or calling on them by name also makes it more likely they will be comfortable participating in classroom discussions.[19]

Tip 8. Engage students in critical thinking and dialogue to build cultural capital.

When they recognize that the formal curriculum can be a source of bias, educators are better able to critically assess the materials they are teaching. But more than that, including students in this analysis is a powerful learning tactic. In her landmark study, Gloria Ladson-Billings[20] found that excellent teachers of African American students engaged them in a review of their textbooks.

In this way, although the required curricula are used, students get to critically engage with them in ways that are empowering. This approach works well for all students, giving them the opportunity to study a topic from multiple points of view. They also get to think critically about the strengths and weaknesses of an argument while building and refining their own point of view.

Another way to involve students in culturally relevant learning experiences is to assist them in developing critical consciousness about their attitudes toward learning particular information. Many of my (CG) students at the second-chance workforce development academy balked at learning Standard English. It was, of course, necessary for their academic success; however, it felt fake or forced to them at best. I needed a different tactic. By knowing about the settings within which they functioned, I could engage students in critical-thinking activities related to their circles of interest. We drew large circles on the whiteboard for each student, and usually identified at least two domains in which they were already successful. They knew how to stay safe on the street, how to navigate conversations with family by using dialect or another language to communicate in different social settings, and so on. The circle they did not yet know how to access fully was the work world. So, we built on their understanding of code switching[21]—a social-theory term for adapting forms of communication to meet the environment—and helped them learn Standard English in order to reach their employment goals.

Tip 9. Redefine the roles of teacher and student.

Rooted in the dialogic teaching approach (an approach that relies on conversation to help stimulate and extend students' thinking) is the idea that students should begin to "take on roles and responsibilities that have been traditionally reserved for the teachers.[22] This requires that

teachers value the knowledge students bring to the classroom and consider themselves to be learners along with their students.

For me (CB), repositioning myself into the role of teacher-learner, not just teacher, was challenging. As I eased into the role, I experienced discomfort. I quite liked being the most knowledgeable person in the classroom. But the rewards I gained from letting go of my expert status at key moments were worthwhile. Instead of correcting what at first glance looked like errors, I observed, asked questions, and learned.

For example, I noticed one student in math class counting by threes (rather than, say, twos or fives or tens), and I felt confused about why she was not using an easier skip counting strategy. "I notice that you're counting by threes. Tell me more about what you're doing here," I said. The student next to her joined the conversation. "She was in 3rd grade in Honduras, and when we're in 3rd grade [in Honduras], we're learning our times tables. That's how we practice them." The discussion continued for several minutes, as students shared the many ways they were taught math in their home countries. Making space for this important dialogue gifted me with a clearer picture of the content, teaching styles, and strategies with which my students were already familiar, and gave me ideas for incorporating their previous experiences into later lessons.

Redefining the role of teacher and student has challenged both of us (CB and CG). Initially, I (CG) found it easier to hand off the teacher role to another expert from the community than to embrace what I felt was a "messier" student-as-teacher way of learning. However, the reward has been worth it! In an interdisciplinary America's Westward Expansion unit (one that was remade to correct the mistakes acknowledged earlier), I joined both Navajo and white students as we grappled together with issues relating to expansion, removal, justice, God, and religion. One of the most moving and humbling moments in my teaching career came when one of my Navajo 5th-grade students made a decision toward reconciliation. He had been struggling with deep anger as we learned more about the ill treatment of the Navajo people during the "Long Walk" from their land in what is now Arizona to eastern New Mexico and their stay at Fort Sumner,[23] and yet he had also been journeying with us as a class toward justice and reconciliation. While on a field trip to Fort Sumner, he looked at us solemnly and said, "I place this arrowhead on this memorial because arrowheads are weapons, and I'm not going to fight white people anymore." I'm still in touch with that particular student. I can testify that he was serious about his commitment. He continues to work toward justice for Navajo people, and now as a young adult, his work is not driven by hatred.

Summary

The journey toward culturally relevant teaching may require foundational shifts in the way we view ourselves and our students, and may require us to adopt different strategies in order to achieve maximum impact on student success. It is not enough to simply *say* that we are all human and all loved equally by God; we must be intentional in our planning as we put these words into action. CRT does not mean engaging in celebratory multiculturalism[24] (emphasis on celebrating food, holidays, or traditions) or incorporating race into the curriculum while continuing to teach from the same viewpoint and using the same strategies. It requires sustainable and rigorous reflection on our ways of thinking and being. We must help our students push back against dominant, often negative, narratives about people regardless of their background by encouraging them to develop resilience. In every country there is a dominant culture that interacts with a minority culture, and sadly, these interactions are not always positive. Our students need to learn to live in multiple environments—their home community, the dominant community, and an increasingly blended, diverse world. As you explore what CRT will look like in your classroom, we hope you will benefit from learning from our experiences—not only our successes but also our "teachable moments." ✐

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Professional Learning for Teachers and Board Members:

The School Board's Responsibility

The North American Division *Manual for School Boards* describes the local school board as "an important component in maintaining a quality school program."[1] Most school boards take this responsibility seriously, focusing on providing adequate financial resources to maintain facilities, purchase curriculum resources, and hire qualified personnel. None of these expenditures, however, guarantees a quality program, especially if we equate quality with student success and continuous school improvement. Educational experts agree that the quality of an educational program is primarily dependent on the quality of the teaching, and that ongoing professional training for teachers is the critical element in improving that quality.[2] School boards, then, must make continuous learning for the instructional staff a priority as they develop and implement policy, create operating budgets, and work with the conference and school administration to generate and fund both short- and long-term plans.

The Challenge

Michael Fullan[3] asserts that *every teacher* should be learning *every day*. This focus on continual learning for teachers is not new. The Bible tells us that "wise men and women are always learning, always listening for fresh insights."[4] Ellen White addressed this adage to teachers in particular: "If you are called to be a teacher, you are called to be a learner also."[5]

When it comes to professional learning, a board's respon-

BY BETTY BAYER

sibility goes beyond ensuring that funds are available for teachers to attend workshops and conferences. Research makes it clear that effective professional learning for teachers—learning that results in improved instruction—is collaborative and job-embedded and considers the unique characteristics of the teachers and the contexts in which they work. For example, research has shown that, like teachers in public systems, North American Division (NAD) teachers participate mostly in traditional, one-size-fits-all forms of professional learning rather than in sustained learning that is embedded in active practice. Non-traditional forms of professional learning that are more collaborative and job-embedded are not common in Adventist schools in North America.[6]

Providing learning opportunities for teachers that are collaborative and context-specific is challenging in a system where many of our schools are small, and both time and money are in short supply. Therefore, local school boards have a responsibility to seek creative solutions and must take an active role in ensuring that the teachers in their schools are given both voice and choice in their learning.

What Boards Can Do

It is not the role of board members to choose topics or to mandate attendance for teachers' professional learning. Neither is it their role to evaluate teaching quality to determine learning topics needed. Support is the board's primary role. In the area of teacher learning, creating the conditions for learning and generating the resources needed to support that learning is a critical board responsibility. Partnering with both school administration and the local conference, boards can use their power and influence to support their teachers in the learning process in several ways:

1. Consider new models and alternate scheduling practices.

There is general consensus in the educational research community that traditional "sit-and-get" approaches to professional learning are not effective, primarily because they lack sustained and supported opportunities for teachers to apply what they learn in their own contexts.[7] Learning that is most successful in improving instruction requires time—time for implementation and practice, and time to collaborate in order to share experiences and support change. This requires learning that is built into the regular work day. Job-embedded learning enables teachers to use their own students' learning to inform the changes that may be needed in instructional practice to enhance classroom learning.[8] In most of our schools, such time for professional growth is not built into teachers' daily schedules.

To accommodate job-embedded learning, school boards will need to be open to alternate school-scheduling models that provide a common time for teachers to plan together and opportunities for classroom-specific action research. Substitute teachers, aides, and volunteers may need to be hired to facilitate the organization and implementation of professional learning communities for teachers. Teaching

loads may need to be adjusted, with the understanding that ongoing learning, not just teaching, is part of a teacher's job.

Teachers in most high-achieving countries have professional learning opportunities built into their work days.[9] In South Korea, for example, teachers spend only 35 percent of their working time on classroom instruction and the rest on collaborative assessment and planning activities specific to their subject area.[10] Teachers in Singapore are required to spend 100 hours in professional learning each year, and this time is included in the teachers' contracts.[11] In many countries across Europe, teachers can apply for a research grant to undertake study activities, and substitute teachers are often hired to facilitate regular teachers' participation in professional learning activities during the school day.[12] School boards must recognize that a teacher's job includes ongoing learning about how best to improve his or her work. Therefore, boards need to explore ways to make such learning part of the teacher's regular work day—adjusted class schedules, early dismissals to accommodate teacher collaboration, as well as hiring regular substitutes to allow teachers time for research and reflection.

Collaboration opportunities are particularly challenging in the Adventist school system because most of our schools are some distance apart, and many employ only one or two teachers. New models for professional learning will need to address this reality. One option may be an increased use of technology to build online learning communities and digital opportunities for teachers to connect professionally and to support one another. Various research studies have captured the power of online communities and social media as learning tools. Experts suggest several advantages for using technology to provide professional learning: flexibility in scheduling, access to a wider global selection of resources and experts, work-embedded support, real-time learning, differentiation to accommodate learning needs at all career stages, self-directed learning options, and greater engagement by teacher participants.[13]

2. Be flexible in accommodating individual teacher needs and requests.

One of the most important things that school boards can do to support ongoing learning is to listen to their teachers. Opportunities for teachers to share can be formal (e.g., specially scheduled board meeting or focus groups with teachers) or informal (e.g., drop-in visits, e-mail), and might even be done using online surveys. Successful learning organizations are built on a foundation of professional trust, and leadership plays a critical role in creating and maintaining such a culture. The focus should be on building teacher participation—a commitment to learning on their own—rather than on compliance. Wiliam[14] proposes that the time currently spent evaluating teachers would be better spent supporting their ongoing learning.

Most teachers in the Adventist school system within the NAD participate in some form of professional learning, and most believe that they are better teachers because of their

participation. But few report having opportunities to participate in setting goals and planning for professional learning at their school or conference, and few believe that the activities selected for them are based on an analysis of their specific needs.[15] Giving teachers more control over their own learning would help enable them to discover the learning opportunities that best match those needs and is an important way that boards can recognize their staff as capable and competent professionals.

Of all the factors that influence teacher participation in professional learning, opportunities for collaboration is the most significant. The more opportunities that teachers have for collaborative practice, the more they will spend time learning and engaged in the types of activities in which they choose to participate. NAD teachers stated that they would prefer more collaborative opportunities to apply and practice what they learn rather than presentations by outside experts.[16] School boards can facilitate this process. Danielson challenges all those involved with policymaking for schools to acknowledge that "professional learning is rarely the consequence of teachers attending workshops or being directed by a supervisor to read a certain book or take a particular course." Rather, these leaders must provide "opportunities for ongoing professional learning by all teachers principally through collaborative planning, analysis of student work, and the like."[17]

3. Provide funds.

One of the primary responsibilities of school boards—and one upon which boards often spend much of their time—is the creation of the school budget. Most budgets include some allowance for professional learning, but the amounts vary. Some include a stipulated amount per teacher, while others budget only for the professional development (PD) days mandated by the conference. New models of learning with implications for rescheduling and allotment of time for professional enrichment during the regular work day will require a redistribution of funds. Adequate funding for teacher learning, clearly indicated in the annual budget, sends a strong message to teachers about the value that board members place on continued, ongoing learning.

In some cases, additional funding may be needed to support an individualized and context-specific approach to professional learning. In many cases, however, a redistribution of available funds at both the school and conference levels may be all that is required. Some schools or conferences may choose to allocate a set percent of the overall budget for staff

> There is general consensus in the educational research community that traditional "sit-and-get" approaches to professional learning are not effective, primarily because they lack sustained and supported opportunities for teachers to apply what they learn in their own contexts.

learning. The Outstanding Schools Act in Missouri, for example, requires public school districts to allocate one percent of state funding to local professional learning and an additional one percent to statewide learning.[18] The current pressure to decentralize decision-making, combined with the recognition that professional learning decisions need to consider local contexts, may even mean that some of the funding for professional learning that currently resides at conference and union levels could be made available to schools.

4. Lead by example.

One of the most important, and least expensive, strategies for school boards to recognize the value of ongoing professional learning is to lead by example. A good place to start is the Adventist K-12 School Board Training course available through the Adventist Learning Community (ALC).[19] This course consists of three short modules that focus on Board Leadership, Board Membership, and Legal and Financial Issues. Additional relevant learning opportunities available to board members through the ALC include mini-courses in digital citizenship, copyright guidelines, and the philosophy of Adventist education. Besides the valuable information shared in these modules, the experience of completing an online ALC course will help board members to better understand this learning option, which is also available to teachers. When teachers see professional learning as a board agenda item, hear reports from the principal about learning activities or expectations for the board, or are invited to participate with board members in relevant learning opportunities, they will see the value that the board places on ongoing learning.

Board members may be interested in pursuing additional learning in areas of particular interest to them or on topics specific to current school needs. Research on school facility planning, choosing and maintaining playground equipment, writing grant applications, school marketing, and fund-raising, for example, may equip members to contribute even more effectively to the work of the board. Resources like the union education code, school handbook, minutes from previous meetings, sample school budgets, and parliamentary procedures can be included in scheduled board training. Such learning can be provided for the school board as a group or pursued by individual members through a variety of venues. Once completed, the learning should be shared with the full board so that all can benefit.

In addition, board members can contribute to a school culture of continual learning by demonstrating a genuine

interest in the ongoing learning undertaken by staff members. Ways to recognize this learning should be explored. Teachers can be encouraged personally or through notes of appreciation from the board. Some may be invited to share relevant learning with the board as appropriate, and incentives or additional funding sources can be sought through grants, sponsorships, or collaboration with local public school boards.

Final Thoughts

Board members are not expected to be experts in educational minutia. Neither are they authorized to act independently or in isolation. There is, however, much they can do in cooperation with school administration and the conference office of education to support Adventist schools in their pursuit of continuous school improvement and ongoing learning. It is not enough to promote high standards for teachers and students. High expectations require high levels of support. This is the "reciprocity of accountability" that Elmore[20] refers to where systems take responsibility for providing the resources and capacity needed to achieve excellence. System leaders, including school board members, are accountable for building that capacity through providing for professional learning. ✎

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19. The Adventist Learning Community (http://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com) is a Seventh-day Adventist ministerial and educational platform that provides various types of continuing-education courses and resources.

20. Richard Elmore, *Bridging the Gap Between Standards and Achievement: The Imperative for Professional Development in Education* (Washington, D.C.: The Albert Shanker Institute, 2002).

Daniel Gonzalez-Socoloske

Why Nature Matters:

Seventh-day Adventist Education in the Anthropocene

My first exposure to the notion of a conflict between human needs and the natural world occurred in 5th grade as I was deciding what project to present at the county's youth science fair. My science teacher suggested I make a presentation about the small endemic[1] butterfly called Mitchell's satyr (*Neonympha mithellii*) found in only a dozen or so wetlands in southern Michigan and northern Indiana. I enjoyed being out in nature and learning about animals, so I decided to follow his recommendation.

The issue at hand was a proposal by the Michigan Department of Transportation to extend US-31 from Berrien Springs north to I-94 in Benton Harbor. This would save commuters about 10 minutes. Many drivers and business owners were for the project; however, some concerned citizens and conservation groups were against it because the proposed high-

way would run right through one of the few remaining wetland habitats of the Mitchell's satyr butterfly. A choice had to be made. Construction began in the 1980s but came to a halt in the late 1990s due to litigation by conservation groups.

I remember visiting the small fen just north of Berrien Springs in 1994, where these butterflies live, armed with a camera provided by my teacher. I didn't see any of the butterflies, which is not surprising because the adults are only out for about two weeks a year in the summer, but I do remember appreciating the unique wetland habitat. I did not win the science fair that year (I placed second), but I learned an important lesson about the choices we make as humans and the possible consequences they have on the organisms around us.

Why does nature matter? Why should we as individuals, as members of our church, our country, the human race, care about nature? If a small butterfly that is visible for only two weeks

a year in a handful of wetlands goes extinct, does it really matter? These may sound like crude, unfair questions, but in a very real way, we ask ourselves many related ones every day, and we answer them with the choices we make. Life is all about choices. Some are easy and relatively inconsequential, like choosing what flavor ice cream to buy. Some are more difficult, like choosing the right person with whom to share one's life. Some are straightforward in terms of being moral or immoral. Others, not so clear.

My goal in this article is to challenge Adventist educators to re-examine their relationship with nature and their dependence on the vital benefits it provides. I hope to convey that nature does matter and that we are living in a unique time in terms of our impact on it. I will introduce the concept of environmental ethics and hopefully convince readers that as believers, it is our moral obligation to

care for nature and that as Seventh-day Adventist educators, it is our responsibility to inform our students about the current state of our planet and the consequences of our choices.

One doesn't have to be an ecologist to appreciate nature and the "free" benefits that it provides us. Nature not only offers esthetic beauty, it is also vital to our survival since it provides the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. Unfortunately, most people don't realize that nature exists in a fairly delicate web of interdependence between organisms and the environments in which they live. That is to say, no organism is self-sustaining. All organisms depend on other organisms to survive. For example, it is estimated that we have as many bacterial cells as human cells in our bodies.[2] We depend on this human biome (the collective community of organisms that live within us) to regulate our immune system, help us digest our food, produce certain vitamins, and protect us from disease-causing pathogens.

On a larger scale, abiotic aspects of nature (the soil, bodies of water, the atmosphere) both influence and are influenced by the biotic components of nature. Plants, fungi, and bacteria change and shape the soil, which in turn allows other plants and a whole multitude of other organisms to thrive—human beings included.

Nature works by maintaining balance. Destructive relationships are not sustainable and are effectively discontinued over time. No predator consumes its prey indiscriminately. Exploitative relationships are certainly an important part of nature, but they are always balanced, or they ultimately end with the loss of one or both species. Waste is rare in nature.

To me, one of the most amazing aspects of nature is the complexity and interdependence of all things. Despite the apparent selfishness and often cruel appearance of the struggle for survival, all organisms ultimately depend on one another to survive. When we look closely at nature, we find much more dependence and cooperation than isolation and competition.

So what's the big deal? Earth is a very large planet, and there are still wide-open spaces where there are no humans around. While that is true in a sense (although becoming less so every year), we are in fact living during an unprecedented time in human history. Our impact on the environment, referred to as our ecological footprint, is more visible than ever before.

No longer can we reasonably deny the reality that we are destroying the delicate balance of nature on which we and all life depend and changing our planet in ways that are potentially irreversible. The irony of it all is that we are ultimately destroying ourselves. Pulitzer prize winner and Harvard professor E. O. Wilson wrote in his 1998 book *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, "Few will doubt that humankind has created a planet-sized problem for itself. No one wished it so, but we are the first species to become a geophysical force, altering Earth's climate, a role previously reserved for tectonics, sun flares, and glacial cycles."[3]

This change is so profound that in 2008, a group of geologists from the Geological Society of London considered a proposal to name a new geological epoch following the Holocene called the Anthropocene.[4] The reasoning was an acknowledgement of the growing geological impact of human influence on ecosystems, land use, and biodiversity. Scientists continue to debate when to place the start of the Anthropocene. Some think it should extend back to the start of agriculture many thousands of years ago, while others have proposed recent dates like 1945 when the trinity nuclear tests were conducted, or 1964 when what is known as the "great acceleration" of our ability to impact the planet began. But all agree that we have entered a time when humans as a species are shaping nature on a global scale. In 2015, Lewis and Maslin wrote in the journal *Nature,* "To a large extent the future of the only place where life is known to exist is being determined by the actions of humans."[5]

Now you might be thinking, Hold on, humans have been around a long time, why would all this be happening now? The reason is a mathematical one: *More.* More humans have more capacity to alter the environment. All civilizations have had a negative effect on their environment to some extent; however, the industrial revolution in the 19th century enabled humans to flourish and prosper at the expense of other organisms and the environment on an unprecedented scale. Since that time, human populations have skyrocketed. It took humans thousands of years to get to a population of one billion in the year 1804. The second billion took only 123 years to achieve (1927), and we have been adding a billion people each 12-14 years ever since. Ecology students will recognize this type of growth curve as exponential growth. The good news is that the growth rate peaked in the late 1960s and has begun to slow; however, adjusting for this decline in growth rate, we are still on pace to hit 8 billion in 2025[6] and 11 billion by the end of the century. In just a blink of a geological eye, our species has grown explosively, in population and in technology, and our impact continues to be global.

Scientists estimate that currently, 83 percent of the terrestrial biosphere[7] is under direct human influence.[8] Land used for human food production (croplands and pastures) now occupies about 40 percent of the terrestrial surface, making it one of the largest biomes on earth.[9] Ten percent of the total renewable fresh water is currently diverted to human use. Monocultural manmade forests, such as palm oil and timber plantations, now cover millions of square kilometers worldwide.[10] A recent study used satellite tracking data of more than 70K commercial fishing ships and found that when controlling for areas where satellite data are poor, we are currently fishing about 73 percent of the ocean.[11]

During this same time of unprecedented success in terms of human growth and advancement in technology, our atmosphere, our land and oceans, and the non-human species, have been greatly impacted. A few species have increased in number, like our domestic animals; however, most have suffered great losses, along with the habitats upon which they depend.

Two recent reports from studies that looked at insect populations over multiple decades found alarming declines. In a 27-year study (1989-2016) in a protected reserve in Germany, scientists documented a 76 percent decline in flying insect biomass.[12] Similarly, in the rainforest of Puerto Rico, scientists have documented 98 percent and 78 percent declines in biomass of ground and canopy-dwelling insects, respectively, over a 36-year period (1976-2012).[13] Vertebrates are not doing much better. Currently, 25 percent of mammals, 12 percent of birds, and 32 percent of amphibians are threatened with extinction, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.[14] The main cause is habitat loss, although pollution, poaching, and overharvesting are also major contributors.

You might have heard that scientists believe that species are going extinct at rates 10 to 1,000 times the "normal" baseline rates.[15] The reason for the high level of variability in the estimates is that those data are so hard to collect, and the life history of each species can vary greatly. I sit on the committee that evaluates the status of manatees every decade or so, and I can tell you it is no easy task. Despite these complications, most biologists agree that we are losing species at alarming rates and that humans are directly or indirectly the cause of the problem.[16]

Average global temperatures have risen, and this is linked to atmospheric increases in greenhouse gasses like carbon dioxide and methane. Sea levels have risen, and glaciers have shrunk—all in the past 50 to 60 years. The list goes on: invasive species changing local ecosystems, deforestation that exceeds planting of new trees, pollution, polar regions melting, coral bleaching. My students who have traveled to Florida and Cuba on ecology trips have witnessed many of these problems firsthand. They have seen bleached and damaged corals and plastic trash while snorkeling in the Florida Keys, and witnessed the devastating effects of invasive species like the lionfish (*Pterois* spp.) in Cuba and the Burmese python in Florida. Twenty years ago, when I participated as a student on the Florida Ecology course, I saw white-tailed deer, raccoons, and other mammals in the Everglades National Park. In 2017, when I returned as a professor with a group of students, we saw none, not even as road-kill, due to the explosive population growth of the invasive python.

The question now becomes, can we do anything about it? Indeed, *should* we do anything about it? How should we as Christian educators respond to this current global challenge? If we look at mainstream Christianity, we find that in the United States, it paradoxically tends to support development and not conservation; deregulation and not environmental protection. While it is true that in the past decade, several Christian organizations have embraced ideas relating to sustainability, they are the exception to the rule.

But what about Seventh-day Adventists? Are we any different? Our official church statement approved in the mid-1990s may surprise some because of its use of direct and strong language in speaking of our moral obligations (see Box 1 for full statement). It indicates that nature is a gift from God and that we as humans are responsible for much of the current suffering and destruction due to our "selfishness and greed." It calls for radical change in our behavior based on "respect for nature" and the "dignity of created life."

So why is it that we treat nature with such indifference and shortsightedness? Why don't we practice what we preach? Why don't we even preach it, for that matter? I think there are two possible reasons for our indifference toward nature and the cognitive dissonance between what we say and what we do. The first is unique to our denomination, and the second we share with the rest of Christianity and maybe Western society as a whole. By exploring both of these potential reasons, I hope to empower Adventist educators to be able to overcome them.

I think we tend to be indifferent to environmental problems because we don't think we will live to see the consequences. Every Seventh-day Adventist generation going back to the Millerites has believed that they were the last generation. Could our apocalyptic belief that Jesus is coming soon produce as an unintended negative side-effect—an indifference toward the disasters that human beings are causing?

A lack of basic environmental knowledge does not seem to be the primary problem. One of the few studies on Seventh-day Adventist environmental literacy found that Adventist teachers in Florida scored comparably with the general population and had at least nominal environmental literacy, with the highest scores in the cognitive (knowledge) subscale and the lowest scores in the behavioral subscale.[17]

Could it be that we shrug our shoulders at the current reality of our planet because we believe that Jesus is coming "very soon," and He will simply hit the "reset button"? Meanwhile, generations pass; and as a result, we must continue to live with our shortsighted decisions and our inaction. Every new generation is left with a more degraded Earth, less resources, and larger problems. Even if the Lord were to come today, does that justify or excuse our careless actions or inaction towards environmental problems?

There are clear examples in the Bible of the connection between our sin and greed and the destruction and

"It is the belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that humankind was created in the image of God, and is thus to represent God as His steward and to manage the natural environment in a faithful and fruitful way. Nature is a gift from God.

"Unfortunately, men and women have been increasingly involved in an irresponsible destruction of the earth's resources, resulting in widespread suffering, environmental degradation, and the threat of climate change. While scientific research needs to continue, it is clear from the accumulated evidence that the increasing emission of destructive gasses, the massive destruction of the American rain forests, and the depletion of the protective mantel of ozone (the so-called greenhouse effect), are all threatening the earth's eco-system. There are dire predictions of global warming, rising sea levels, increasing frequency of storms and destructive floods, and devastating desertification and droughts.

"These problems are largely due to human selfishness and greed, which result in ever-increasing production, unlimited consumption, and depletion of nonrenewable resources. Solidarity with future generations is discussed, but the pressure of immediate interests is given priority. The ecological crisis is rooted in humankind's greed and refusal to practice good and faithful stewardship.

"Seventh-day Adventism advocates a simple, wholesome lifestyle, where people do not step on the treadmill of unbridled over-consumption, accumulation of goods, and production of waste. A reformation of lifestyle is called for, based on respect for nature, restraint in the use of the world's resources, reevaluation of one's needs, and reaffirmation of the dignity of created life."

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* This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) for release by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg, at the Annual Council session in San Jose, Costa Rica, October 1-10, 1996: https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/statements/article/go/-/stewardship-of-the-environment/.

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suffering of nature. Hosea wrote that "'there is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bonds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. *Because of this* the land *mourns*, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are *dying*'" (Hosea 4:1-3, NIV, italics supplied).[18]

It could be argued that environmental destruction is a byproduct of our sin against humanity and against God, the only entities to whom we are responsible, right? Surely the direct or indirect (in the form of inaction) destruction of the Earth is not sinful in it of itself. Will God judge us for our treatment of the land, the wildlife, the physical Earth with which He has entrusted us?

I mentioned there were two reasons for our indifference. While the first is a by-product of our apocalyptic beliefs, the second results from the lack of a land ethic. An ethic is the set of norms that help us know what is right and wrong. The Golden Rule is an example of an ethic between individuals. We base our moral decisions on our ethical views.

"There is as yet no ethic dealing with man's relationship to land and to the animals and plants, which grow upon it"[19] wrote Aldo Leopold in the final chapter of his short book *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (1949). Leopold suggested that we need to extend the boundaries of our ethics to include the water, plants, and animals—that is, collectively, the land. This may

sound obvious, but how many of us think it is a moral issue when we make decisions about our production of trash or consumption of resources? Is there anything morally wrong about purchasing fuel-inefficient vehicles or unnecessarily large houses if we have the financial resources to do so? E. O. Wilson put it this way: "So a very Faustian choice is upon us: whether to accept our corrosive and risky behavior as the unavoidable price of population and economic growth, or to take stock of ourselves and search for a new environmental ethic."[20]

So, what is the moral choice we should make as Adventists living in the Anthropocene? And what role do we have as educators? I think we need to use the land ethic along with our other ethics toward humanity and God to shape our behavior. This means that we will make decisions based on the well-being of not just ourselves (humans), but also all of creation—and not just for the present time, but also for future generations of all creatures. As educators, we are tasked with teaching that land ethic together with the ethics we already teach relating to God and humanity.

Addressing Complex and Global Environmental Problems

It is essential to avoid extremes. My 15 years in conservation work have taught me that it is important to meet people in the middle and be ready to compromise. We have to be realistic. For example, most people will agree that we should try to reduce our footprint by buying responsibly farmed and harvested meats, if meat is to be consumed. Asking everyone to stop using automobiles won't work. But surely, we can agree that we must try to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and invest resources in public transportation and in research to develop technology that provides alternatives which rely on renewable resources. It is unrealistic to ban the use of all plastics, but we can all agree that we don't want a world with more

plastic than fish in our oceans (which could happen by 2050!).[21]

The environmental problems we face are complex and global in nature and will require not just personal change, but also political and institutional modifications. The personal decisions are widely known (e.g., use of energy-efficient light bulbs, buying locally, moral consumption of resources, family planning, etc.), so I won't focus on those here. Institutional and political changes will require applying the land ethic when we select our leaders and holding them accountable when things are going well as well as when they fail. There is much to be said about those needed changes, but the focus of this essay is on Adventist education.

What Can We Do as Adventist Educators?

1. *Develop in our students a moral character that includes a land ethic.* As educators we play a substantial role in forming our students' ethical norms. Ellen G. White wrote: "True education imparts this wisdom. It teaches the best use not only of one but of all our powers and acquirements. Thus, it covers the whole circle of obligation—to ourselves, *to the world*, and to God."[22] We must help our students move beyond nominal (basic) environmental literacy to operational (behavioral) environmental literacy by instilling in their hearts and mind a moral conviction about caring for our planet.

2. *Inform students about the current state of the planet.* It is important that they receive the most accurate and up-to-date scientific information concerning the state of our planet and how humans are affecting it (see Sidebar 1). If those resources are not readily available in the science materials provided by our church, demand them. Request that resources be allocated at the various levels (union, division, and General Conference) so that those resources can be developed by Adventist scientists who specialize

in related fields such as earth science, geology, conservation and population biology, ecology, climate science, etc.

3. *Model living sustainably and consuming resources responsibly.* Think about the resources you use at home and in your classroom. Avoid using single-use plastics, and recycle whenever possible. Consider the garbage your school produces every day. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Americans produce an average of 4.5 pounds of waste per day.[23] How much of that ends up in a landfill or in the ocean, and how long will those waste items continue to exist after you dispose of them?

4. *Challenge your students to think about the future.* Create projects in your classes that explore the problems humans are facing and challenge your students to invent solutions. Schedule an annual environmental fair where students can present their projects and ideas for solving environmental problems. Teach children about civics and the importance of voting.

5. *Elect and support leaders who understand the importance of a land ethic.* As active citizens we must support those who understand the importance of a land ethic, whether church or school administrators, or local town, state/province, or national leaders. As teachers we can voice our concern when decisions are made that go contrary to this ethic. We can support initiatives that guarantee future generations the aesthetic beauty and ecological benefits we now receive from the natural world and often take for granted.

Just as communities can create horrific destruction, they can also take actions for **good**. Notice that I have used moral terminology when describing human actions that affect our planet. As local school communities, we can be an example to the larger community. Imagine if the following were to take place in our schools:

• Universities and local schools provided free gardening plots to the communities in which they are situated as well as training on how to grow vegetables organically;

• Schools and institutions not only recycled their waste but also supported or even built recycling centers where the larger community could bring their plastic, aluminum, and paper wastes;

• Schools and universities strived to be carbon neutral and focused on using mostly sustainable resources;

• Planned new buildings and retrofitted old buildings were designed to meet external environmental certification like that granted by the non-government organization LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design);

• Schools, colleges, and universities pledged to use energy in smarter and more efficient ways, and invested in sustainable energy sources like solar and geothermal.

All of these initiatives fall nicely in line with the Seventh-day Adventist Church's official statement about the environment.

Can anything really be done to reverse our current trajectory? The cynical side of me says "No, it's too late." Human greed, corporate interests, those with wealth are too powerful, and many who hold decision-making power are short sighted. But I see the new generation marching around the world advocating for change and recognition of stark environmental realities facing our world.[24] I hear those young people advocate for something they believe in on moral grounds. They see the urgency of the situation and want to do something about it. They recognize that we already have financially viable, science-based solutions.

Environmental policies and grassroots action have improved many of the environmental problems, resulting in improved air[25] and water[26] as well as bringing species back from the brink of extinction.[27] Change is difficult, and many lack the will to do so; however, I believe this new generation has the courage to implement that change.[28]

As Adventist educators, we need to empower our young people with sound knowledge about the topic and nurture their desire for change by encouraging them to follow a land ethic, rather than becoming an additional obstacle to progress. I believe that if we adopt a land ethic and extend our moral boundaries to embrace nature as a gift from God, we can find a balance between human needs and the natural world. Will it be easy? No. It will take sacrifice, and it will come at some cost to our current lifestyle. The word *compassion* literally means "to suffer with"; that is, the feeling that arises when one is confronted with another's **suffering** and feels motivated to relieve it.

Some things are gone forever. Past generations chose a world without northern white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*), Chinese river dolphins (*Lipotes vexillifer*), and golden toads (*Incilius periglenes*). We cannot change that now. Remember the Mitchell's satyr butterflies in the fen north of Berrien Springs? Well, the last surveys in the summer of 2018 indicated that they have become extinct in that fen, although other populations of that species may exist elsewhere, and the county's plans to finish the road have been reapproved and will commence in 2021.

Back in 1999, when I was a biology student at Andrews University, *Focus*, the alumni magazine, ran an article about our environmental challenges and how the university was wrestling with them.[29] In that article, Dr. Woodland (then a faculty member in the biology department) outlined many of the same problems shared in this article and provided a list of things that the school could do to solve them. While the then-president supported these recommendations and agreed that they fit well with our Adventist philosophical beliefs and the university's goals, concern was raised about the potential financial burden. Today, some 20 years later, and nearly half a century after the first Earth Day celebration at the university, the same issues persist, now more serious than before. Many of our schools face similar challenges. Our official church statement on the environment was issued almost 25 years ago, and we have not acted on it in any substantial way as a denomination to address the issue.

Now, travel with me in your mind 25, 50, 100 years into the future. If Jesus hasn't returned, what will be the conversation among our Seventh-day Adventist young people living in the Anthropocene as they read and reflect on our official environmental statement published in back in 1996 and the old articles in *Focus* in 1999 and this journal in 2013 and 2019? Will it be one of disappointment about our inability to value and preserve God's creation and ultimately our own contribution to an impoverished planet? Or, of encouragement in the realization that since that time we acted as a positive force to ensure a better planet for those that came afterward and led the way through our own sacrifices? The generation before us made their choice; now it is ours to make. ✐

This article has been peer reviewed.

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1. In ecology, endemic species are those that are only found in one geographical location or region and nowhere else.

2. Ron Sender, Shai Fuchs, and Ron Milo, "Revised Estimates for the Number of Human and Bacterial Cells in the Body," *PLOS Biology* 14:8 (August 2016): e1002533. This ratio was long thought to be much higher—in the order of 10:1 bacteria to human cells, but has recently been revised to a ratio closer to 1:1. Either way, we share our bodies with a surprisingly large number of other organisms.

3. Edward Osborn Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 277-278.

4. See review by Colin N. Waters et al., "The Anthropocene Is Functionally and Stratigraphically Distinct From the Holocene," *Science* 351:6269 (January 2016): aad2622-1-aad2622-10. Geologists divide geologic time periods into epochs; the Holocene began after the end of the last ice age about 10,000 ybp (conventional dating). The Anthropocene comes from the root word *Anthro* which means "human," so it literally means the "age of humans."

5. Simon L. Lewis and Mark Andrew Maslin, "Defining the Anthropocene," *Nature* 519:7542 (March 2015):171-180.

6. The United Nations predicts that by 2025 the world's population will increase by one billion to approximately eight billion people. See "World Population to Increase by One Billion by 2025" (2013):https://www.unfpa.org/news/world-population-increase-one-billion-2025.

7. The biosphere encompasses all of the abiotic and biotic components of Planet Earth. The terrestrial biosphere includes all the land, lakes, and rivers within the biosphere (excluding the oceans).

8. Eric Sanderson et al., "The Human Footprint and the Last of the Wild," *BioScience* 52:10 (October 2002): 891-904.

9. Jonathan A. Foley et al., "Global Consequences of Land Use," *Science* 309:5734 (July 2005): 570-574. Ecologists divide different types of terrestrial habitats into biomes primarily based on the regional climate (temperature and precipitation) and the community of plants.

10. Michael Williams, "Forests." In *The Earth as Transformed by Human Action: Global and Regional Changes in the Biosphere Over the Past 300 Years.* B. L. Turner II et al., eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 179-201.

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12. Casper A. Hallmann et al., "More Than 75 Percent Decline Over 27 Years in Total Flying Insect Biomass in Protected Areas," *PLoS One* 12 (October 2017): e0185809.

13. Bradford C. Lister and Andres Garcia, "Climate-driven Declines in Arthropod Abundance Restructure a Rainforest Food Web," *Proceedings National Academy of Sciences* 115:44 (October 2018): E10397-E10406.

14. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity *Global Biodiversity Outlook 3.* Montreal (2010), 94 pages.

15. Megan Lamkin and Arnold I. Miller, "On the Challenge of Comparing Contemporary and Deep-Time Biological-Extinction Rates," *BioScience* 66:9 (September 2016): 785-789. https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biw088.

16. See for example, William K. Hayes and Floyd E. Hayes, "How Does Human Activity Affect Species Extinctions?" *The Journal of Adventist Education* 76:1 (October/November 2013): 23-29: http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae201376012307.pdf.

17. Michael Murdoch, "Environmental Literacy of Seventh-day Adventist Teachers in the Parochial Schools of the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 6:2 (2012): 69-87. Environmental literacy can be measured in three scales, **nominal** environmental literacy (basic understanding of terms), **functional** environmental literacy (broader knowledge and understanding of the interactions between human and natural systems), and **operational** environmental literacy (greater depth and breadth in understanding, where the person evaluates the impact and consequences of his or her actions). Murdoch found that Adventist teachers had at least nominal environmental literacy, which was comparable with the rest of the general population, but that did not correlate with positive behaviors and action regarding the environment.

18. Hosea 4:1-3. *New International Version* (NIV). Holy Bible, *New International Version®*, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

19. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1949), 203:http://www.umag.cl/facultades/williams/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Leopold-1949ASandCountyAlmanac-complete.pdf.

20. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge,* 277, 278.

21. World Economic Forum, Ellen MacArthur Foundation and McKinsey & Company, "The New Plastics Economy—Rethinking the Future of Plastics" (2016): https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/publications/the-new-plastics-economy-rethinking-the-future-of-plastics-catalysing-action.

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23. United States Environmental Protection Agency, "Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: 2015 Fact Sheet" (July 2018): https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-07/documents/2015_smm_msw_factsheet_07242018_fnl_508_002.pdf.

24. On Friday March 15, 2019, an estimated 1.5 million young people in more than 2,000 locations across 123 countries skipped classes and marched in a global school strike for climate change called #FridayForFuture. See Chad Frischmann, "The Young Minds Solving Climate Change," BBC Future (March 29, 2019): http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20190327-the-young-minds-solving-climate-change.

25. John Bachmann, David Calkins, and Margo Oge, "Cleaning the Air We Breathe: A Half Century of Progress," *EPA Alumni Association* (September 2017): 52: https://www.epaalumni.org/hcp/air.pdf. Prior to the Clean Air Act Amendments in 1970, major U.S. cities suffered from dense smog and acid rain, and the problem was getting worse. In the half-century since the law was enacted, a variety of programs have cut air pollution emissions by 70 percent while the economy has more than doubled. U.S. air quality has dramatically improved, providing significant benefits to the environment and human health.

26. David A. Keiser and Joseph S. Shapiro, "Consequences of the Clean Water Act and the Demand for Water Quality," *NBER Working Paper No. 23070* (January 2017), 48: https://www.nber.org/papers/w23070.pdf. Like the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1972 has dramatically improved the environmental state of watersheds and reduced pollution levels. It however still has a long way to go to meet the original goals of making all U.S. waters fishable and swimmable by 1983 and having zero water pollution discharge by 1985. Most American streams, lakes, and coastal areas still violate water quality standards.

27. Several species have recovered from the brink of extinction due to the enforcement of environmental laws and protection. The classic U.S. example is the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). See Wade L. Eakle et al., "Wintering Bald Eagle Count Trends in the Conterminous United States, 1986-2010," *Journal of Raptor Research* 49:3 (January 2015): 259-268.

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Kayla F. Gilchrist-Ward

READING Comprehension Strategies to Improve

WRITING Skills in the High School English Class

The high school English curriculum is comprised of grammar, writing, vocabulary, and a variety of literary works. Some of these works are categorized as classic literature, and some are modern; however, regardless of the category, students can be sure of one thing in the English classroom: the writing assignment. Good writers are often avid readers. Although reading comprehension skills are usually taught in early elementary and middle school grades, the need for them extends to the high school classroom. E-mail, texts, tweets, blogs, and instant messaging have become the means by which students communicate, thereby increasing the need for reading and writing skills.[1] While these writing forms use minimal word counts and sometimes lack traditional sentence structure, the reader still needs to understand what is being stated and sometimes implied. Further, the writer must know how to effectively communicate his or her ideas using these methods. Whether students pursue employment as blue-collar or white-collar workers, employers expect them to be able to read, write, and comprehend numerous types of communication.[2]

As secondary-level English teachers prepare young people to attend college and enter the workforce, they must develop their reading and writing skills, which requires addressing and overcoming challenges in these areas. Luke and Grieshaber[3] suggested that traditional ways of teaching such as lecturing, reading and answering questions, defining words and using them in sentences, etc., may not address the needs of all students. If this is the case, high school English teachers must implement specific strategies to help improve reading and writing skills.

Strategies for Implementation

Journaling

Journaling is considered an effective strategy for teaching reading and writing skills. This form of writing can take place before, after, or during a reading activity or experience. Journaling affords students an opportunity to write about their reaction to the theme of a text, react (positively or negatively) to an event in the text, express their views about controversial ideas in the text, or explore their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the text. Expressing themselves through the written word increases readers' understanding of the text and highlights the importance of sharing their ideas with others.

The instructor may use journaling to create an atmosphere of trust so the participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts with others. Journal writing also teaches higher-order thinking. A study by Shaarawy[4] found that journaling positively affected young people's critical-thinking skills, making them better students and communicators. Lo[5] concluded that portfolio journals foster student achievement by giving them more control of their own thoughts and ideas, placing the

teacher in the role of an observer who comments and offers guidance when necessary. Opportunity to write freely in a journal creates a more relaxed environment, thereby encouraging the struggling writer to express himself or herself without concern about a possible grade.

Journaling can take many forms: a reading log where students merely record the title of the reading material, author, and number of pages read; an anecdotal reading log where they record the title of the reading material, the date the material was read, and answers to guided questions about the reading; a diary entry; or a reading checklist. It might be an informal record of thoughts and reactions to a text, or a formal record of the thought processes necessary to complete a task. Journaling will generally help to improve students' reading and writing skills.
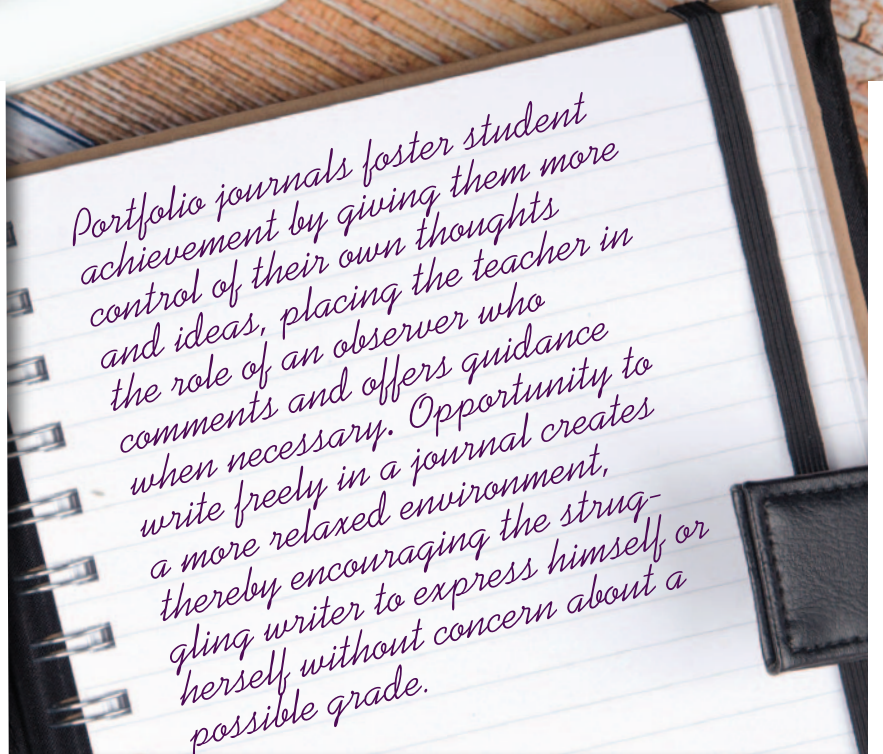
Best Practices

The teacher can use several approaches to journaling:

• He or she can have students free write about their experiences, future aspirations, or views on certain current events, jotting down all their ideas without consideration for grammar, spelling, or other writing rules.[6] For example, the prompt "In five years I see myself. . . ." encourages students to set goals for themselves and is a great strategy to help them plan for the future.

• Students may also journal about their weekly activities by recording both positive and negative things that happened, exploring strategies to avoid the negatives and foster the positives, and thereby achieving an understanding of what areas they are able to control.

• Group journaling is a creative way to involve students in writing since it encourages reflection, offers opportunities to raise important questions and explore difficult ideas, develops speaking and writing skills, and enhances group development.[7] To introduce this exercise, the instruc-

tor provides a hardcover journal and suggests a topic about which each student is to write a response in the journal. After the exercise is completed, the instructor will ask volunteers to read their responses aloud as a segue to group discussion. This method will help students develop confidence about sharing their thoughts in front of a group. It will further encourage them to write with a specific purpose and audience in mind.

• Group journaling can also be used for personal expression. Several students can be offered the opportunity to write in the journal during a class period. Their entries may include poems, songs, and ideas for short stories or articles. The teacher may allot several days for students to read the contributions aloud to those in their groups or to the entire class, after which those listening can be encouraged to offer suggestions or make observations about the journal entries. The instructor should display the journal in a designated area in the classroom so that students may write in it whenever they wish to record a thought.

Assessment

Journal assessment can take many forms, based on the nature of the journal and the purpose of the assignment. After each student selects a certain number of journals to submit for grading, the instructor can use a rubric similar to the one posted by Richmond Community School that assesses content, idea development, organization, and mechanics (see Appendix for the link that leads to the journaling rubric). For the less-structured, free-written journals, the instructor will assign a completion grade. For example, if the student is required to write 10 journal entries but submits only eight, he or she would receive 80/100.

One creative way to encourage journaling is to have students create an electronic book comprised of at least one journal entry from each student. The entries can be saved as PDF files and uploaded and stored at an HTML5 Website. The students e-mail the instructor a link to the book (see Appendix for link that leads to the HTML5 Website). The instructor can use the rubric referred to above to assess the electronic book by adding a creativity category to the rubric. The group journal does not generally receive a grade since it is

Portfolio journals foster student achievement by giving them more control of their own thoughts and ideas, placing the teacher in the role of an observer who comments and offers guidance when necessary. Opportunity to write freely in a journal creates a more relaxed environment, thereby encouraging the struggling writer to express himself or herself without concern about a possible grade.

used to encourage ideas and increase students' comfort level in sharing ideas. If the instructor chooses to assign a grade, he or she can consider class participation points.

Varied Instruction

Varied instruction is an additional strategy English teachers may implement in the classroom. Because people learn in different ways, teachers must vary instruction to meet the needs of every student.[8] Several studies have been conducted on the multiple intelligences and how they can be used to address students' learning in any academic setting. Howard Gardner of Harvard University identified nine different intelligences: musical, bodily-kinesthetic, logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existential.[9] One strategy English teachers can implement to address spatial intelligence is visual literacy.[10] Pictures and films that relate to the content of various assignments help students make concrete connections to abstract ideas. The visual content appeals to their need to "see" meaning in action. For example, the student may interpret meaning based on body language.

Verbal or dramatic readings of passages help students hear the emotions of literary characters and develop short-term understanding of them. This strategy addresses the musical intelligence where students interpret the meaning of sounds. A change in voice inflection may help students identify emotional reactions to characters, conflict, and conflict resolution. Role-playing and problem-solving scenarios are bodily kinesthetic activities that allow students to move beyond the assignment to engagement with the text and real-life experiences. Exploring how the natural environment affects the psyche provides opportunity for self-exploration and appreciation of different cultures, beliefs, and experiences. These varied methods of instruction integrate several of the multiple intelligences.

Varying assignments to incorporate the multiple intelligences will also improve student achievement. Strategies an English teacher can use to improve students' academic success in his or her writing class include the following:

• Ask students to use visual skills to create a book cover, painting, drawing, or picture book to express ideas;

• Connect a song to an idea; or

• Create a conflict-and-resolution situation that mirrors content taught in class.

Best Practices

Instructors can use picture books to enrich teaching and learning in language arts as well as in mathematics, social sciences, sciences, and visual and performing arts.[11] Creating picture books enables students to chronicle major events in their lives. Having students write the narrative using elements such as theme, plot, characterization, and conflict and resolution will provide the framework for storytelling. Having them exemplify those elements using pictures will help them identify the effectiveness of nonverbal communication in writing. The compilation of pictures can later be uploaded as a book using the free electronic HTML5 Website mentioned earlier in this article. This will enable students to share the electronic book in class and with others through a link provided by the Website.

Assessment

One way to assess creative projects is peer grading. In order to ensure anonymity, students' names are replaced by numbers and the submissions read to a different class. A rubric can enable students to rate their peers based on the criteria for the assignment and the creativity of the ideas employed (see Appendix for link to the visual presentation rubric). The narrative receiving the highest score receives recognition (as award, prize, or certificate). This technique motivates students to submit their best work in order to win the prize, while the anonymity ensures a degree of objectivity. To further remove pressure from the writer, the instructor should assign a completion grade. This way, everyone receives credit for his or her effort.

Socratic Circles

Socratic circles are teacher-led discussion sessions organized around a series of open-ended questions on a given topic. Also known as Socratic Seminars, these whole-class conversations help foster critical thinking and allow students to gain in-depth understanding of a concept or situation.[12] Socratic Circles have been used by many English teachers to help encourage student participation during reading and group discussions. Socratic circles give ownership of the conversation and sharing of ideas to the students to ensure dialogue about a topic. The discussion generally focuses on open-ended questions that foster comprehension of the reading material.[13]

Participating in oral activities such as read-alouds and think-alouds allows students to hear different voice inflections and verbal interpretations and to ask questions while reading. Researchers Gillam, Fargo, and St. Clair Robertson[14] found that students who participated in think-alouds were able to recall information and respond to questions about the text with greater accuracy. English teachers can use these strategies to help improve their students' reading and writing skills. The more information students retain, the better they understand what they have read, what they synthesize, and how they convey that information to someone else in the classroom or workplace.

Best Practices

According to the Paideia Active Learning Website,[15] Socratic seminar questions are open-ended, thought-provoking, and clear. The instructor

devises a list of questions for the students to answer about the literary text such as: "What do you think motivates the character?; What would be another good title for this piece?; What evidence is used to support the writer's stand on the issue?; What additional points could be included in the text to further explain motive or ideas?; Based on this story/selection, do you think the author believes that human beings are inherently good or evil?" These questions encourage the reader to use his or her critical-thinking skills to analyze the selection.

Assessment

One of the best ways to assess Socratic circles is to use a wholistic rubric, which allows the teacher to measure the amount of critical thinking and the value of input during the discussion. The rubric should be designed to measure the amount of participation by each student and the quality of the responses (see Appendix for the link to the wholistic rubric).

Project-based Learning

Project-based Learning (PBL) is another strategy that works well in the English classroom. In addition to group discussion activities, an English teacher can also design project-based assignments to help students increase their comprehension and writing skills. In most working environments, several people contribute their expertise to produce a product. Schools considered to have successful advanced academic programs include project-based learning in their course of study. As early as elementary school, students are learning to work together to solve equations, build models, and report findings. Research indicates that combining reading and writing in project-based learning is more effective than addressing each area separately.[16] Project-based learning should continue through middle, high school, and college courses. English teachers should be able to implement this type

> **Reading and writing skills are vital for students to become productive citizens. Although students are introduced to reading and writing skills in elementary and middle school, these skills must also be reinforced in high school.**

of teaching by simply redesigning some of their lessons.

Best Practices

The research paper is considered a project in most high school English classes. The instructor may redesign this project so students complete it as a group. The group is thus responsible for developing and agreeing to a research question or questions. They then conduct research and determine the best way to report their findings (see Appendix for the link that leads to guidelines for creating the assignment). The project may require several group meetings.

This type of project can be designed to incorporate the aforementioned strategies. The group is tasked to keep a research journal and a duty log, participate in Socratic circles, and use read-aloud/think-aloud strategies to share ideas. Using their preferred intelligence, students can create graphs and charts to record information. They can also create outlines to express their ideas and make videos or PowerPoints to report their findings. The teacher can have the group write a script, create and enact a scenario, create a mu-

sical score, and/or provide a written paper to accompany the visuals.

Assessment

Assessment for this type of project can take many forms. Since the research project is completed by a group of students, the instructor can include a peer evaluation in which group members evaluate one another's performance. The peer evaluation needs to be administered several times throughout the research project to determine whether each group member is completing his or her assigned tasks (see Appendix for the link to the peer-evaluation rubric).

The instructor then uses the responses to counsel the group members and to make necessary adjustments in group membership and assigned tasks. The instructor will need to determine which parts of the research project to assess. For example, he or she may assign participation grades for the Socratic circle sessions. The research assignments submitted for formal assessment should include the outline, an annotated bibliography, and final paper, all of which can be graded by the instructor using a rubric (see Appendix for the link for creating rubrics). The oral presentation of the research project is evaluated by the students and the instructor and used as a means of discussion about the research topic and the research process (see Appendix for the link to the peer-group evaluation and oral-presentation evaluation).

Conclusion

Reading and writing skills are vital for students to become productive citizens. Although students are introduced to reading and writing skills in elementary and middle school, these skills must also be reinforced in high school. The English teacher can implement a number of reading and writing strategies to ensure student success.[17] Implementing effective, best-practice strategies at the high school level will help ensure that students have first-rate reading compre-

hension and writing skills—not only as they matriculate through school, but also as they enter the workforce. ✐

This article has been peer reviewed.

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APPENDIX

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Katia Garcia Reinert

Youth *ALIVE:*

Building Resilience Against At-risk Behaviors

The world contains roughly 7.7 billion people.[1] Around 1.2 billion of them (1 in 6) are adolescents aged 10 to 19.[2] Many of these young people engage in healthy behaviors and enjoy good health, but there are thousands who suffer premature death, substantial illness, and injury. Good health encompasses not only physical, but also mental and spiritual well-being, which impacts not only the individual but also the people in one's life. Premature death and illness are often related to at-risk behaviors. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), alcohol or tobacco use, unprotected sex, and/or exposure to violence can adversely impact young people not only during adolescence, but also throughout their lives, and can even affect the health of their children. Among the top at-risk behaviors are the following:

• *Substance use and process addictions* (e.g. alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, opioids, pornography, gambling, gaming). Addictions are a major cause of young people's physical and mental-health problems, poor cognitive de-

velopment, violent behavior, victimization, learning difficulties, low rates of economic advancement, and impaired social development.[3]

• *Sexual activity*. Early onset of sexual activity relates to many sexually transmitted illnesses (e.g., HPV, chlamydia, gonorrhea, HIV/AIDS), teen pregnancy, fractured relationships, and poverty.[4]

• *Dropping out of school.* The lack of education correlates to lack of opportunities for economic stability and impaired social relationships.[5]

• *Youth violence and bullying.* Interpersonal violence is among the top 10 leading causes of death in adolescents worldwide.[6] Gangs recruit vulnerable youth in poverty-stricken areas and engage them in violent behavior, sexual harassment, and assault. In addition, gang membership often results in poor learning outcomes and premature death, not only for the individual, but also for those living within the community.[7] A young person who is bullied may experience depression, anxiety, loneliness, impaired ability to make friends, and higher levels of substance abuse. Youth who bully others report high rates of smoking, excessive drinking,

and fighting; and, bullying behavior may be an indicator of future marital aggression, difficulty keeping a job, child abuse, and elder abuse.[8]

• *Suicide.* Around the world, suicide is a major risk among youth and a major cause of premature death.[9]

Unfortunately, Seventh-day Adventists are not exempt from many of these problems, nor are Adventist schools. Research by the Institute for the Prevention of Addictions (IPA) at Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.) has shown that some students in Adventist schools (K-20) in the U.S., use harmful substances, though at much lower rates than students in non-faith-based schools. The general culture impacts everyone, including Adventist youth.[10]

Promoting healthful behaviors during adolescence and taking steps to better protect young people from health risks are critical to preventing health problems in adulthood. Unfortunately, the higher rates of drug and alcohol use in the general population will continue to exert a powerful influence on Adventist youth and, tragically, simply sharing "the right infor-

mation" does not ensure that our youth will make the best choices or abstain from at-risk behaviors. Many educators and parents feel powerless to do anything about the rapid changes that have occurred in society since they were young. The question remains, what can educators do to help youth live their faith and be fully alive, free from addictions and other damaging behaviors?

Promising Research

In spite of the many changes within our global society, some things have remained the same:

• The need for relationships with peers and with adult mentors;

• The desire for a personal connection with God;

• The search for values that matter and count;

• The importance of having fun and sustaining the human desire to play;

Research has also shown that students who have a religious affiliation and who embrace spiritual values are much less likely to use drugs.[11] Recent addiction research has revealed that treatment and prevention programs succeed better when they contain a "values" component.[12] These values are essential in promoting a society free from dangerous and illegal drugs. Therefore, we need to treat the underlying causes of drug use such as hopelessness, depression, feelings of worthlessness and separation, a need to belong, or any other emotion that might contribute to negative self-concept. Coming into the arms of God and promoting Christian values are a great place to start.

Research has identified several resilience factors that protect youth and empower them to say "No" to at-risk behaviors. According to the data, a commitment to the belief that the body is the temple of God, and a personal connection to God does make a difference.[13]

Resilience

Behavioral research typically explores what puts young people at risk to become involved in at-risk behaviors. The concept of resilience has inspired hope among researchers, including educators. Resilience is the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. It means the ability to "bounce back" from difficult experiences.[14] Resilient individuals are more likely to have several characteristics, including the following:

• A deep religious faith[15];

• A strong commitment to self and/or their God and willingness to act and deal with problems;

• Positive attitude toward their environment, a strong sense of purpose, and a strong internal locus of control that enables them to see life's obstacles as challenges that can be overcome[16];

• A strong commitment to helping others[17];

• A belief that adversity can be overcome, that there is life beyond the obstacles of today; and

• The ability to identify factors that account for success rather than focusing on shortcomings such as academic failure, drug use, or other at-risk behaviors.[18]

Building Connections and Healthy Relationships

Independent of race, ethnicity, family structure, and poverty status, adolescents who are connected to their parents, to other family members, and to their school community (a healthy horizontal relationship) are protected from many at-risk behaviors such as premarital sex, violence, emotional distress, suicide attempts, and drug use.[19] No one is an island. We all long to be accepted and connected with one another for support and encouragement (horizontal relationship). This is biblically supported in Romans 14:7: "For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone" (NIV).[20] As individuals connect with God, they value others as children of God, making it easier for them to connect with other youth and adults.

The School as a Protective Community

Schools can provide several protective factors for young adults such as opportunities for involvement in school decision making, high but realistic expectations for their performance, and a caring, supportive atmosphere. According to the WHO, having a positive school experience has a favorable influence on a person's health and well-being, while a negative experience becomes a risk factor can affect students' mental and physical health.[21] If the student "likes" the school he or she attends, that is considered a protective factor against bullying; sexual risk-taking; use of tobacco and alcohol, and drug abuse. On the other hand, students who dislike school or feel disconnected from other people in school are more likely to fail academically, drop out, and have mental-health problems.

Thus, when students believe that their school is a "community," a place characterized by supportive and caring relationships, where opportunities are provided to participate in school activities and decision making, and a place where norms are shared, they will enjoy school more and be more academically motivated, attend more regularly, engage in less disruptive behavior, have higher academic achievement, use drugs less, and be less likely to engage in delinquent behavior.[22] In one study using student survey data from 508 U.S. communities, it was noted that adult-supervised after-school activities were associated with lower incidences of cigarette smoking, alcohol use, and binge drinking in the past 30 days. In addition, community activities to reduce substance use, including student organizations to prevent alcohol abuse, were associated to lower binge drinking.[23]

Therefore, schools can function as protective communities. Educators and other mentors can positively affect children's and adolescents' health and well-being by creating positive experiences and after-school programs that can enhance the students' experience in the classroom and have a lasting impact.[24] *Youth Alive* is one of the programs that incorporates evidence-based strategies for prevention of at-risk behaviors that has been shown to make a difference when implemented in Adventist schools.[25] It has been developed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church targeting not only Adventist youth, but also other teens and young adults in the community.

The *Youth Alive* Program

Youth Alive is a program that incorporates the factors for resilience mentioned above. It has been used for several years in Asia, Africa, America, and Europe to build resilience and prevent at-risk behaviors among teens and young adults aged 15 to 22 in schools, churches, and communities. It incorporates the faith-values associated with resilience, namely having Jesus Christ— the highest Power—at the center of all their activities and facilitates connectedness among youth and be- tween youth and adults. These key perspectives and actions have a major impact in protecting young people from at-risk behaviors.

All About Discipleship

In essence, *Youth Alive* is a youth program designed to build resilience against at-risk behaviors such as violence, pre-marital sexual activity, the consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs, and the misuse of legal drugs. It focuses on intergenerational mentorship for spiritual growth, leadership empowerment, service, and connectedness. The program involves a collaboration of several church ministries including Health, Youth, Family, Education, Public Campus Ministries, and Global Mission.

Youth Alive is critical to helping young people live a healthy, purpose-driven life by modeling an evidence-based **Positive Peer Prevention Program.**

Positive: The *Youth Alive* program focuses on positive alternatives in Christ, resulting in positive interpersonal relationships. Participants treat one another with **Respect, Dignity, and Honor,** valuing each person as a child of God and not engaging in racism, prejudice, or put-downs. This attitude promotes a feeling of complete acceptance.

Peer: In this program, youth and adults reach out to other youth, children, and adults to encourage them to make healthy choices so they can be free from at-risk behaviors, use of dangerous substances, and harmful habits. The connectedness among youth and with adults provides a natural sense of satisfaction that increases self-esteem and provides an uplifting experience through Christ. Thus, the use of illegal drugs, alcohol, and tobacco; misuse of prescription drugs; or other behaviors that result in addictions, become less desirable.

Prevention: *Youth Alive* focuses on the theme "MY CHOICE—FULLY ALIVE," presented through all components of the program. This encourages a commitment to healthy living by all the participants, including those who may have already casually experimented with drugs or other at-risk behaviors.

Program: The program involves various activities and events focusing on the **growth and discipling** of youth. It is intergenerational. That is, it includes not only qualified adult presenters and facilitators, but also young people as mentors and participants. The program components are listed below.

Program Components

An important way to equip youth and adult leaders for mentoring youth is through **Facilitator Training.** Working in collaboration with church youth leaders, school leaders can invite youth enrolled in Adventist schools (whether or not they are church members) to attend large conference gatherings or retreats to experience *Youth Alive*. These gatherings often occur at the start of a school year or at another convenient time, such as a school break or holiday. The *Youth Alive* program also includes regularly scheduled gatherings through local clubs held in the school. Such meetings take place weekly in a small-group setting called friendship groups. At these meetings, the youth gather to learn, share, play, worship, and serve. This proactive initiative promotes youth living an abundant life through healthful lifestyle choices.

Youth Alive offers an online portal and app that give young people free access to information such as books, articles, and classes on various issues relevant to living a happy, healthy, and fulfilling life committed to God in mission. A **Youth Alive Leaders Portal** connects teachers and administrators, as well as local church leaders, to various *Youth Alive* resources, including a calendar of events, discus-sion boards, media files, and best practices on how to conduct success-ful *Youth Alive* programs. To access these materials, select the "Register" icon on the *Youth Alive* Leaders Portal Website (https://leaders.youth aliveportal.org/en), and create a pro-file and login.

Ongoing learning opportunities for both young adults and leaders are available at larger conferences, local club meetings, friendship groups, and online, which focus on spiritual growth and empowerment for leader-ship in mission activities such as church planting.

Implementing *Youth Alive* in Schools

Because of the positive impact of the *Youth Alive* program in local churches, it is highly recommended that our schools launch their own *Youth Alive* conference and then es-tablish a *Youth Alive* club co-led by a teacher and a student leader. Such

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Box 1. *Youth Alive* Pledge and Motto

The *Youth Alive* participants are encouraged to sign the following pledge:

Youth Alive Pledge

I pledge to choose Jesus Christ as my Highest Power

I want to be healthy and happy

I will say NO to alcohol

I will say NO to tobacco

I will say NO to illegal drugs

I will say NO to pornography

I will say NO to compulsive gaming

I will say NO to pre-marital sex

I will say NO to any unhealthy behavior

I will help my friends to say NO to these things also

I pledge to stand up for what I know is right

My Choice, Fully alive!

Participants are also encouraged to live by the following motto, which is built around the goals of the program:

Youth Alive Motto
"Fully Alive! Healthy Youth Connected for Service!"

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clubs can involve youth with regular activities oriented toward building resilience through strengthening the protective factors mentioned above.

How to start? First, schedule a *Youth Alive* conference.[26] It is best to hold this at the beginning of the school year. (This can be combined effectively with the school's orientation program.) Another option is to schedule it during a school break. During the conference, introduce the idea of the *Youth Alive* club, and invite students to participate. Then, following the conference, launch the *Youth Alive* club and schedule weekly, biweekly, or monthly *Youth Alive* friendship group meetings during the school year when students can discuss topics related to at-risk behaviors, find peer support, enjoy cooperative games, participate in service opportunities, and grow spiritually (see Box 1).

What Makes *Youth Alive* Effective?

Youth Alive is guided by research on protective factors among youth and by the iCOR (Intergenerational Churches of Refuge) model and values.[27] As it turns out, what protects youth against at-risk behaviors also fosters discipleship. The iCOR model focuses on relationships, spiritual growth, mission, and empowerment. As such, the program accomplishes its goals by:

• Nurturing positive relationships with adults and other youth through a mentoring process;

• Inspiring youth to connect to God, grow in their spiritual journey, and find their own purpose for living;

• Engaging youth in service and mission opportunities through the *Youth Alive* activities; and

• Empowering youth to become leaders of vibrant *Youth Alive* clubs and friendship groups.

Getting Involved

If you as an educator would like to make a difference in the lives of your students by becoming involved with *Youth Alive,* here is how to get started:

1. Get in touch with a *Youth Alive* coordinator at youthalive@gc.advent ist.org for more information and consultation. They will connect you with the necessary resources.

2. Register at the *Youth Alive* Leaders Portal[28] by clicking the "Register" icon. Once registered, you can download *Youth Alive* materials and check the calendar for any upcoming facilitators' training near you.

3. Download the "*Youth Alive* Facilitator Manual" and the "*Youth Alive* Participant Manual" from the Leaders Portal.

4. Plan on organizing a training conference in collaboration with the local union *Youth Alive* leaders or register to attend a scheduled training conference near you.

5. Mentor a young student leader to co-lead the *Youth Alive* club and friendship group meetings in your school. Sample programs are available in the "*Youth Alive* Facilitator Manual" and Leaders Portal.

The *Youth Alive* facilitators have helped many students to commit to purpose-filled lives free from at-risk behaviors, use of dangerous sub-stances, and harmful habits. More importantly, many found God and their calling. Here is how one student described his experience, "I know that I did drugs because of a lack of security and a lack of love and a need to belong. And I found that in my druggie circle, but it wasn't what I was really looking for. What I was lacking was God and support. And that's exactly what I got at the *Youth Alive* program."

May you feel God's leading as you consider becoming involved with *Youth Alive* at your school. You can continue to make a deep impact in the lives of the youth whom you are privileged to influence for eternity. ✐

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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 professional 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.

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