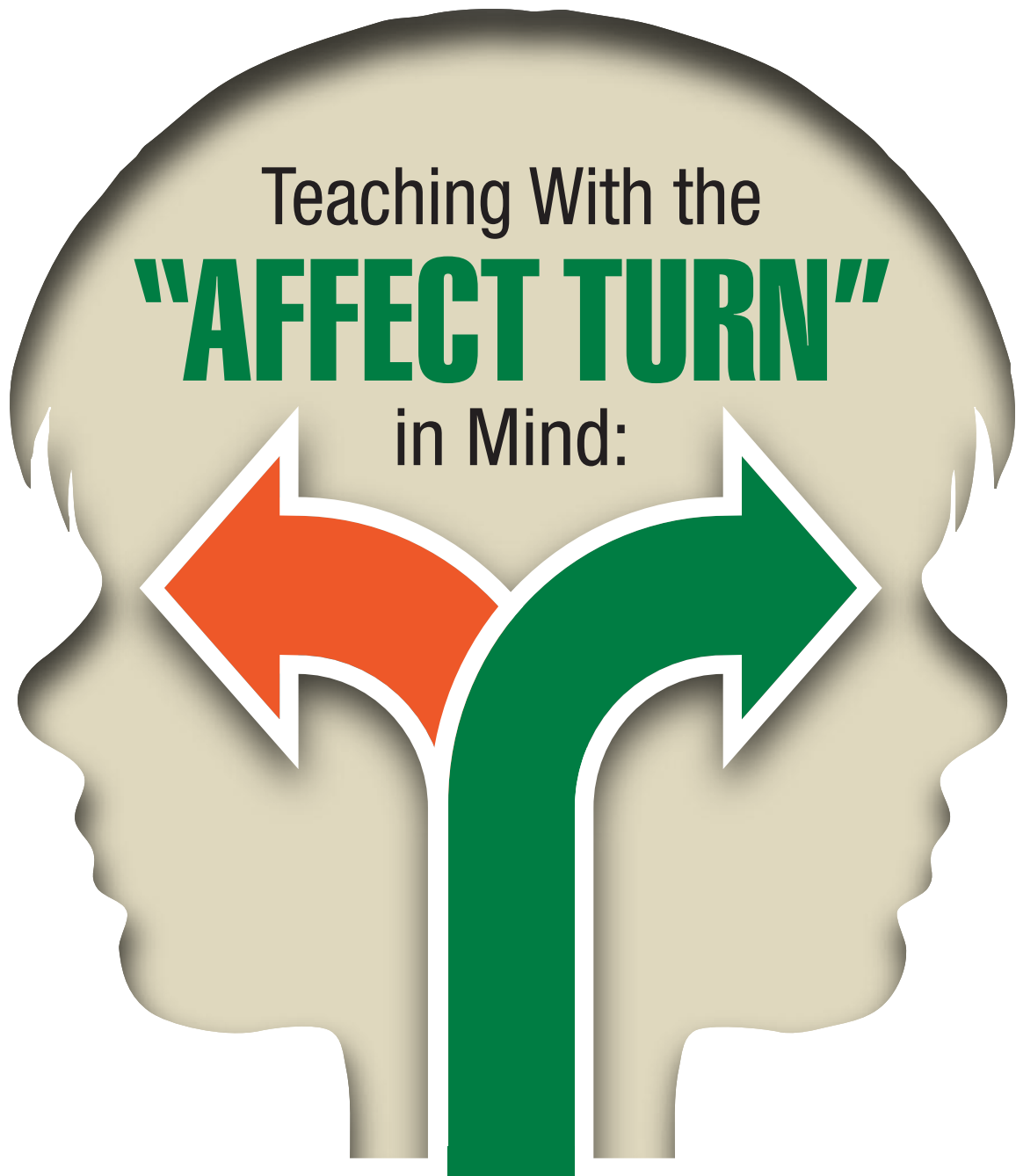


# ADVENTIST EDUCATION

Teaching With the  
**"AFFECT TURN"**  
in Mind:



Connecting Theory With Practice



12



23



30

VOLUME 84, NUMBER 4, 2022

- 3 Editorial: “Do You Know the Shepherd’s Voice?”**  
By Faith-Ann A. McGarrell
- 4 Teaching With the “Affect Turn” in Mind: Connecting Theory With Practice**  
By Patricia Schmidt Costa
- 12 Color in the Elementary School Classroom: Educating Children About Race**  
By George Ashley and Cameile Henry
- 23 Perspectives: A Call to Nurture Resilient Faith in Adventist Education**  
By Shawna Vyhmeister
- 30 Best Practices at Work: The Pedagogy of Jesus: Lessons for Teaching in Luke 24:13-43**  
By André Vasconcelos
- 34 Book Review: *The Morning After The Night Before: Recollections of My Journey, A St. Joseph Son***  
By Petra Pierre-Robertson
- 36 Resource: How to Afford an Adventist Education: Opportunities in Literature Evangelism**  
By Almir Marroni

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Faith-Ann A. McGarrell



**M**y heart still plummets to my stomach when I remember her cry, “But Miss McGarrell, I listened to your voice!” Her words, filled with incredulity and disappointment, cut like a knife and stung. All I could do was apologize and remind her that “This was just a simulation.”

Each year, students at the school where I taught were invited to participate with 70 other high school students in a region-wide leadership retreat for student leaders. The retreat took place at a remote encampment, far away from the bustling city. The presentations and activities that weekend focused not only on the voices that lead but challenged the attendees to pay attention to the voices they followed. In one afternoon session, the program planners launched a simulation to illustrate the theme. Students were divided into groups, blindfolded, and told to follow the instructions of their assigned group leader; the leader would guide them to a site designated as their “eternal home,” representing eternal life. They were warned that although they might hear other voices, they should follow the voice of their leader since the other voices would be intent on leading them elsewhere—to “eternal death.” Those assigned as group leaders were instructed to use verbal cues or physical ones, if necessary, to ensure that their flock made it from the main meeting lodge to the other side of the encampment.

The remaining adult chaperones and sponsors were given the task of being other voices—those that produced a counter message from the one being broadcast by the designated leaders. The adults were given the freedom to use any means necessary to distract. The simulation’s initial launch was chaotic—many voices clamoring for attention and blindfolded participants unsure of whether to turn right or left. However, soon, out of the chaos arose a loosely ordered group of individuals leaving the lodge. As freezing rain drizzled from the gray October sky and the cold, crisp wind penetrated every layer of clothing, several colleagues and I determined that we would not walk the three-mile-long trail trying to distract the participants and inveigle them to follow

## “Do You Know the Shepherd’s Voice?”

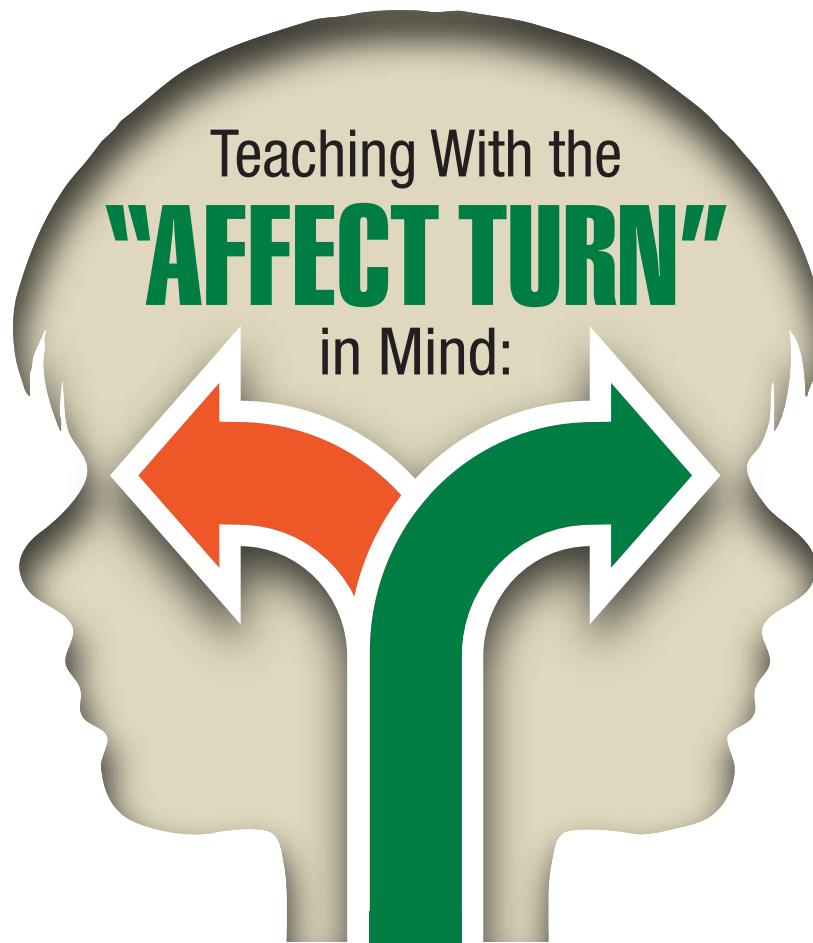
our voices. So, we colluded with one of the bus drivers to start one of the vehicles and get the heat going. We then proceeded to cajole, in soothing tones, several of the participants to join us on the bus. “There’s no need to walk in the cold”; “Come with us; the bus is warm!” and “Join us! We’re going where you’re going.” Several resisted,

chased us away, or told us to go tempt someone else. However, 25 listened, and we carted them off to the encampment site designated as eternal death.

As our band of captives sat in the bus, singing, chatting, and enjoying the warmth, the gravity of what we had accomplished began to weigh heavily on me—and also on my colleagues. We knew it was a simulation. We knew that this was not real. Yet, we knew that our students, oblivious to where the vehicle was going, were on that bus because they recognized our voices, and they did not imagine that we would lead them astray. During the debriefing, there were many tears as both students and sponsors weighed the magnitude of our words, the power of our influence, and each individual’s personal responsibility to critique the voices that lead and those we follow.

My student’s cry remains a constant reminder for me even today as the assault on education, both public and private, continues to spiral, twist, and bend amidst the challenging societal climate. There are so many voices demanding attention, postulating what should be taught, how and when it should be taught, and to or by whom. The issues continue to escalate: from debates about access and funding education globally to critical race theory and “wokeness” in schools and politicians demanding curriculum revisions; from mental and physical health crises facing students and teachers, Pre-K through higher education, to an increase in war and environmental disasters that threaten to suspend schooling for millions, especially girls; and, from persistent gun violence in U.S. schools to the infiltration of hardcore drugs in appealing packages (e.g., candy-colored fentanyl-laced pills and fruit-flavored vaping pens). Add to this the ravages of a global pandemic—the impact of which is yet to be fully grasped—and educators face the seemingly

*Continued on page 40*



Teaching With the  
**"AFFECT TURN"**  
in Mind:

Connecting  
Theory  
With  
Practice

With an Intellectual Quotient (IQ) of 165, Theodore was a dream come true for every teacher. His inquisitive nature and academic achievements allowed him to skip two grades, enter Harvard University at age 16, and obtain a PhD in mathematics in his early 20s. However, this unique student, regarded by some as a genius, was also socially awkward and emotionally and professionally dysfunctional.<sup>1</sup> Although Theodore volunteered to be psychoanalyzed while a student at Cambridge, nobody suspected he would become a famous, menacing killer whose anonymous mail bombs would terrify large numbers of people for 17 years. According to his autobiography, Theodore Kaczynski, also known as the Unabomber, killed three people and harmed at least 12 others physi-

cally in a deluded attempt to set America on a path of freedom. Technology, he argued, was enslaving humans, and the bombs he created, shipped through the mail, and which detonated in the recipients' hands, were his way of conveying a message.<sup>2</sup>

Kaczynski's morbid acts cannot be justified. He acted in an attempt not to

purge his sorrow due to mental abuse, teasing, and social incompetence, but to enhance his troubled lifestyle.<sup>3</sup> In *True Education*, Ellen White wrote that: "There is in our nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, we cannot resist. To withstand this force . . . we can find help in but one power. That power is Christ."<sup>4</sup> Kaczynski's case reminds us that evil exists and can exercise a controlling power over individuals whose human emotional core is neglected. And, while neglect of the affect will not turn most individuals into serial killers or terrorists, attention to affect provides an opportunity to influence the choices students will make in their lives.

Yet, expectations of quality academics, hectic schedules, important teacher benchmarks, and planned lesson objectives can impede educators

BY PATRICIA SCHMIDT COSTA

from giving adequate attention to the “affect turn” (see Box 1) in education. Understanding affect is fundamental to helping learners understand why they have certain feelings,<sup>5</sup> and is essential in today’s classroom. Theodore Kaczynski attended school when discussions about the impact of affect and emotions were few. According to Freire, unemotional students may develop destructive behaviors and end up making threats to harm themselves or their peers. He stated, “What is important in teaching is not the mechanical repetition . . . but comprehension of the value of sentiments, emotions, and desires.”<sup>6</sup> Said another way, true education involves the appropriate development of the mental, physical, and emotional influences of a person, but above all, helps students grow in spiritual strength.<sup>7</sup> Focusing on student and teacher emotions reduces tension and helps students to become empathetic, caring adults.<sup>8</sup> Teachers can benefit from understanding and learning how to apply the latest research on the affect turn in education.<sup>9</sup>

### The Affect Theory

“Affect” is an involuntary physical reaction or response of the body to a stimulus.<sup>10</sup> Affects are links between the body and the brain that begin when the brain senses a situation that demands an emotional response.<sup>11</sup> According to Frank and Wilson,<sup>12</sup> Silvan Tomkins, the famed psychologist and personality theorist, suggested three types of affect: positive, neutral, and negative. Each of these processes occurs automatically below the level of consciousness.<sup>13</sup> Tomkins’ research led him to identify two positive affects that humans have: enjoyment-joy and interest-excitement. In the area of negative affect he identified fear-terror, distress-anguish, anger-rage, shame-humiliation, disgust, and dissmell (a reaction to an unpleasant odor), as resulting from incidents with an undesirable association. According to Tomkins, there is only one neutral affect, surprise-startle, which describes the state of instant readiness to respond.<sup>14</sup>

A total of nine universal facial expressions correspond to the various af-

fects. These common facial expressions are present in babies from birth. For example, when experiencing enjoyment-excitement, humans universally use a smile, which is characterized by the edges of lips turning upward. Gazing eyes and listening ears represent the interest-excitement affect. In contrast, fear-terror produces uplifted eyebrows and wide, shocked eyes. A negative affect, distress-anguish, is manifested with crying, a red face, and closed eyes. If distress-anguish is not appeased, babies, and even adults, turn to anger-rage, which is linked to a demanding facial expression. When shame-humiliation moves a person, the muscles of the neck soften, and the head tends to lower forward. Sometimes the person covers his or her face in an automatic hiding response. The facial expression related to disgust is a nauseated expression, commonly including closed eyes and the tongue sticking out of the mouth. This affect takes place regarding a taste, noise, or a disturbing visual. Dis-smell is a peculiar non-verbal expression that involves pulling away from an unpleasant and visible or invisible object with an unpleasant odor.

The surprise-startle affect is consid-

ered a neutral affect.<sup>15</sup> Ostrofsky explained that the visible signs of the surprise-startle affect involve “opening the eyes to get a good look, and snatching a quick breath in preparation for action as needed.”<sup>16</sup> A surprise-startle affect is a very brief, automatic manner of communicating positive or negative feelings, and thus is appropriately considered a neutral affect. Affects are the product of stimuli; they also amplify stimuli. It is important for educators to understand that these reactions are involuntary, natural responses that occur in every social interaction and all aspects of life, including educational settings.

Both educators and learners engage with the educational curriculum. But their bodies and minds demand more than a textbook, an academic objective, a benchmark, or standardized tests. Deeply complex psychological, social, and political challenges and issues are exposed in every class, every day.<sup>17</sup> Affect is a challenging subject because this phenomenon is concurrently biological (physical), neural, subjective, historical, social, and personal.<sup>18</sup>

Scholars such as Zembylas and Leys<sup>19</sup> consider the terms *affect*, *emo-*

## What Are “Affect” and “Affect Turn”?

By definition, the word *affect* refers to feelings, emotions, and attitudes held by an individual.\* The “turn to affect” in education pedagogy is an approach that encompasses the social, cultural, political, and psychological factors that impact and trigger the social and emotional beings of learners—both the teacher and the students, encompassing feelings, emotions, and attitudes. Affect studies, which rose to prominence in the mid-1990s and evolved into what is now called “social and emotional learning,” seek to delve into “how teachers and students are moved, what inspires and pains them, how feelings and memories play into teaching and learning.”† Adventist education, using a wholistic approach, promotes developing the physical, mental, and spiritual facets of each learner. Developing the mind involves academics as well as affect. The turn to affect in education is part of teaching and learning wholistically.

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tions, and feelings to be synonymous and interchangeable. Damasio suggested that it is a difficult task to choose a single term to describe emotions or the “drives and motivations and as states of pain and pleasure”<sup>20</sup> that trigger what he classified as background, primary, and secondary emotions. In education, the concepts of affect, feelings, or emotions can be used in varying ways. Consequently, it is essential to recognize the beliefs about affect, and apply them when seeking to mend the breach of communication between educators and learners in today’s classrooms.

### The Affect Turn in Education

Multiple disciplines use affect to effectively influence people and their emotions. This influence could be positive and uplifting or negative and manipulative. Teachers and students must learn to recognize when and how affect is being used to influence decisions and choices. The entertainment business, for example, induces audiences to feel emotions through music, speech, and body movement. Filmmakers create scenes of sadness, pain, happiness, surprise, disgust to produce responses producers wish to generate. Actors not only internalize words of a script but also must find ways to express those words in believable, expressive ways using voice, hands, and facial expressions to stimulate and elicit desired responses.<sup>21</sup> Politicians use affect theory to create electoral campaigns. Expert writers and speakers prepare emotionally packed discourses using powerful words that sway the minds of listeners. Emotions are external responses to internal *and* external experiences. This means that affects trigger the body to respond in many ways such as with tears, laughter, surprise, or anger.

Massumi<sup>22</sup> believed that affect should yield a change in how students are socialized in the classroom, and this is what schools and education must attend to in the teaching and learning cycle. Certainly, how teachers

use affect can bring about change. Educators teach using words, and many times these are not entirely concrete. Words build ideas that help to shape and create the learners’ identities. Sometimes the way the words are expressed limits the possibilities of subjective and abstract thinking. Children repeat what they hear in school, at home, and on television. They repeat what affects them. At the same time, the words repeated are attached to their individual experiences. The body and mind are stimulated to

**It is because of the power of emotions that the study of affect has become the object of scholarly inquiry. Educators are “bringing together theories of subjectivity and subjection, theories of the body and embodiment, and political theories and critical analysis of affect and emotion.”**

create a reality—and they simultaneously use that reality to try to influence others.

It is because of the power of emotions that the study of affect has become the object of scholarly inquiry. Educators are “bringing together theories of subjectivity and subjection, theories of the body and embodiment, and political theories and critical analysis of affect and emotion.”<sup>23</sup> Educators are being trained to use less of what Freire called “a dominating standard discourse”<sup>24</sup> and more critical-thinking skills. This form of instruc-

tion uses feelings, ideas, and character-building skills. The affect turn in education links the emotional part of learners with societal, psychological, and the cultural aspects of learners.

The affect turn in education also addresses the relationship between emotions and what happens in teacher education. Scholars such as Gilles Deleuze, Baruch Spinoza, Lisa Blackman, and Brian Massumi suggest affect turn is more than just inserting emotion into pedagogy. Learning is a lasting modification of behavior that happens through moving experiences. An ongoing type of positive, neutral, or negative affect can shape the learner’s academic performance in positive or negative ways. In schools, educators have the power to use affect theory to address students’ emotions and influence minds with reason and passion. Care must be taken to ensure that this influence is used positively and not in a manipulative way. This approach also impacts educators because affects belong simultaneously to both sides of the relationship—teachers are both the learners and teachers.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout my long career as an elementary school teacher, I have been deeply moved by numerous, if not all, of my students. Some of these memories are narrated below because they include turning to affect to yield behavior modification, improve academic performance, address hyperactivity and attention span issues, and integrate technology. I share these to connect the affect theory with the practice of turning to affect in education.

### Make Accommodations to Facilitate Behavior Modification

Affect influences how a person encounters the world and its happy and sad realities.<sup>26</sup> Relationships are influenced by affect and the accumulation of emotional experiences by each person in the relationship. My student, Manuel,<sup>27</sup> constantly begged for attention in class. The youngest in his family, he had the attention of his parents, older siblings, and grandparents.



They enjoyed his humorous antics, admired his interjections, and praised his talent as a comedian. At school, however, interrupting, joking, and distracting class constantly produced negative affects (responses) in me, his teacher. Nevertheless, I kept my feelings in check to try to produce positive affects in Manuel. It took a while for educator and learner (and we both were a little of each) to connect with and conform to each other. Whether it involved small rewards, praise, or making Manuel the main character for a play, affective interactions that were continually revised took place throughout the academic year. As Wetherell observed, “cycles of affective practice might persist for a short period or they may last and be reworked.”<sup>28</sup> Affective practices are interconnecting and can form patterns that will finally produce habits of

mind.<sup>29</sup> The science behind the emotional process in humans is explained by Damasio in the following paragraph:

“Punishment causes organisms to close themselves in, freezing and withdrawing from their surroundings. Reward causes organism to open themselves up and out toward their environment. Approaching it, searching it, and by so doing increasing both their opportunity of survival and their vulnerability.”<sup>30</sup>

Manuel and I recently connected through social media. In a public post, my now adult and former student expressed that he considered me as his favorite teacher. Although not every intervention produces successful re-

sults, I am convinced that in order to teach effectively, there must be an emotional connection—a nurturing work<sup>31</sup>—between educator and learner: “Affect is about sense as well as sensibility. It is practical, communicative, and organized.”<sup>32</sup> More than a century ago, James<sup>33</sup> concluded that educators must motivate and orient students while identifying their aptitudes in order to elevate their self-concept. Self-concept is how people feel about themselves, and it possible for educators to prevent students from feeling personal shame for being themselves.

### **Acknowledge the Impact of Affect on Academic Performance**

When I began teaching more than 30 years ago, I thought I could change the world. I aspired to move my stu-

dents to feel great about the positive mental and social characteristics they embodied. As Clough et al. put it, I was a body in motion with “more passion for living than you ever experienced.”<sup>34</sup> As a novice teacher, I made many unpopular choices in order to help students I knew were negatively affected. I let my nervous system “react in particular ways upon the contact of particular features of [my classroom] environment.”<sup>35</sup> I mostly walked away from the experience with positive results, although I was not always successful in my attempts to help.

I recall how one student, Diana, began rocking back and forth in a monotonous way during instruction. It was disturbing because her academic experiences were being jeopardized by this behavior. She refused to engage in learning. After unsuccessfully attempting a variety of approaches, finally, one day I held her on my lap—despite the fact that this is frowned on for teachers to do nowadays. This approach helped her relax and feel comfortable narrating heart-wrenching details about her father’s infidelity and subsequent departure from the home.

Diana’s family faced several relational and financial struggles. One such challenge had to do with finding the funds to purchase a dress for her to wear to a school program. I was not able to change her family situation, but I could try to change her sense of self-image and pride. Most of the female students in the classroom were bragging about their new outfits; however, Diana did not have one, which affected her sense of self-worth. Affect theorists point out that interpersonal comparisons can have a significant effect on people’s emotional well-being: “Affect is . . . an energy that can be whipped up or dampened in the course of interaction.”<sup>36</sup>

At the end of a school day, during dismissal, I held an envelope in my hand and asked for donations. This

was done without others knowing that it was to help Diana purchase a new dress. I called Diana’s mother to let her know I would be taking her to purchase a dress, which was bought, miraculously, with the exact amount of money collected. Diana was elated after the experience. The pendulum-like rocking motions ceased, and her academic performance thrived. The problems at home continued, but she knew that she was cared for at school; therefore, her learning im-

**Every student is unique. I do not believe educators should break the rules, as I did at the beginning of my educational practice, to help students’ affects. However, I do believe that every educator should be mindful of the classroom atmosphere.**

proved. Diana held her chin up high at the school program in her beautiful navy nautical-style dress, and as her teacher, I did, too.

Every student is unique. I do not believe educators should break the rules, as I did at the beginning of my educational practice, to help students’ affects. However, I do believe that every educator should be mindful of the classroom atmosphere. Learner-centered inclusive classrooms are part of the affect turn in education. Accomplishing this requires every educator to engage in daily self-reflection and self-monitoring to stimulate positive affective re-

actions and discern what students are trying to say with or without words in the classroom.<sup>37</sup>

### **Apply a Variety of Strategies and Interventions**

Leys and others<sup>38</sup> posit that emotion and cognition are linked. Troubled emotions, therefore, lead to problems with reasoning and understanding in school. To avoid academic failure for students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), who also exhibit disorderly attitudes because of a history of family, cultural, social, or other kinds of trauma, the most common solution seems to be medication.<sup>39</sup>

When I met Levi, he was an enigmatic, clever, yet impulsive student in one of my 4th-grade classes. However, from the first day, I could tell there was a story behind the rumors of him having ADHD. Rumors about a student’s behavioral issues, according to Anderson, Gregg, and Seigworth<sup>40</sup> can increase anxiety and lead to disillusionment in children, teachers, and school personnel. That is exactly how I perceived Levi’s emotional state: apprehensive and disappointed.

A month into the school year, I learned more about Levi. At this point in his life, he took two prescribed stimulant pills. A third drug tackled his anxiety, irrational thinking, and nightmares. The medication calmed his demeanor in class, and he appeared focused on learning. However, in addition to his emotional state, Levi struggled with his weight and craved unhealthy processed foods.

As a result of the classroom environment, Levi began to believe that he was valued, and soon changes were made to reduce his medication to one pill in the morning on school days. Slowly, as he and his parents learned more about healthful eating, he responded to what he was learning and ate more fruits, vegetables, and legumes as part of his daily diet. Furthermore, I spent quality time with him after school, engaging in home-



work activities and involving him in sports. As part of a structured schedule, he participated in Bible readings and prayer nightly. The results were significant. Not only did Levi's attitude toward life change, but he also made academic improvements, lost weight, and positively affected my life as his teacher.

The turn-to-affect theory comes with an associated risk. The management of medicated bodies is challeng-

ing since parents and educators do not always have the tools to navigate the situation.<sup>41</sup> Fortunately, Levi's doctor was pleased with the results of what less medication, a healthier diet, a structured environment, and more emotional support did for him. As time passed, I too, experienced positive affects as I observed Levi transform into a much healthier, confident, and emotionally balanced child.

## Using Technology to Enhance Affect Turn in Education

Teaching styles are emotionally distinctive and are a significant part of a learner's past experiences. Educators who deliberately modify their teaching styles to accommodate unique students will reap the benefits. Affective practice focuses on emotions as they appear in the lives and actions of learners and helps them to find their voice.<sup>42</sup> "Voice" generally refers to the audible way of communicating but can also be expressed in written form. Using words, educators attempt to understand the feelings students bring into the classroom. But, when students are nonverbal and unable to use pencils or pens to write clearly, it is difficult to understand their emotions and their affects.

Zack was a nonverbal, noncommunicative student whom I was only able to reach by modifying my teaching style. A classroom blog was created to help Zack communicate affectively and effectively. Through his posts, he expressed positive attitudes about science, language arts, and social studies topics. Blackman<sup>43</sup> explained that voices have potential to open up the affect in learners and shape them through personal history.

Some scholars focus on how a positive mood helps to induce thinking that involves greater creativity and flexibility during problem-solving. Proverbs 17:22 says "A merry heart is good medicine" (NIV).<sup>44</sup> Zack was able to master skills such as learning the states and capitals of the United States, rules for capitalization, and the layers of the atmosphere. Not only did he master a variety of skills, but he was also able to reflect on the activities, thereby displaying emotions. "I like the blogging, teacher. It's cool," he wrote in his first post. A connection was made. I interpreted Zack's positive comment as his ultimate desire: "I know desire. I know desire. I too want freedom. I feel its push inside of me, pushing out up my throat, pushing pulsing. I want. Relief."<sup>45</sup> For Zack, the physical-digital combination in the blog expanded his range of knowledge. The technology experience in this affect-supported

## Additional Readings

Affect pedagogies are conceptual but can be adapted to the needs of students in the classroom. There are very few resources that explicitly demonstrate how to use affect theory in the classroom. However, as educational researchers explore the growth of this trend, more will become available. For this reason, it is vital for Adventist educators to be aware of the trend and its philosophical underpinnings and find ways to adapt resources appropriately.

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### Resource

Affect Academics: <https://www.affectacademics.com/> is a website created by Christina Post, a math and science teacher. Using the Universal Design for Learning curriculum design, she has created an affect-based method for teaching math, reading, and executive skills.

teaching style enabled him to make the abstract concrete.<sup>46</sup> It gave Zack feelings of openness to experience freedom in his academic journey.

### Teachers and the Affect Turn in Education

Reciprocal learning between educator and learner leads to enhanced value and insight for both. The affect turn in education is a two-way transaction that involves, according to Freire, “dreams, utopias, ideas.”<sup>47</sup> Concurring with Picard et al.,<sup>48</sup> numerous studies link interpersonal relationships between educators and learners to productive learning. Effective strategies that support healthy relationships and productive learning include utilizing student profile forms at the beginning of the school term, which provide educators with valuable information about each student. Creating a welcoming environment, affirming diversity, and taking time to make every student feel valuable play important roles in students’ social-emotional development, as well as in their academic achievement.<sup>49</sup>

Teachers who struggle with the affective nature of teaching could benefit from contemplating the example of the teacher par excellence, Jesus Christ, whom “was a close observer, noticing many things that others passed by. He was ever helpful, ever ready to speak words of hope and sympathy to the discouraged and the bereaved.”<sup>50</sup> Jesus showed by example that “the true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul.”<sup>51</sup> Teachers who focus on observing, noticing, helping, and restoring students understand that in “doing what God wants. . .” (Matthew 6:33, ICB),<sup>52</sup> all the other things (academics, standards and benchmarks, achievement in testing) will be *achieved* by each student.

Educators also benefit from living according to what King Solomon wrote thousands of years ago, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23, NIV). Guarding the heart against

**It is a complex interaction between educator and learner on a personal level, and for the Adventist educator, a collaboration with the divine. Affect can modify behaviors, improve academic endeavors, help young people with a wide range of behavioral and emotional issues, and allow students to find their voice in the academic realm.**

the negative affects in teaching and learning, such as sadness and anger, is important to not only avoid feeling overwhelmed but also to learn how to appropriately handle these emotions. The distressing stories learners bring into the classroom continue to affect the hearts of educators no matter how long they teach, yet experience helps them cope with the pain.

### Conclusion

The personal stories in this article were shared to exemplify how the turn to affect in education is important in order to value the feelings, emotions, and dreams of learners. True education includes taking social and emotional learning into consideration to not only have caring children in and outside of classrooms but also future compassionate adults. Our natural, human tendency toward evil is exemplified in Theodore Kaczynski, and the only antidote for that is God’s character restored in the human heart.

The Adventist philosophy of education states: “Education in its broadest sense is a means of restoring human beings to their original relationship with God.”<sup>53</sup>

The turn to affect does not occur because of more professional development or acquiring the latest teaching gadget. It is a complex interaction between educator and learner on a personal level, and for the Adventist educator, a collaboration with the divine. Affect can modify behaviors, improve academic endeavors, help young people with a wide range of behavioral and emotional issues, and allow students to find their voice in the academic realm. Educators must remember that knowledge must be shared with a critical mind but also with feelings, intuition, emotions, and self-reflection.<sup>54</sup> Then, they will be able to effectively implement the affect turn in education. ✍

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*This article has been peer reviewed.*

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# Color in the Elementary School Classroom: Educating Children About Race

The COVID-19 pandemic was a major shock to our modern world, reframing the way societies operate worldwide. Another major event that recently shook our world was the impact of George Floyd's death. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black American, was arrested by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for allegedly attempting to purchase cigarettes at a convenience store with a counterfeit \$20 bill. Due to illegal forceful actions by a White police officer, with the assistance of three supporting officers, what might have been a routine lawful arrest turned into a fatal tragedy, resulting in George Floyd losing his life. This incident, which was publicly witnessed and filmed by an eyewitness, was quickly shared with the public via social media and instantly became one of the world's most-viewed videos of its time. This video depicting the horrific murder of George Floyd while in the custody of White police officers sparked an unprecedented mobilization of global protests against racial discrimination. Easy global access to mainstream and social media allowed a large portion of the world, which included

children, to witness George Floyd's death.

Children are not blind to or immune from the impact of major social events that take place within our world community. The graphic images of George Floyd's death sparked a universal conversation on racism, a discussion that made its way into many public and private schools, creating a pivotal enlightenment platform for children to better comprehend issues relating to race and racism. But do Seventh-day Adventist educators have a responsibility for addressing race-related social topics within the classroom, which include issues such as people of color<sup>1</sup> in the United States having significantly higher rates and likelihood of the following:

1. Being targeted by police;
2. Higher COVID-19 death rates and higher rates of disease and death from multiple health-related causes<sup>2</sup>;
3. Living in communities with unregulated toxic waste (environmental justice);
4. Significantly higher denial rates for mortgages (economic injustice).<sup>3</sup>

If the answer is yes, then how should these racial inequities be discussed within our schools?

## Racial Challenges

*Race, ethnicity, and culture* are topics that are often intertwined; *ethnicity* and *culture* are tied to a person's environment (e.g., nationality, religion, traditions), while *race* refers to the social definition of human beings based on physical characteristics such as skin color.<sup>4</sup> Prejudice against others based on race, ethnicity, tribal identity, religion, and many other factors occurs in all parts of the world. From the remnants of apartheid in South Africa to ethnic tensions in Europe, hostilities between the Han and Uyghurs in China, the Arabs and the Kurds in Iraq, or the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, to name a few, racial and ethnic challenges persist, and children are watching and affected.

To obtain a glimpse into the current thoughts and feelings of Adventist elementary educators on the topic of race in Adventist elementary schools, qualitative interviews were conducted using the convenience sampling method to interview a small group of selected K-5 Adventist educators from Canada and the United States (see "Notes and References" for further description of the sample group).<sup>5</sup> Although this is a

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limited North American perspective when compared to the global Adventist Church, it does provide some insight into children's feelings on race within the church's school system and their views concerning current racial challenges that Adventist teachers in North America and other locations may experience within the classroom. The following are some examples that were shared.

One kindergarten teacher said that no human living today knows exactly what Jesus looked like, yet the picture commonly perpetuated depicts Jesus as pale-skinned with long hair.<sup>6</sup> This teacher intentionally placed different racial depictions of Jesus in her classroom at the beginning of each school year. One day, while sharing a story about Jesus during storytelling time, the teacher pointed to a picture in which Jesus was depicted with brown skin. A student remarked, "That's not Jesus; Jesus's face is not brown!"

Another teacher shared an interesting observation that came from a 7-year-old dark-skinned Black student in her class at a predominantly White Adventist school. During art class, students were asked to draw a picture of themselves using the colored pencils and crayons provided for them. This student used a pencil crayon called "Flesh Tone," a pale-rose-colored crayon designed to resemble the Caucasian White flesh tone color. When the teacher asked him why he chose this color, he innocently stated that the pencil crayon said, "Flesh Tone."

Another example of challenges Adventist elementary school teachers are facing, which is supported by scholarly research, is the limited racial and social learning opportunities afforded children, especially young children who have spent very little time in school because of the pandemic. COVID-19 has negatively affected the social development of children due to the social policies governing countries around the globe, which required maintaining physical and social distancing, which prevented natural social interaction that would usually occur among people.<sup>7</sup> Children born shortly before and during this

period of global uncertainty have had fewer opportunities to socialize with people from different racial groups due to their limited contact with people outside of their direct families (e.g., at parks, grocery stores, and in the general community). As a result, for some children entering school—many of whom were quarantined at home and restricted from socializing with others, there has been an increase in separation anxiety and fear now at being exposed to racial characteristics of people that they may not have

**Even before entering our [Seventh-day Adventist] schools, some of our children may already have a pre-conceived, negative picture of other racial groups due to the heavy influence of mainstream and social media, which may support their implicit or explicit bias.**

previously encountered face to face.<sup>8</sup>

These are just three examples of race-related issues faced by elementary teachers in Adventist schools and the need for teachers to help their students learn how to appropriately understand race and/or systemic racial biases that exist within society.

Still not sure if Adventist educators have a responsibility for addressing race-related social issues within the elementary classroom? The next section of the article provides additional insights concerning why the interviewed participants believe that race education is the responsibility of classroom teachers.<sup>9</sup>

## The Media

One senior Seventh-day Adventist elementary educator participant expressed the strong belief that negative racial stereotyping can occur within some of our Adventist schools. This educator contends that "even before entering our [Seventh-day Adventist] schools, some of our children may already have a pre-conceived, negative picture of other racial groups due to the heavy influence of mainstream and social media, which may support their implicit or explicit bias."<sup>10</sup> Research reveals the prevalence of systemic racial bias and stereotyping by the media (e.g., people of color being less likely to be portrayed in positive roles such as elected officials, doctors, lawyers, etc.) and more likely to be portrayed in negative roles (e.g., being criminally active, violent, and dangerous) when compared to their Caucasian counterparts, which creates a societal racial hierarchy.<sup>11</sup>

## Limited Opportunities for Racial Interaction

An Adventist elementary school administrator who was interviewed noted that the racial makeup within his Adventist school system has dramatically changed over the past 10 to 15 years. When asked what he felt was at the heart of this change, he stated that, "most SDA [Seventh-day Adventist, hereafter Adventist] parents in this region would not discuss this publicly, however, many [Adventist] parents from the majority racial group do not want their children interacting with children from minority racial groups." When asked why he felt this way, he stated, ". . . because of their own fears often created by limited interaction with other racial groups, and the negative projection of these groups by the media, which can create fear and apprehension of certain racial groups. Unfortunately, some parents believe that certain racial groups will negatively influence their children attending our [Adventist] schools and move them to schools they deem more appropriate for their children. As a result, many of our schools become

racial silos, thwarting the natural opportunity for our [Adventist] children to interact and learn from other racial and ethnic groups. These silos decrease student opportunities to develop lifelong [Adventist] multi-racial friendships that could make great strides towards anti-racism, equity, inclusion, and diversity, positively influencing the future direction of our schools and church.”

### Uncertainty of Responsibility for Educating Children on Race

Another theme cited by educators was uncertainty regarding who is responsible for discussing this content with children. This uncertainty may create a void in structuring a cohesive learning experience within our school system. One teacher noted that some teachers simply do not want to offend anyone by discussing this topic or feel unprepared to engage in anti-racist education activities with children.

Teachers should not feel reluctant to address the topic of race, as the elementary classroom is the forum through which important societal values are shared and discussed, impacting the affective domain of children, where these values are internalized.<sup>12</sup>

### The Development of Racial Awareness Among Children

Research suggests that children are aware of racial differences as early as infancy<sup>13</sup> and that children as young as 2 years old use racial categories to reason about individual behaviors.<sup>14</sup> Further, children 3 to 5 years old not only categorize people by race but also:

1. Develop racial biases;
2. Use racial categories to identify themselves and others to include or exclude children from activities;
3. Negotiate power in their own social/play networks based on race.<sup>15</sup>

These studies reveal that children enter school with preconceived ideas and their own random interpretations about race. Ideally, the classroom should be the place to reinforce positive racial awareness concepts that children have learned at home. Educators’ reluctance to talk to children about race/racial identity/

racism or being “colorblind” will leave a void in their inquisitive minds about a subject matter of which they are likely *well aware*.<sup>16</sup> Christian educators, then, must be prepared to help children learn to interact positively with one another as they learn about people’s differences and similarities.

### Elementary Education and Race Education Responsibility

We are living in a time of tremendous social upheaval, a time when racial justice awareness has become a glaring global issue. This is an opportunity for elementary educators in Adventist schools to acknowledge this challenge and accept the responsibility of enlightening their students about the beauty of racial diversity. God created the diversity of human color, and the children in our classes will all, at some point, interact with people from different racial backgrounds. Are we neglecting an integral part of the purpose of each child’s educational experience if we choose to ignore this instructive responsibility? Each child brings his or her own unique racial, ethnic, and cultural story to the classroom, which, when shared, can enhance students’ appreciation of the richness of human racial

diversity and prepare them to engage in the world as unbiased, independent thinkers. After all, how can children obey the commandment “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:14, NIV)<sup>17</sup> if they do not understand and appreciate neighbors who may look and speak differently?

Over the past 70 years, global migration has significantly increased the racial and ethnic diversity within elementary classrooms, especially in North America and Europe.<sup>18</sup> It is our responsibility as teachers to be prepared to welcome and accommodate new racial groups of students who enter our classrooms.

Children who experience racism within our schools and churches or in society are affected by its detrimental long-term effects on their health and well-being.<sup>19</sup> Thus, it is important for Adventist educators to make space within their curriculum to integrate anti-racist principles that will enable *all* children to feel valued, accepted, and connected to teachers and classmates within the classroom environment.

### How to Address the Topic of Race in the Classroom Setting

One scholar noted that some teachers’ reluctance to include issues



relating to race within the general classroom learning experience do not stem from their aversion to this content, but rather that they have simply not been trained in how to effectively impart this knowledge. As a result, they remain quiet on this issue, which allows racism to perpetuate.<sup>20</sup>

How can Christian educators at the elementary level bridge the gap of unfamiliarity and discomfort concerning the topic of race? What are some tools that Christian educators can use to discuss race and anti-racism with younger children? The following discourse represents avenues that educators can infuse in their own professional growth to effectively structure the classroom environment to impactfully include the topic of race.

### **1. Accepting One's Own Discomfort**

As Christian educators, one of the things we naturally want to do in a classroom setting is to avoid discomfort, distress, or issues that may make us feel uncomfortable—in other words, “play it safe.” However, we must get comfortable with being uncomfortable about addressing this topic in the classroom. Many societies avoid discussions about racial issues because they make people feel uneasy; however, having difficult conversations and moving through the discomfort is the only way to achieve meaningful change. Engagement in this topic will provide students with early foundational principles and tools to navigate their own beliefs and prepare them to respond appropriately when they are faced with these topics in the future.

Children identify with their race as part of their identity, just as they would their gender, ethnicity, or religious affiliation. The classroom space should be a safe place to communicate with children about such topics. It is important that our students see our genuine thoughts and emotions about racial issues within the classroom environment. Only then can they feel authentic in the experience with their teachers and school staff.

#### *Moving Beyond Multiculturalism*

Some K-8 teachers may feel that

incorporating multiculturalism (educational equity through the recognition and celebration of all ethnic and cultural groups) into the classroom is the best way to address race. However, the idea of viewing all students solely through a multiculturalism lens does not adequately address racial power hierarchy, and colorism/shadeism (prejudice based upon an individual's skin tone, usually with lighter tones being viewed as preferred within racial groups) diff-

There are two challenges that we would like to highlight for Adventist educators in addressing race in the classroom. The first is *ensuring racial equity within our classrooms...* Second is *actually discussing the topic in a manner that brings about greater understanding and appreciation.*

ferences because multiculturalism does not address the racial bias, disparity, multiracial identities, and the overall impact of racism that children need to know when learning about race.<sup>21</sup>

### **2. Recognize That God Created a World Full of Differences**

As we reflect on the biological world that God created, one thing is quite clear: God must value differences. Our Creator made differences within the same species of plants and animals throughout the natural world.

Most teachers are quite comfortable discussing diversity in plants and animals but may feel reluctant to talk about racial diversity in the classroom or society. Children may already be experiencing the results of this reluctance by independently having to cope with the challenges of implicit and explicit racial bias within our schools (e.g., bullying) that may negatively affect their health and well-being.<sup>22</sup>

There are two challenges that we would like to highlight for Adventist educators in addressing race in the classroom. The first is *ensuring racial equity within our classrooms*, which means recognizing that some groups may enter our classrooms with deficits based on family socio-economic disparities.<sup>23</sup> Thus, equity for teachers means being able to teach children based on their specific needs and requirements. Second is *actually discussing the topic in a manner that brings about greater understanding and appreciation*. In essence, ensuring that parents and community members understand that these discussions are designed to help children build a positive relationship with their Creator, who values diversity, rather than to push a political agenda. This fits well with Ellen White's statement that “True teachers are not satisfied with second-rate work. They are not satisfied with directing their students to a standard lower than it is possible for them to reach. They cannot be content with imparting only technical knowledge. . . . It is their ambition to inspire students with principles that will make them a positive force for the stability and uplifting of society.”<sup>24</sup>

### **3. Partner With Parents**

Fathers and mothers play a dual role as parents and educators; they are the first role models and socializing agents, from whom children learn foundational values as well as cultural and societal norms. It is imperative that parents self-assess their own thoughts and beliefs and identify and correct any racially biased perspectives that could consciously or unconsciously influence their child's perspective on race. Avoiding racial stereo-



typing early in a child's development can help prevent prejudicial behaviors once children enter school.<sup>25</sup>

Teachers and educational administrators may need to engage in difficult conversations with parents regarding a racial incident that occurred with a student or a negative racial perspective that parents or other family members have instilled within a child. Do not shy away from the topic. Prayerfully seek God's wisdom on how to tactfully discuss the matter with parents before you begin the conversation. Suggestions to address these difficult conversations include the following:

#### A. Envision the Final Outcome

Know the outcome you want to achieve. Are you seeking action on a matter, support, or trying to help them understand a new perspective?

#### B. Start Your Journey

Help them understand why you view racial equity, acceptance, and inclusion as important.

#### C. Use Their Child's Perspective

Discuss how they would like their child to navigate the issue of race as a citizen of this world and the world to come.

#### D. Avoid Confrontation

People do not want to be told what to do, especially in regard to such a sensitive topic. Avoid language such as, "This is wrong"; rather, use language that will help parents see a new perspective. For example, "Have you ever considered how your child would feel if she were in this situation?"

#### E. Create and Share School Policies

Schools must have policies in place to help educators address these topics. Ways of crafting effective policies will be discussed in an upcoming article (see School Policy Resources). If, however, policies are already in place, share them with the parents along with standards and guidelines that the school expects students and families to follow. For example, creating a sense of belonging, well-being, and respect for equity, diversity, and

inclusion to which all constituents of the school community must adhere.

#### F. Summarize the Experience

Conclude by asking the parent(s) to summarize what they have learned from the discussion, and if there are things that they could do differently.

#### G. Offer Resources

Be prepared to provide helpful resources (i.e., video clips, articles, books) to assist them.

A recent scholarly study suggested that when young people engage in productive conversations about race at home and within the school setting, their own self-awareness becomes enhanced, and they are more open to embracing their own racial identities as well as those of others.<sup>26</sup> These venues provide the platform for children to analyze the impact of racial equity in their own communities, creating opportunities to increase

their level of compassion, empathy, and confidence in having meaningful discussions about race.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4. Help Children Understand Racial Bias and How to Appropriately Address It

Together, parents and teachers can help children frame how to appropriately address racial bias, so they will know how to negotiate this topic should it occur in their daily lives. This can consist of activities such as discussions, role plays, and video clips exposing them to various case scenarios that expand their understanding of racial bias. Teachers can also use real situations that occur within society to help students frame and understand how to respond to racism. (See Resources for Teachers on page 17 for an assortment of resources and activities that teachers can use within the classroom.)

*Continued on page 18*

### School Policy Resources

Schools must have policies in place to help educators as they work with students and their families on these topics. Implementation of effective policies can help create a sense of belonging, well-being, and respect for equity, diversity, and inclusion to which all constituents of the school community must adhere. Here are a few helpful resources:

#### Competent Crisis Response

This resource offers suggestions from The National Association of School Psychologists about what should be included in culturally competent crisis plans and preparations <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/diversity-and-social-justice/cultural-competence/culturally-competent-crisis-response>.

#### PACER, "Working With Culturally Diverse Families" (2023)

This website provides lists, guides, and tools for interacting and cultivating family engagement within multicultural families, immigrants, and families from specific regions of the world. <https://www.pacer.org/cultural-diversity/national-practice-guides.asp>.

The following resources provide checklists and a model of what should be included in school policies.

National Education Association, "School District Policies Against Discrimination Based on Race, Religion, and National Origin" (2018): 16-21: <https://neadjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NEA-Legal-Guidance-on-Students-Rights-2018.03.13.pdf>.

Maureen B. Costello et al., "A Guide for Administrators, Counselors and Teachers: Responding to Hate and Bias at School" *Teaching Tolerance* (2017): <https://teaching.pitt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/DIFD-2019-Responding-to-Hate-at-School.pdf>.



### General Children's Books That Include Characters of Different Racial Backgrounds (Available for purchase online)

Karen Auto, *I Can, Too!* (Toronto, Ont.: Scholastic Canada Ltd., 2022).

Keisha Cuffie, *D Is for Dazzling* (Halton, Ontario, Canada: Keisha Cuffie, 2022). ISBN 13: 9781778048906..

Diversity Books and Reading Materials <https://diversebooks.org/>

Melissa Ewers, *Belonging Is . . .* (Atlanta, Ga.: IG Design Group Americas, Inc., 2021).

Jerome Gay, Jr., *Talking to Your Children About Race: A Biblical Framework for Honest Conversations* (Greensboro, N.C.: New Growth Press, 2022).

Joanna Ho, *Eyes That Kiss in the Corners* (New York: Harper Collins Books, 2022).

Colin Kaepernick, *I Color Myself Different* (New York: Kaepernick Publishing, 2022).

Monique G. Smith, *My Heart Fills With Happiness* (Victoria, B.C.: Orca Book Publishers, 2018).

Bellen Woodard, *More Than Peach* (New York: Scholastic Inc., 2022).

### Online Reading Resources for K-5 Teachers (for purchase or free)

Seventh-day Adventist Official Position on Racism  
<https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/racism/>

10 Principles for Talking About Race in Schools  
<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engage-ment/tools-tips/10-principles-talking-about-race-school>

10 Tips on Talking to Kids About Race and Racism  
<https://www.pbs.org/education/blog/10-tips-on-talking-to-kids-about-race-and-racism>

Joe R. Feagin and Debra Van Ausdale, *The First R: How Children Learn Race and Racism* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001).

Terry Husbands, *But I Don't See Color: The Perils, Practices, and Possibilities of Anti-racist Education* (Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2016).

Ihoema U. Iruka et al., *Don't Look Away—Embracing Anti-Bias Classrooms* (Lewisville, N.C.: Gryphon House, Inc., 2020).

Kids' Health  
<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/talk-about-race.html>

L. Derman-Sparks, J. O. Edwards, and C. M. Goins, *Anti-bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves* (Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2010).

Talking to Kids About Race: Tips for Teachers and Other Educators

<https://www.chop.edu/health-resources/talking-kids-about-race-tips-teachers-and-other-educators>

The authors do not endorse any specific resource; this information is provided for general information. Readers should use their discretion to review and select resources that will be appropriate for their classroom.

### Teaching Activities That Can Be Used to Help Discuss Race With Children

"All About Me"  
<https://kidsactivitiesblog.com/192247/all-about-me-worksheet-ideas/>

Activities to Help Discuss Race With Children  
<https://www.chicagoparent.com/education/at-home-learning/activities-to-discuss-race-with-kids/>

Activities That Promote Racial and Cultural Awareness  
[https://www.pbs.org/kcts/preciouschildren/diversity/read\\_activities.html](https://www.pbs.org/kcts/preciouschildren/diversity/read_activities.html)

How to Talk to Children About Race  
<https://www.pbs.org/parents/talking-about-racism>

Learning Activities to Help Discuss Race With Children  
<https://www.chicagoparent.com/education/at-home-learning/activities-to-discuss-race-with-kids/>

Safe@School  
<https://www.safeatschool.ca/resources/resources-on-equity-and-inclusion/racism/tool-kits-and-activities>

Talking to Children About Race  
<https://www.pbs.org/parents/talking-about-racism>

Teaching Young Children About Race  
<https://www.teachingforchange.org/teaching-about-race>

### Resources With Biblical Principles on the Topic of Race for Children

Xochitl Dixon, *Different Like Me* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Our Daily Bread Publishing, 2020).

Pamela Kennedy, *All the Colours That I See* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Kids, 2018).

Shai Linne, *God Made Me and You* (Greensboro, N.C.: New Growth Press, 2018).

Trillia Newbell, *God's Very Good Idea* (Epsom, U.K.: The Good Book Company, 2017).

Matthew Turner, *When God Made You* (New York: Penguin Convergent Books, 2017).

Dorena Williamson, *Colorfull: Celebrating the Colors God Gave Us* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Publishing Group, 2018).

\_\_\_\_\_, *Crowned With Glory* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Publishing Group, 2018).

*Continued on page 18*

**General Educator Resource Kits About Race**

**Anti-Racism Resource Kit Committee on Race Relations and Cross-cultural Understanding – 2007**

The purpose of this resource kit is to encourage educators to provide opportunities for their students to enhance their self-awareness, knowledge, and strategies that are needed to discuss, understand, and address issues of racism that may be found in their classrooms and communities. Information is sourced from the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre in Calgary. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511bd4e0e4b0cecdc77b114b/t/55a95b28e4b05f2993aa5882/1437162280833/Anti\\_Racism\\_Resource\\_Kit.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511bd4e0e4b0cecdc77b114b/t/55a95b28e4b05f2993aa5882/1437162280833/Anti_Racism_Resource_Kit.pdf).

**Children’s Anti-Racism Activity Toolkit: Inclusive Games and Art Activity (for children ages 6-12)**

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide children with the opportunity to be creative and share their knowledge and feelings on important topics, such as racism, discrimination, equality, and reconciliation through play and discussion. [https://legacy.winnipeg.ca/cms/recreation/pdfs/antiracism\\_toolkit.pdf](https://legacy.winnipeg.ca/cms/recreation/pdfs/antiracism_toolkit.pdf).

**Educator Tools for Teaching About Race (K-12)**

This site provides educators with creative resources that can be used to bolster the development of positive identity for children.

<https://oursharedfuture.si.edu/resources/k-12-educational-resources>.

**Racism and the Box: Lesson Plan Rachael Sanowski – 2000**

Educators can invite students to reflect on the role racism plays in self-betrayal and self-deception. The lesson plan contains historic racist actions in society. <http://learningtogive.org>.

**Teaching Tolerance: Lesson Plans on Race and Ethnicity**

This website provides free educational materials on various social justice topics for educators. The *Lesson Plans on Race and Ethnicity* contains classroom activities that are available to a broad age range and varied grade levels. <http://tolerance.org>.

**United Nations: International Decade for People of African Descent – 2015-2024**

Provides historical information and program of activities from U.N. documents about people of African descent. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent>.

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\* The authors do not endorse any specific resource listed here; this information is provided for general information. Readers should use their discretion to review and select resources that will be appropriate for their classroom.

**5. Utilize Special Events to Bring Racial Awareness to Life in the Classroom**

In February 1926, Carter Woodson organized the first Black History Month in the United States, designed to recognize the diverse contributions and achievements of Black people to current and past civilizations.<sup>28</sup> Since then, other groups have created their own recognition months for public awareness and learning, such as Hispanic Heritage Month in October. While these official events are important and can broaden our understanding of the contributions of different racial and ethnic groups, unfortunately, some schools use these occasions as singular efforts for the inclusion of other racial groups. Rather, the goal must be to make racial inclusion, equity, and diversity a natural component of our curriculum throughout the year. The implicit and explicit curriculum should highlight the accomplishments and contributions of diverse individuals in multiple content areas

(e.g., academics, customs, history, science, languages, food, holidays, etc.). Avoid using celebration of cultural events as the school’s major approach to promoting racial awareness. Remember, the primary issue of race is identity; it is not simply about cultural events or customs.

Although Adventist teachers are part of a global Seventh-day Adventist teaching community, teachers in different geographic locations will not have direct access to the same events, historical places, people, or general resources; however, teachers can draw on their own unique local resources to promote racial awareness within the classroom (e.g., museums, historical community markers). For example, one school invited a centennial member of the church into the class to help children learn about his life growing up during the U.S. civil-rights era.

**6. Use Biblical Principles to Stimulate Healthy Long-term Perspectives on Race**

Insightful devotional topics are an excellent method that teachers can use to help children accept, appreciate, and empathize with the plight of other racial groups and understand why people think the way they do. The Bible is ripe with illustrations that educate children about how God views race. An excellent example is the parable of the Good Samaritan. Teachers can modernize the story to include race, helping children to see that their neighbors are people from all racial groups.

Another great biblical example is how Paul addressed the discriminatory, racist attitudes of Jews against the Gentiles. Instead of ignoring the problem, Paul confronted the practice directly, stating that “There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him” (Romans 12:2).

Phillip’s ministry to the Ethiopian

(a person of color), resulting in the man's baptism, is another example that illustrates God's love and care for people from all races.

### **7. Incorporate the Principles of "The Fruits of the Spirit"**

Incorporating the easy-to-understand, biblical principles embedded in "the fruits of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22, 23) into the curriculum to engender non-biased perspectives on race is another helpful tool. When developing lesson plans, teachers can make a conscious effort to include the fruit of "love," helping students to see how God's love is actualized when they view and treat people from different racial groups with godly love.

The fruit of "self-control" is another

fitting example that can be used. Teachers can make this principle practical for children by helping them to see how to practice self-control in their behavior toward people who look different from them—by refraining from impulsive negative verbal comments about the color of their skin, hair, or appearance, and helping them practice this within the classroom setting. Children need to know that it is OK to recognize the differences in human beings; however, we should not regard such differences as indicating that the person is inferior, unappreciated, or evil, or that the individual is superior or considered of greater value simply because of his or her racial background. Rather, help students look for positive characteris-

tics that demonstrate the fruits of "love" and "kindness." We want them to understand and value differences they see in one another. Putting the principles of the fruits of the Spirit into practical, demonstrable actions that children can use will help solidify in their minds that all people, regardless of race, color, ethnicity, or other physical differences, are part of God's family.

Finally, when major racial incidents such as George Floyd's death take place, help children make sense of what occurred by inviting them to lean on the power of prayer, where children and adults can pray together for comfort and healing for the individuals affected by these unfortunate incidents.





## 8. The Classroom as a Model Experience for Learning About Race

Teachers should take an introspective look at the visual materials that decorate their classrooms as well as the video, audio, and textbook materials they use. Do they reflect people of different racial groups? What perspective of race will children absorb based on the materials posted on the bulletin boards, stories shared in books, videos, and other learning materials within your classroom? Are the materials in the environment inclusive of different races? It is important to intentionally reflect diversity in the materials used in the classroom environment. Even if these resources do not include a variety of racial groups, it is still vital for teachers to intentionally include other racial groups in their presentations to help increase familiarity and create opportunities for discussion. Taking the time to equitably ensure the inclusion of subject matter from diverse racial groups will help students appreciate differences. This may take extra effort on the teacher's part, but it will go a long way in helping to solidify in the minds of children the contributions and challenges of different racial groups within modern society.

One elementary teacher at a small Adventist academy shared this example of an activity she used to implement racial awareness within her Grade 1 classroom. When discussing God's protective angels, she incorporated pictures of angels with different skin tones in a PowerPoint presentation. Children were asked to point to the picture that resembled what they thought their guardian angel looked like. All the children except for two, who identified as children of color, chose angels that resembled the Caucasian race, including four children of color. The teacher used this as a teaching moment to help children understand that the paintings of angels could portray different races and that pictures of angels with darker skin

tones are also God's angels, similar to angels with other skin tones. This teacher now intentionally looks for diverse ways to depict pictures of Jesus and Christianity within the classroom to help children see that God embraces people of all races.

A recent societal example that could be used to help direct children's attention to racial inequity is the lack of clean water in Jackson, Mississippi, U.S.A, a majority Black community that has lived with decades of deferred maintenance for its water-treatment plants, resulting in a recent water crisis when the main water-

**When teachers have a non-biased perspective and a willingness to openly share their own journey toward understanding racial identity and racial inequities, this can make a huge impression on the minds of young children.**

treatment facility failed. The city was left without potable water. Teachers can share a story such as this and ask students what could be done to address this problem. If students want to address this social justice issue by volunteering to raise funds to send fresh water to the residents of this city, teachers can facilitate this initiative, which will leave a lasting memory of the importance of getting involved in social issues that impact human beings.

Another example that illustrates racism in action is the recent violent backlash toward people of Asian descent living in North American and some European nations. In some

countries, China has been blamed for the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic within the country, leading to racist attacks against Asians living in these places. Teachers can help children to understand these injustices, listen to their responses and ideas on how to address them, then help create appropriate strategies to address these injustices.

While the current caste and shadeism system in India is not typically considered a racial issue,<sup>29</sup> it is just as much an important social issue as people are discriminated against based on the families of origin or the color of their skin. Teachers can educate students about this practice and help them develop strategies to deal with the issue of shadeism and caste systems.

Faculty-development meetings provide another opportunity for teachers to openly discuss and share ideas about how to infuse anti-racist content into the curriculum. Our experience has shown that some of the best teaching ideas emerge from these sessions. In addition, bringing in experts who can provide *ongoing* sensitivity training on race, ethnicity, and cultural diversity for teachers, administrators, board members, and parents will help to expedite knowledge acquisition and practice implementation for teachers more effectively than if they are left to do these things on their own.

There are a variety of free online resources that can assist Adventist teachers in addressing racial bias within the classroom, such as YouTube video clips and general online learning activities. Examples of these resources are enclosed in this article (see *Resources for Teachers* page 17). However, the most significant resource for students is the attitude, behavior, and openness of their teachers.<sup>30</sup> Adventist educators at all levels serve as role models and play a powerful role in the lives of children. When teachers have a non-biased perspective and a willingness to openly share their own journey toward



understanding racial identity and racial inequities, this can make a huge impression on the minds of young children. Children will notice teachers' attitudes and behavior regarding racial diversity. Even if adults are not conscious that they are role modeling racial attitudes, children are always watching.

### Conclusion

Next to parents, teachers have the most influence on a child's perspective of the world, making it a "moral and ethical" responsibility to ensure that children have a proper understanding of our world, which includes racial issues. When teachers talk to children at an early age about race, this helps them to understand, respect, and appreciate their own racial background and to understand that all races are equally valuable.<sup>31</sup>

Human beings created divisive-ness based on color, not God. In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness" (Genesis 1:26, italics supplied). The Bible is clear in declaring from the beginning that all people of all races carry the image of God. Our role as Christian educators is to foster the natural imagination and curiosity among children that will enable them to view skin color as God intended it:

- A gift that that enables us to see the broad spectrum of God's creative ability.
- An opportunity to better understand and appreciate differences.
- The conviction that even though our skin colors may differ externally, we have much more in common, physically, mentally, and spiritually because we are all made in the image of God. ✍

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*This article has been peer reviewed.*

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### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The term "person of color" is used in the United States to indicate that someone is not White. This includes, for example, Blacks, Hispanics, people from the Middle East and Asian countries, and those of mixed race or Jewish heritage. See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/person%20of%20color>. However, issues of race are not only between Blacks and Whites, and it is not only an American phenomenon.
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3. Liz Mineo, "A Reading List on Issues of Race," *The Harvard Gazette* (2020): <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/06/a-reading-list-on-issues-of-race/>; The White House, "Advancing Equity and Racial Justice Through the Federal Government: Executive Order 13985": <https://www.whitehouse.gov/equity/>; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Racism and Health" (n.d.): <https://www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/racism-disparities/index.html>.
4. Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2006).
5. Participants for this informal inquiry provided a limited insight into Seventh-day Adventist elementary educators' perspectives on race. Participants were selected using the convenience sample qualitative method, a research method that provides researchers with easier access to participants due to geographic/regional proximity, researcher and participant time availability, and willingness to participate in research. Five Adventist educators from Canada and the United States (two males and three females, from diverse racial groups) were contacted by phone or in

person between 2022 and 2023 and interviewed using the same series of questions that related to their perspectives on race and Adventist education at the elementary level. It is important to note that this is a very small sample size. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a worldwide denomination whose members hold diverse perspectives; thus, participants used in this article provided a limited North American perspective. To protect the privacy of teacher participants, the identifying details have been changed.

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9. Monish Bhatia, Scott Poynting, and Waqas Tufail, eds., *Media, Crime and Racism* (London, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

10. Comment from a senior Adventist elementary educator and study participant.

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17. Mark 12:31. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references in this article are quoted from the *New International Version* of the Bible. Holy Bible, *New International Version*, NIV Copyright 1973, 1978, 2011, by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

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10.1037/xge0000851; Hasiya E. Yusuf et al., “The Impact of Racism on the Health and Wellbeing of Black Indigenous and Other Youth of Color (BIPOC Youth),” *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics* 31:2 (2022): 261-275. doi.10.1016/j.chc.2021.11.005.

23. Equality makes sure that everyone has access to the same quality and number of resources so that desired outcomes can be reached; equity makes sure that individuals have access to the resources that they need, recognizing that some may need more assistance than others in order to achieve the same outcomes. For more see Colleen Murphy, “Equity vs. Equality: What’s the Difference?” *Health* (January 2023): <https://www.health.com/mind-body/health-diversity-inclusion/equity-vs-equality>.

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29. Shadeism and colorism are forms of prejudice that take place within communities of people who share the ethnic or racial group. It is demonstrated by preferential treatment to those within the group who have skin tones and physical characteristics that are lighter and closer to Caucasians. Racism differs in that it is prejudice from those outside of a given group or race. For more see De’Shane Frye, “What is Shadeism?” *The Campus Chronicle* (September 2019): <http://theasuchronicle.com/what-is-shadeism/>; Meera Estrada, “Shadeism Is the Dark Side of Discrimination We Ignore,” *Global News* (April 2021): <https://globalnews.ca/news/5302019/shadeism-colourism-racism-canada/>.

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Shawna Vyhmeister

## A Call to Nurture Resilient Faith in

# ADVENTIST EDUCATION

**A**dventist students are growing up in a world that is increasingly hostile to Christian beliefs. Globally, many Adventist young adults attend public schools and universities, and the philosophical ideologies undergirding these institutions, while varying based on the social and economic cultures within the given country, are likely to be very different from traditional Adventist perspectives. Students' religious experiences and levels of commitment to any particular religion will vary depending on, among other variables, how actively engaged their parents chose to be during their formative years.<sup>1</sup> Factors like these have an impact on how students function and influence their individual values. Yet, regardless of the cultural orientation within a country or what took place in the students' homes, Adventist educators and education professionals must prepare students to face a secular world that is increasingly and openly hostile to Christianity. Our Adventist schools must address how we prepare students to face this secular world independently after they graduate. If we do not, who will? This article first documents the depths of the problem and then lays out some of the things that Adventist educators can do about it.

### Societal Pressure Against Traditional Christian Beliefs

Demographic shifts have brought changes to traditionally Christian nations like the United States. As the national population became more diverse, specifically in religion, the demand to provide non-sectarian public spaces rose to the level of the courts. Constitutional

clauses guaranteeing religious freedom, free expression, and free speech curtailed practices like public prayer or displaying the Ten Commandments in government buildings, and supported religious freedom through the separation of church and state.<sup>2</sup> As DeJong explains, it used to be that "church and culture seemed to pursue the same goals, hold the same values, even (dare I say) serve the same Lord."<sup>3</sup> However, he observes that "in the second half of the twentieth century, we have seen a distinct change in the American environment," which shows it is moving away from Christian values. He suggests that we can no longer count on society to urge our children along the path toward Christianity.<sup>4</sup> This move toward secularism and the growth of non-Christian religions is not limited to the United States. Other societies (e.g., countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa) have experienced or are experiencing this cultural shift, which has been accompanied by an increase in religious persecution.

In the past, if people didn't like what was being said at an event, they left. Today, there is a high chance that someone will attempt to shut down the event or disrupt it. If a public figure is caught voicing a perspective that is not in line with the company's or society's beliefs, they may be fired: "What they've been told is pretty clear: you're welcome to have opinions, but they [had] better be the same as ours."<sup>5</sup> In Western nations, more liberal perspectives seem to be acceptable, but not more conservative ones. If this is religious freedom, it seems to be freedom *from* religion, not freedom of conscience or freedom to practice one's religion openly. American children are



growing up in a “Christian” country where they are more likely to be endangered for believing in God than for doubting. Was it accidental when the Columbine shooters asked their victims if they believed in God and then pulled the trigger when they said “yes”?<sup>6</sup> Or when those attending Bible study at Charleston, South Carolina’s Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church were murdered by an attacker who entered the meeting under the guise of needing prayer?<sup>7</sup>

More sobering data regarding religious persecution nationwide comes from the Voice of America, a global media government agency, which reports that “since the mid-2000s, mass shootings in churches, temples, synagogues, and mosques have become more frequent, and been committed by perpetrators with a history of racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Christianity and Islamophobia, with ties to white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups.”<sup>8</sup> The report continues to note that in 1966-2000, 1 percent of mass shootings were deemed motivated by religious hate; from 2000-2014, 9 percent; and, from 2018-2020, 17 percent. This once-Christian nation is fast becoming not only non-Christian, but one that is distinctly unfriendly to Christians, Jews, Muslims, and many other groups. And, these numbers do not begin to compare with levels of religious persecution globally.<sup>9</sup>

But the most insidious attack against Christian beliefs and values may be from academia, long a bastion of left-leaning perspectives. Richard Rorty may be an extremist among left-leaning proponents, but his viewpoint is not his alone. Here is his explanation of his goals as a university professor:

“The fundamentalist parents of our fundamentalist students think that the entire ‘American liberal establishment’ is engaged in a conspiracy. The parents have a point . . . we are going to go right on trying to discredit you in the eyes of your children, trying to strip your fundamentalist religious community of dignity, trying to make your views seem silly rather than discussable. We are not so inclusivist as to tolerate intolerance such as yours.”<sup>10</sup>

These words are not an academic discussion of a point of view. They are a declaration of war. And not only is the approach calculated and deliberate: it is effective. The results are devastating: “When it comes to reshaping values, liberal universities know precisely what they’re doing. And the reality is that about four out of five students walk away from their Christian faith by the time they are in their twenties.”<sup>11</sup>

### By the Numbers

This rather grim picture of the increasingly secular world in which young adults are growing up is only part of the picture. We turn now to look at the data. How

have these changes affected the youth? Here is what we know:

These numbers show that the “no religious affiliation” group has tripled recently.<sup>12</sup> We do see, however, that a third of young adults attend church weekly, and a quarter of them become Christians as adults. Findings also show



that 70 percent of Christian students who attend a secular university will, as Rorty urged, decide to leave their faith behind. However, it is important to note that many young adults who quit attending church don’t stop because they disagree with the beliefs.<sup>13</sup> Only 10 percent become atheists or don’t want to be seen as a Christian anymore. Some feel judged by other church members, while others disagree with certain beliefs. Most do not.<sup>14</sup> They just slip away. And while a few of those who drop out will eventually return, sadly, most will not.



### What to Do?

So, what can Christian teachers do in the face of this exodus? Is there any good news or a silver lining somewhere? Fortunately, there is. As the world has become less friendly to Christian values and behav-

**83%** American students who attend secular universities.<sup>15</sup>

**71%** Americans who claim to be Christian.<sup>16</sup>

**70%** Professed Christians who leave university with little or no faith.<sup>17</sup>

**64-80%** Young adults reared in the church who will be disengaged from religion by the age of 29.<sup>18</sup>

**69%** Young adults who never return to church if they drop out for a year or more.<sup>19</sup>

**60%** Young adults who were spiritually active in their teens but are not active now.<sup>20</sup>

**33%** Young adults (18-29) who attend church weekly.<sup>21</sup>

**31%** University students who claimed no religious affiliation in 2016.<sup>22</sup>

**23%** Born-again Christians who embraced Christ after their 21st birthday.<sup>23</sup>

**10%** University students who claimed no religious affiliation in 1986.<sup>24</sup>

**10%** Young adults who attend a religious meeting weekly other than church.<sup>25</sup>

**Note:** Because these statistics came from different sources and were collected at different times, they do not add up to 100 percent. All of the studies cited were conducted in the United States.

ior, many individuals and organizations have begun to study what works and do something about it. Three areas have been proven to make a difference in young Christian students' lives. Adventist educators are already participants in the first of these areas but should prayerfully consider whether they can do more.

### Promote Adventist Education

One of the most effective tools for maintaining faith in today's world is not a surprise: It is participation in

Adventist education. Although many of these studies are not recent and more research needs to be done, what we know is shown in the chart on the left.

When asked, the students reported that "the most important factor that . . . helped them develop their religious faith" was attending an Adventist school.<sup>26</sup> It is as simple as that, but there is more. The statistics say the same thing. "There is a consistent and important relationship between attending an Adventist school and the likelihood that a child or youth will join the Adventist Church and then choose to remain a member."<sup>27</sup> Simply put, more people who attended Adventist schools as children stay in the church as adults. In one study that followed Adventist young people over 10 years, the results were notable: "At the 10-year mark, the probability of leaving the Adventist Church was 3.9 times greater for those who had attended non-Adventist schools than those who had attended Seventh-day Adventist schools."<sup>28</sup>

Looking at the phenomenon in another way, "Thirteen years after graduation, 37 percent of those who had graduated from public high schools remained in the church, compared with 77 percent of those who had graduated from Adventist academies."<sup>29</sup> The 37 percent number lines up with what other Christian denominations are reporting. The 77 percent who remain is quite a bit better.

Of course, there is no guarantee. Adventist schools are not perfect and will not "make" all their students become Christians. Adventist educators already believe that our children deserve the best opportunity we can give them to grow up into adults who have an active and meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ. The Bible reminds us that even sinful humans would not give their children a stone when they ask for bread (Matthew 7:9-11). These data and results should be shared often with parents in churches and homes, and most importantly, with constituents in general. Many who may not have school-aged children can help promote Adventist education and support, financially or otherwise, those who do. Preach it from the pulpit—education sermons, talks, spotlights. Talk about it during home visits with families. Actively and intentionally share the knowledge that Adventist education makes a difference.

### Prepare Young People to Face a Secular World

Getting students in the school's front door is a good first step, but what happens while they are in school is important. Soon, they will face increased exposure to secular society and need to be ready.

Most students don't intend to leave their faith when they leave home, but many wind up doing pre-

cisely that.<sup>30</sup> Leaving home is often enough to make the break with religion: Attending a public university adds more pressure, as Christian beliefs will be questioned, even assaulted, from day one.<sup>31</sup> Students will make friends with many non-Christians, and before they know it, they might begin to change. One woman who rediscovered her faith later in life explained how this happened to her in college: “Originally, I hoped to share my faith with them, but instead, they passed on their spiritual indifference to me. They had a subtle but profound influence on my priorities.”<sup>32</sup>

This pressure toward secularization is not new. One author explains that while young people may “receive some measure of religious instruction at home, eventually, they leave home, and launch out into the world. Some go to work; some go to college. They face temptations that they have not faced before and give in to them. Their lives might get out of control with the use of alcohol, and they might give in to sexual indulgence. At the least, they never read the Bible or make any attempt to develop a spiritual life. Most don’t even attempt to take what knowledge is at their disposal and form their own beliefs and convictions. They don’t learn to think.”<sup>33</sup>

This situation may sound much like what many Christian youth experience today. But the truth is, this was written in 1797. This problem is not new, but if anything, it is getting worse. We must find a way of giving our students the tools they need to support, defend, and grow their faith. Equipping our students must be a primary goal of Adventist education, and it cannot wait until high school or beyond. Yet, it is not enough to equip students. We must also provide parents with opportunities to learn about the principles that guide Adventist education, through seminars, after-school extracurricular events, publications, and other sources.

The world is not a friendly place for young Christians. Not only are the statistics alarming; the scoffers are equally blatant with their criticism: “If four years of college undo 18 years of parenting and religious affiliation, perhaps the faith community’s tenuous hold

is the problem, not the particular place outside its bubble where that hold evaporates.”<sup>34</sup> This statement will raise hackles, but it also points to a truth. If we cannot or do not prepare young people to follow God during the first 18 years, maybe part of the problem *is* ours. We have not prepared our young people to swim against the current of society; to answer tough questions; or to thrive spiritually in a secular world.

It seems that while attending secular universities is part of the problem, it is not the cause of the departure from the churches. Plenty of people who don’t go to college also leave the church. Simply put, today’s

world is not an environment that encourages faith in Christianity. And this means that we may need to prepare our young people differently if we want to keep them.

We often make choices for our students and then wonder why they don’t know how to choose for themselves. We must help them learn to make good choices and let them practice under supervision. We try to create a world without opportunities to sin, so they won’t be tempted. Maybe we should focus more on helping them learn to resist temptation. Sometimes we are so wrapped up in teaching them the truth that we fail to address their questions and concerns.

What if we actively prepared our young people for the secular world while they study in our Adventist schools? What if we talked with them before they leave to help them understand what is likely to happen there, in terms of their spirituality, temptations, and the closed-minded individuals or extreme activists they will surely meet? What if we gave them ideas from our own lives on how to travel north in a south-moving world?

### Support Christian Fellowship Groups in Colleges

The natural outgrowth of preparing youth for the secular world is following up with them when they get there. This approach has not been a focus for Adventist schools and teachers, as we have thrown our energy into trying to keep students in our schools. But what happens after they leave, when their support system is gone? Is there something we can still do?

Given that universities are places where young

**We often make choices for our students and then wonder why they don’t know how to choose for themselves. We must help them learn to make good choices and let them practice under supervision.**

Christians can be drawn away from their faith, we need to act to provide support. “There’s no such thing as a solitary Christian,” Budziszewski argues. “If you go into the world alone, you’ll be swallowed.”<sup>35</sup> Many Christian groups have realized this problem. They are beginning to work together to actively reach out on secular campuses, providing virtual and physical communities that make contact even before prospective college students leave home.<sup>36</sup>

Public universities have a wide variety of special-interest clubs, and there are Christian groups (e.g., Campus for Christ) who have operated on public campuses for years, allowing those who desire it to have a Christian influence and a nurturing environment for their faith. Some of these groups have been questioned and even pushed off-campus. But, overall, researchers have concluded that God and faith are more present in today’s public high schools than in the past.<sup>37</sup> And at the university level, Christian groups in the U.S. are beginning to insist on their constitutional rights of freedom of association, freedom of speech, and equal access to campus facilities and resources. It turns out that the idea of separation of church and state “requires neutrality toward religion; it does not require hostility.”<sup>38</sup>

Christian college fellowship groups are an area that Adventists need to emphasize more, especially given the large percentage of Adventist students in secular universities. An organization that works to do this is Adventist Ministry to College and University Students (AMiCUS).<sup>39</sup> They publish a journal (*College and University Dialogue*)<sup>40</sup> aimed at Adventist students in non-Adventist universities. In some parts of the world, there is a strong emphasis and impact; in others, this sort of ministry is reaching just a small percentage of the Adventist students in public universities.

But this is not something that needs to wait for church administrators to set up. Is there a college near you? What can you, as an Adventist educator, or your local church do to provide a safe, friendly environment for religious seekers, whether Adventist or not? Are there Adventist students who would appreciate a ride to church? A home-cooked meal? A place to hang out on Sabbath? A campus-based Bible study group? Are there graduates from your school that you can contact and offer support? This outreach can be scaled large or small but doing something is certainly better than doing nothing.

Preparation for leaving home matters. But support is indispensable. What if Adventist schools kept communication open with young people after they have left the school? Perhaps they can help them find a friendly family in the new church, send e-mails to stay

in touch, or even send care packages on a regular basis. The school might even help find people in the home church who could offer to discuss challenging questions that a student will surely encounter in the university and to dialogue in an open-minded way. The possibilities are as limitless as the needs, but it starts with people willing to serve and caring enough about the young people to develop a relationship with them. If we shut ourselves out of our young people’s lives when they need guidance the most, we should not be surprised if they seek help elsewhere.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

As Christian educators, our goal is to nurture young adults to become well-grounded in their faith and broad-minded “thinkers, not mere reflectors of other people’s thought.”<sup>42</sup> Not closed-minded liberals or conservatives, but open-minded Christians who understand the secular perspective and are not afraid to stand up for the truth as presented in God’s Word—spiritually resilient adults who are in the world but have not absorbed its ethos.

It is not easy for a young person to grow up Christian today. But rather than wringing our hands and weeping about the devil’s success with our young people, what if we put the devil on notice that each one of them is a child of God, and he/she is not going to be sent out unprepared, or left unguarded, or unprotected? We need to consider what things we can intentionally do to make a difference to the Christian youth we have in our sphere of influence. A home-cooked meal. A call or a message. A conversation and a prayer on the sidewalk. A thought-provoking assignment that helps them grow spiritually. They need to know they are not alone. God is not dead, and faith is still relevant. Who knows? Your small act could make a difference for eternity. ✍

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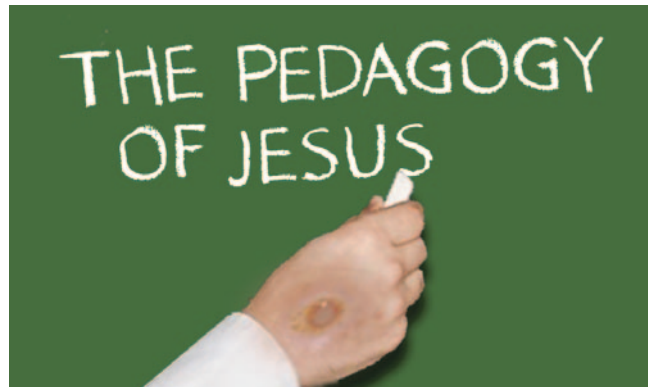
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André Vasconcelos



## Lessons for Teaching in Luke 24:13-43

As the incarnate God who came into this world to instruct and save humanity, Jesus is the model for Christian education. In the book *Education*, Ellen G. White stated: “In the Teacher sent from God all true educational work finds its center.”<sup>1</sup> The parables, conversations, and sermons of Jesus are pearls of heavenly wisdom teachers who wish to educate for the kingdom of God must constantly seek out.

With that in mind, this article analyzes the text of Luke 24:13 to 43, where Jesus gave a lesson to two disciples on their way to Emmaus, a small town seven miles (about 11 km) outside Jerusalem (vs. 13).<sup>2</sup> This analysis aims to extract principles of Jesus’ teachings in dialogue with modern authors that can be useful for teaching in Adventist schools.

### The Biblical Account

In the Gospel of Luke, we read that after the crucifixion of Jesus, two disciples were talking to each other as they walked toward Emmaus. Saddened by what had happened in Jerusalem, they spoke intently, fully absorbed in conversation. They thought Jesus would be the promised messianic king who would free the Jewish nation from foreign rule (vs. 21). In this context, verse 15 informs the reader that Jesus Himself approached the disciples, but they failed to recognize Him; their eyes were blinded to the truth regarding His identity (vs. 16).

Like a successful teacher, Jesus first asked a question: “What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?” (vs. 17, NLT).<sup>3</sup> With crestfallen heads, the two

stopped, and Cleopas, one of them, answered, “You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days?” (vs. 18).

After asking another question and listening to the disciples’ point of view, Jesus rebuked them for their hardness of heart and went on to teach them everything said about Him in the Scriptures, from the books of Moses to the prophetic literature (vss. 25-27). In other words, Jesus gave them a glimpse of the role of the Messiah in the Scriptures.

The biblical account says that as they approached the small town, the disciples insisted that Jesus not continue His journey but stop with them, for it was almost evening (vss. 28, 29). Jesus complied with their request and accepted their hospitality. When they were at the table, He blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to them. At that moment, the eyes of the two disciples were opened, and Jesus disappeared from their presence (vss. 30, 31).

Amazed at what they had just seen, the disciples said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” (vs. 32). Then they returned to Jerusalem and went to meet the 11 apostles and the group of disciples who were with them, to tell them that they had recognized Jesus when He blessed and broke bread (vss. 33-35).

### Characteristics of Jesus’ Approach to Teaching

Luke’s brief account presents several characteristics



of Jesus' way of engaging with His disciples. In this recorded encounter, Jesus used prior experiences to build knowledge, asked open-ended questions to guide the conversation, and incorporated a wholistic approach to integrating knowledge and experience. Adventist educators can use these approaches modeled by Jesus as they interact with their students throughout the process of learning.

#### *Build on Prior Knowledge*

Jesus could have simply revealed His identity to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Instead, He decided to transmit this knowledge by building on what the disciples already knew and had experienced. He asked them to tell Him what they knew about Him (vss. 19-24) before adding to their body of knowledge (vss. 25-27). Like Jesus, teachers can focus on building knowledge by seeking ways to build on students' experiences.

The simple transmission of the content does not guarantee that students will assimilate knowledge. In speaking about the teacher's role in this learning process, Ellen White commented: "Teachers should lead students to think and clearly to understand the truth for themselves. It is not enough for the teacher to explain or for the student to believe; inquiry must be awakened, and the student must be drawn out to state the truth in his own language."<sup>4</sup> Jesus listened intently to what the disciples were saying and then followed up with questions that challenged what they thought they knew. And, once they were challenged and curious, He had them right where He wanted them and added more to their understanding.

#### *Ask Open-ended Questions*

Asking open-ended questions was the second strategy Jesus used. He demonstrated that this is one of the most efficient and effective ways to build knowledge. As observed by Ken Bain, the president of the Best Teachers Institute, "Questions help us build knowledge. They target the gaps in our memory structures and are critical for indexing the information we retain as we develop an answer to that question."<sup>5</sup>

Along the same line of reasoning, Sonia Krumm, in her book on teaching the Bible at the middle and high school level, observed that "The type and quality of

questions the teacher asks is directly reflected in the type and quality of student learning."<sup>6</sup> According to Krumm, one of the characteristics of good questions is that they generate more questions.<sup>7</sup> This is verified in Luke's account as the dialogue between Jesus and the disciples occurs through a series of questions (vss. 16-19, 26).

Moreover, "a good question usually brings with it another question that derives from the answer to the first,"<sup>8</sup> as it does in Luke's passage. The questions asked by Jesus were linked in a logical sequence, inducing the disciples to express their version of what had just happened in Jerusalem. Christ's questions were neither vague nor apathetic; on the contrary, they were accurate and sensitive, profoundly shaking the disciples' emotions.

Jesus' questions were so effective that, according to verse 19, the two travelers gave a lengthy exposition in response. Jesus let them speak their minds on the matter, only then going on to correct their mistaken perspectives on the mission and identity of the messianic king.

#### *Incorporate a Wholistic Approach*

Another notable feature of Jesus' method was His wholistic approach of blending the exposition of content with the experience. The eyes of the disciples, His students, were opened to His teachings only when they were impressed by the way Jesus gave thanks and broke bread. This shows that how the teacher con-

ducts the class is as important as the content presented in the classroom. In the end, the words of the Polish educator Janusz Korczak cannot be ignored: "Each person carries within him a whole world, and everything exists twice: once as it is, the other as he perceives it with his own eyes and feelings."<sup>9</sup>

Students remember teachers and professors who impacted their lives not only by the content of a given course but also through those educators' ways of being. If teachers want to influence their students' lives, they must take every opportunity to leave an imprint on their hearts and minds. One of the points that Ellen White made most concerning the ministry of teachers is their influence on the students:

"The Lord would have the teachers consider the contagion of their own example. They need to pray much more and consider that the convictions which flow from a well-ordered life and godly conversation,

**Asking open-ended questions was the second strategy Jesus used. He demonstrated that this is one of the most efficient and effective ways to build knowledge.**

from a living, decided Christianity, are the preparation of the garden of the heart for the seeds of truth, which are to be planted for a fruitful harvest, and for the Sun of Righteousness when He comes with healing in His beams.”<sup>10</sup>

Returning to the biblical account, it is noteworthy that the “opening” of the disciples’ eyes (vs. 31) coincides with the “explanation” of the Scriptures (vs. 32).<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, the verb translated as “explain,” from the Greek *dianoigō*, literally means “to open”<sup>12</sup> and is the same one used in verse 31. That means that before understanding what the Scriptures taught, the two disciples were impacted by Jesus. In other words, using the example of Christ, the experience makes it possible for the student to absorb the content presented by the teacher.

### Conclusion

Educators working in Adventist institutions can learn much from the Master Teacher and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. After reviewing the passage in Luke 24:13 to 43 and analyzing some of the main characteristics of Jesus’ teaching approach in this passage, at least three lessons can be highlighted for educators teaching in Adventist institutions. First, the teacher should be concerned with leading students to construct knowledge from their own lived experiences and encourage them in this self-process of learning. Second, as demonstrated by Jesus, one of the best ways to construct knowledge is through the use of questions; the quality of the questions will impact the quality of the learning. Third, the teacher’s example and experiences are as crucial to the teaching and learning process as the content he or she communicates in the classroom.

Teaching is a sacred ministry, and educators are entrusted with the challenging duty of preparing new generations to lead the mission of the church. In *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, Ellen White wrote:

“Patient, conscientious teachers are needed to arouse hope and aspiration in the young; to help them to understand the possibilities lying before them. Teachers are needed who will train their students to do service for the Master, who will carry them forward from one point to another in intellectual and spiritual attainment. Teachers must strive to realize the greatness of their work. They need enlarged views; for their work, in its importance, ranks with that of the Christian minister.”<sup>13</sup>

Educators can glean fresh insights into Jesus’ teaching approach through contemplation of His interactions with His disciples and His dealings with each one of us. The diligent study of the Scriptures combined with the work of God’s Spirit will provide an expanded view of this sacred calling. ✍

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*This article has been peer reviewed.*

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### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 83.
2. It is interesting to note that Ellen White also recognized that the passage in Luke 24:13-43 portrays Jesus as an educator: “He who spoke as never man spake was an Educator upon earth. After His resurrection, He was an Educator to the lonely, disappointed disciples traveling to Emmaus, and to those assembled in the upper chamber. He opened to them the Scriptures concerning Himself and caused their hearts to bound with a holy, new, and sacred hope and joy” (*Counsels to Writers and Editors* [Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1946], 80).
3. Scripture quotations in this article are taken from the *New Living Translation* of the Bible New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.
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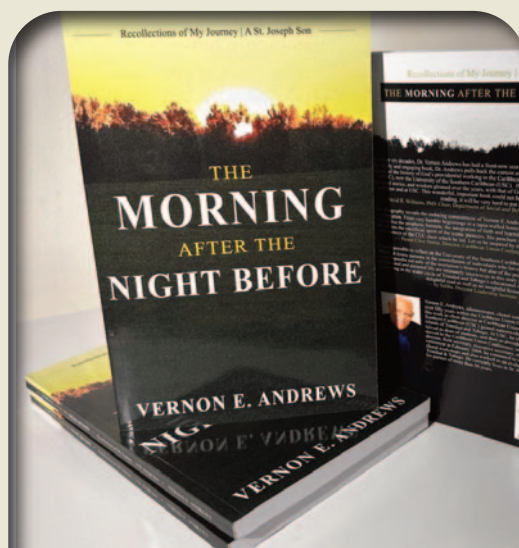


Petra Pierre-Robertson

**T**he *Morning After the Night Before: Recollections of My Journey, A St. Joseph Son* is an autobiography with 18 chapters and eight appendices. The first 16 chapters are succinct mini-narratives of selected experiences in the life of Vernon Euclid Andrews, a retired educator and administrator. Andrews served as the president of the University of the Southern Caribbean in Maracas, St. Joseph, Trinidad, and field secretary and music director for the Caribbean Union Conference in Maraval, Trinidad. His recollections are delivered in a conversational storytelling style, and the narratives cohere into a continuous whole. Using literary conventions of flashbacks and flash-forwards, he chronicles a narrative denominational history of the Caribbean Union and, more specifically, the University of the Southern Caribbean. Throughout all this, his autobiography is woven. It is a history book but also a personal story.

The first seven chapters recount various experiences from the author's birth to childhood and teenage years to adulthood. Simultaneously, these experiences are grounded in spatiotemporal, educational, and socio-cultural landscapes. These include his entrance into and experiences in the Maracas Seventh-day Adventist Primary School, his introduction to and subsequent love for music, musical recollections, undergraduate experiences at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, and meeting the love of his life.

Chapter eight, which serves as the genesis for the title of the book *The Morning After the Night Before*, reflects his favorite landscape, or rather, soundscape—



**Vernon E. Andrews, *The Morning After the Night Before: Recollections of My Journey, A St. Joseph Son***

(Independently published in Trinidad & Tobago, 2022). ISBN 9798410515191 (Print). 168 pages. US\$18.95. To order this book, visit <https://www.amazon.com/Morning-After-Night-Before-Recollections/dp/B09WYVJVGX>.

music. In chapters nine through 16, the author shares experiences from his adult life that correspond with the physical, academic, and social growth of the East Caribbean Training School (now the University of the Southern Caribbean) and the Caribbean Union Conference (its parent institution). The experiences shared resonate with themes of dedication, hard work, human relationships, leadership, patience, prayer, resilience, tact, and God's providential leading, to name a few.

The book ends with eight appendices. These records are select writings, presentations, and correspondences written by the author as an educator, administrator, and former president of Caribbean Union College. The book also provides photos that reflect the various experiences identified.

**Digging a Little Deeper**

The author's birth occurred during a time of local and global tensions. The Moyne Commission, also known as the West India Royal Commission Report of 1938, revealed the social and economic conditions in the then British West Indies, which were devastated by the Great Depression. By 1939, World War II began escalating in Europe. He uses his parents' experiences during this period to paint educational landscapes. His father's formal education ended at the primary school level, after which he took an exam given to those desirous of entering government service. His mother, Winifred Beryl Stoll, was enrolled as the 76th student at East Caribbean Training College in 1928, one year after the school's establishment in 1927. This aptly

positions the author as one who can competently describe the growth and development of the East Caribbean Training School into the University of the Southern Caribbean, which coincided with the various stages of his life.

The author's traumatic experience on his first day in a government school served as a stimulus for his being among the first set of students enrolled in the primary school on the Caribbean Training College campus, which later became Maracas Seventh-day Adventist Primary School. At this point, we are introduced to persons outside his immediate family who significantly impacted his life and with whom he developed lifelong friendships, such as his elementary school principal, childhood friends, and schoolmates at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Through these stories, he reflects on "the value of Christian education unswervingly supported by two God-fearing parents, and nurtured by loving and committed teachers" (p. 20).

The author takes readers to Guyana and tells stories of riding large river vessels, such as the *Lady Nelson*, as well as tugboats and pontoons along the majestic Essequibo River (which flows 630 miles in a northerly direction from the Amazon to the Atlantic Ocean). In personal anecdotes, he transports readers by buses and trains across the island of Trinidad to the dedication of the San Fernando Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1949. He uses the story of that trip not only to share memories of the days of train travel on the Trinidad Government Railway but also to tell the story of a curious little boy (the author) being lost in San Fernando and, as a result, missing the dedication of the church. Andrews wittily and seamlessly fuses this experience with the hymns "Amazing Grace" and "Seeking the Lost" to draw a spiritual lesson from the experience.

The author shares recollections of his musical growth and acknowledges the influence of Bender and Frances Archbold on his career in music (although his mother was his first piano teacher). Bender Lawton Archbold served as youth and education director for the Caribbean Union in 1949 and later as president of Caribbean Union College. He became the first Inter-American Division president born in Inter-America (the island of Providencia, Columbia). His wife,

Frances Victoria Burke-Archbold, a licentiate of the Royal School of Music in Piano Performance, taught choral and piano music to the children at the Maracas school. Also included in his reflections is his experience with Cecil Warren Becker, the long-time organist at Andrews University.

This autobiography would not be complete without a love story. The author devotes an entire chapter to his lifelong partner, Phyllis Andrews, in the chapter is appropriately titled "The Lady in My Life."

*The Morning After the Night Before* is worth the read. Living history, in the person of Vernon Euclid Andrews, has been transformed into documented history. This memoir is a necessary resource for educators and educational administrators, students and teachers, and a wide range of audiences from policymakers to the members in the pews, especially when faced with the question, "What do these stories mean?" We have nothing to fear for the future, except we forget how we were led in the past.\* In that regard, this record of the past is a must-read for members of both church and society. ✍

*The Morning After the Night Before* is worth the read. Living history, in the person of Vernon Euclid Andrews, has been transformed into documented history.

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\* Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1991), 359.



Almir Marroni



## Opportunities in Literature Evangelism

### How to Afford an Adventist Education:

The year was almost over, and many students at Brazilian Adventist College<sup>1</sup> planned to join the literature-evangelism program in the summer. For weeks the conversations among my roommates focused on the dilemma of staying to work at the school or facing the risk of going out to sell books without any assurance of the outcome.

I felt strongly compelled to go. I had read about the church's publishing work and was impressed by the Holy Spirit to enroll in that army of workers. Interestingly, I was not recruited, as no leader extended an invitation to me. I had to take the initiative to seek a space in one of the teams being formed. The student literature-evangelist (LE) teams were organized by the union and conference publishing directors with the assistance of students, who, based on successful previous experience in canvassing, were assigned as team leaders. Why teams? Teams made it easier for supervision, training, assistance, and motivation. Also, young adults love to work in teams.

From among the several teams, I picked the leader whom I trusted the most. I spoke to him but was frustrated with the excuse that his team had run out of available spots. He recommended that I talk to other leaders, which I did without success. Everyone gave the same

answer: "The team is already complete." Soon I realized there was a hidden truth behind the standard answer.

You see, I was considered a privileged student. I was raised in a middle-class family and did not have to worry about working to pay for my studies. I realized no one believed that a student would "expend blood and sweat in canvassing" if he or she didn't need to raise money for college tuition. So, I had to change my approach to get a chance.

I returned to the first leader—the one I trusted the most—and found him outside the classroom building. I approached him and said: "My parents already know that this year I will not travel on vacation with them and will not even spend Christmas with my family. So, when are we leaving for the canvassing territory?"

A bit confused, he replied, "December 2nd." Hearing what I wanted, I excused myself and entered the building.

Literature evangelism would be a great challenge. I was shy and fearful, and it was difficult for me to approach strangers. Before the real work began, I would have to practice the sales presentation with my teammates. I felt nervous and began perspiring and trembling. Everyone laughed when the book slipped out from my hands onto the floor. Failing in front of all of



my peers was embarrassing. The next morning, I went out into the field carrying with me the disbelief of my leaders and canvassing colleagues who thought: “That little daddy’s boy won’t achieve anything.”

But to everyone’s surprise, I took the opportunity seriously. After an entire morning without success, God gave me my first sale: a complete set of books to a young mother of two little boys. Before purchasing the set, she asked: “Are you sure these books will help me to raise my boys as God’s children?”

“Absolutely,” I said.

From that first set of books, I felt God had called me for that work, and I did it with all my strength and with complete dependence on Him.

Door-to-door work became a second school where I learned many lessons. I prayed as never before. I felt small, but God was with me. Every day I had opportunities to share the good news about Jesus, pray with clients, and develop the art of persuasion. Although I experienced pain and challenges, by the grace of God, the results were amazing. After two months, I returned home with a check for the equivalent of almost two years of tuition as a boarding student.

I continued canvassing during the summer and winter vacations until I finished my studies. This activity was a life-changing, practical school. Although I had no idea about the significance of what was happening in my life, God was preparing me to serve in the publishing ministry. The thought that I belonged to an army of thousands of young people motivated me with a sense of significance and purpose. At that time, I found out that throughout history, the canvassing work has played a vital role in grounding and strengthening the faith of young Christian people who mightily contributed to the gospel mission.

### The Canvassing Work and Christian Education

Over the centuries, the canvassing work and Christian education have been partners in training and developing youth to serve God. Long before the Adventist movement began, students from Christian schools were already involved in sharing their faith by selling literature.

In Waldensian communities in Europe, the youth were trained through a combination of classroom activities and the experience of sharing their faith in the cities. “They had education centers where young people would transcribe portions of the Bible, which soon they would go out in the cities to disseminate. It was a re-

quirement that those who wanted to become ministers had to spend three years canvassing in foreign territories.”<sup>2</sup> Later, during the Reformation years, student colporteurs were trained to spread Luther’s books while earning funds to pay for their tuition fees.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the 20th century, Adventist schools in North America established a plan to encourage students to sell literature during the summer months. A sale of a certain amount would allow students to attend school during the year. In 1906, Union College, in Nebraska, established the first scholarship plan for student canvassers.<sup>4</sup>

Ellen G. White was still living when students, referred to as “colporteurs,” first began the work of door-



to-door ministry. She offered counsel, encouragement, and a list of benefits the youth would obtain by enrolling in this program. She saw the canvassing work as a learning experience, full of opportunities to share God’s love through personal testimony (see *Colporteur Ministry*, chapter 5).<sup>5</sup>

Student canvassers meet dozens of people daily, many of whom face trials and spiritual challenges. They need prayers, kindness, and hope. Through the influence of Christian students, many people request Bible studies and eventually attend church and request baptism. Thus, canvassing is a blessing both for students and those with whom they come into contact.

### Student Canvassing Today

Reports from world divisions show that more than 20,000 young people get involved in Adventist literature evangelism every year.<sup>6</sup> The student canvassing

## Literature Evangelist Opportunities for Students

One way students can earn money to pay for school fees and tuition is to sell books. The General Conference Publishing Department and conference publishing departments provide resources and opportunities for students to sell and distribute Adventist literature during school vacations or for a designated period. Participants in this program have opportunities to grow and enhance their social and leadership skills.

**General Conference Publishing Department** <https://www.adventistpublishing.org/students/>

**Think Big Literature Evangelist Training Program** (serve as a literature evangelist for one year) <https://www.adventistpublishing.org/students/think-big/>

**Summer Programs** (work as a literature evangelist during a vacation) <https://www.adventistpublishing.org/students/summer-program/>

program is active on all continents with excellent results, but involves much more than sales figures. It is exciting to know that every year, this army of students meets more than five million people face to face. Can you imagine the impact of these young Christian people on hurting, discouraged people seeking meaning in their lives or those who are seeking a personal relationship with God? Thousands of prayers are offered, and millions of truth-filled books are distributed. Only in eternity will the results of this ministry be revealed.

Both during and since the pandemic, canvassing has continued to thrive.<sup>7</sup> Many students accepted the challenge of selling books when people especially needed a message of hope. In most countries, it was possible to resume door-to-door work after following health protocols.

As a publishing leader, I have met thousands of young people aiming for a better future and a chance to enroll at an Adventist college or university. Most of them struggle with a lack of financial resources to pursue a Christian education. I have had the privilege of recruiting, training, and ministering to committed youth who, despite a variety of challenges, accept God's call to service. Many say that canvassing was one of the most rewarding and rich experiences they have ever had. They developed social skills, learned discipline, and above all, they experienced God's

power as He performed miracles in providing for their needs every day.

Many Seventh-day Adventist youth have a vision for service. They dream of preparing themselves not only for a professional career but also to exercise their profession within a missionary framework. Recognizing the role of canvassing on students' development and spiritual growth, teachers and educational administrators should encourage them to dedicate at least one summer to literature evangelism. Such an experience will strengthen their relationship with God, nurture their commitment to service, and teach them many other unforgettable, valuable lessons.

Literature evangelism allows teenagers and young adults to serve and feel useful. It helps create a sense of purpose in life. We praise God for the youth worldwide who have engaged in literature evangelism and pray that many others will accept the call to join this powerful army and take advantage of the opportunities to support themselves as they pursue Adventist education. ✍

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### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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6. Information supported by quarterly reports submitted by the world divisions to the General Conference Publishing Department.
7. *Ibid.*

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**Editorial** *Continued from page 3*

insurmountable challenge of deciphering whose voices will lead or which voices to follow.

One natural response is to bury one's head in the sand and pretend that these topics either don't exist or that they will go away if we stay submerged long enough; the tendency is to huddle in our enclaves and "shut the door and teach!"<sup>1</sup> But, we cannot; we must not. For Seventh-day Adventist educators, hiding from the fray is not an option. We have a calling, a mandate to prepare students for this world—and also for the world to come.<sup>2</sup> To do this, we must assess the winds of change, remember our mission, and chart a course to ensure that we don't lose any of our flocks. To do this, we must remember that the One who says, "'Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out and face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you'" (2 Chronicles 20:17, NIV),<sup>3</sup> then face our challenges head-on.

As Jesus walked the road to Emmaus, He came upon two disciples wrapped in discussion: "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?" (Luke 24:17), He asked. They shared with Him the tensions of the time, their frustration, sadness, and fears. Jesus listened. He listened intently. And when they were finished, He reminded them of who He was and what He came to accomplish. In the midst of the very challenging times ahead, let us remember who our Leader is, what He came to accomplish, and the privilege we have to participate in the mission of Adventist education.

Several articles in this issue speak to the sensitivities teachers must cultivate as they interact with students. Patricia Schmidt Costa introduces the topic of "Affect Turn" and explores aspects of social and emotional learning that inform good practice. Using several personal examples from her more than 30 years of teaching, she challenges readers to see beyond students' behavior and do the work to get to the heart of the matter.

George Ashley and Cameile Henry delve into a topic that is uncomfortable for some and possibly taboo for many: race. They posit that children, from birth, are keenly aware of differences. To neglect to discuss the topic is to reinforce stereotypes, promote prejudice, and rob ourselves of the opportunity to fully understand God and the diversity He has woven throughout our world.

Shawna Vyhmeister discusses secularism's encroachment into higher education and puts forth recommendations for Adventist educators seeking to engage young adults even after they leave Seventh-day Adventist schools.

Several other articles provide food for thought. André Vasconcelos shares lessons from Jesus' encounter with the disciples on the road to Emmaus that can be applied to the classroom and even in a wider

context as we navigate challenging times. Petra Pierre-Robertson offers an insightful book review of Vernon Euclid Andrews' *The Morning After the Night Before*, a historical memoir of early educational work in the Southern Caribbean. And finally, Almir Marroni shares his own experience as a literature evangelist and offers an opportunity for students pursuing Adventist education to gain the benefit of this resource.

As Adventist educators, we must evaluate the voices vying for our attention and weigh them against our foundational principles and values.<sup>4</sup> We hope the articles in this issue offer opportunities for self-reflection. And ultimately, we hope they challenge and encourage you as you participate with God in this great calling.

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**NOTES AND REFERENCES**

1. The ideology behind the saying "shut the door and teach" is one that places the teacher at the center of student learning. In U.S. schools, teachers are designated *in loco parentis*, or in place of the parent, giving them decision-making responsibilities that govern the learning environment. One side of the debate says that teachers must shut out all external sources of interference (administrative demands, government mandates, parental intrusion, curriculum wars, etc.) and focus on the task of teaching. For those opposing the statement, the concept of shutting out all other perspectives is limiting and insular, leading to professional isolation. See "The Doctrine of In Loco Parentis" *Encyclopedia Britannica* (n.d.): <https://www.britannica.com/topic/teaching/The-doctrine-of-in-loco-parentis>. See also bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Jack Schneider and Jennifer Berkshire, *A Wolf at the Schoolhouse Door: The Dismantling of Public Education and the Future of School* (New York: The New Press, 2003); Kelly Treleaven, "Here's Why We Can No Longer 'Shut the Door and Teach'" *We Are Teachers* (2023): <https://www.weareteachers.com/shut-the-door-and-teach/>.

2. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 13.

3. 2 Chronicles 20:17. Unless stated otherwise, all Scripture in this editorial is quoted from the *New International Version* (NIV) of the Bible. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

4. "Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Education Policy," *General Conference Policy Manual* (2003), 221-228 (Education – Departmental Policies: FE 05, FE 10): <https://circle.adventistlearningcommunity.com/download/PhilStat2003.pdf>.



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