



ILLINOIS Focus



Ron Aguilera, President

ADVENTIST EDUCATION: WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?



I get the question often, "Why should I send my child to an Adventist school?" Often this question comes in response to an education Sabbath sermon or discussion about where someone is sending their child to school. When I explain I am a product of Adventist education and how it has blessed me, I hear the argument that Adventist education is too expensive, or that it really does not offer more of educational value than a public school. Others argue that some public schools provide a broader worldview and a tolerance of ideas and thinking that will enable our children to make better choices as they grow into adulthood. As I reflect on these and other arguments, I realize often we forget the eternal benefit and value of Adventist education. As I reflect on my Adventist education, and that of my children, I am reminded of four things.

ONE: Adventist schools are a place where children learn to love God. As Adventists, we value truth, integrity, and loyalty to God and His commandments. We teach about the love of God and the importance of loving our neighbors. Our schools strive to be relevant and caring to our community and the world in general.

TWO: Adventist schools support families who want their children to know God and be in the church. Unfortunately, some families believe it is the school's responsibility to take over spiritual instruction when the child goes to school. But a parent's responsibility of raising a child doesn't end when the child walks out the door to attend school. It's an ongoing responsibility. "Train up a child in the way he/she should go..." Proverbs 22:6 is

spiritually in a professional and positive manner. Both my children and I still talk about those teachers that had and are still having a positive effect on our lives.

FOUR: Adventist schools help the student develop healthy boundaries. Adventist schools strive for healthy boundaries and work toward stopping all forms of bullying and unhealthy practices such as drugs and alcohol use. These boundaries are put in

Volume 8 - Issue 2 - April 2021

ISSUE FOCUS EDUCATION

directed at parents, but the school (and church) is a great partner in a child's spiritual development.

THREE: Adventist schools offer academic excellence. Formal Adventist education encompasses academic excellence. Statistics show that Adventist education results in higher-than-average grades nationwide. This was the experience my children had at all levels of Adventist education. But even apart from academics, Adventist school staff strive to meet the needs of the individual student physically, mentally, and

place to uphold the values and principles of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, many of them shared by the community. When a child attends an Adventist school, they associate with other youth of similar faith and beliefs. Friendships are begun that can last a lifetime. In fact, both our ministerial director and executive secretary are individuals with whom

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Making Lemonade from Lemons 2
Our Ultimate Preparation 3
Bible Class Projects 4

& MORE





August 2020 came with many questions and even more choices for our household. We wondered, "Should our kids learn remotely or in-person?", "Will my child be physically safe when returning to school?", and "Will Covid-19 negatively impact our children's mental well-being?" With the uncertainty of unprecedented times, my family squarely looked at the 2020-2021 school year and determined to "make lemonade from lemons," proceeding to enroll in asynchronous Adventist instruction from our lemon-themed home-classroom.

Like us, most Illinois Conference families faced similar concerns and dilemmas for their school-aged children. Through strong leadership and strict adherence to Illinois State Board of Education guidelines, all ten Illinois Conference schools safely reopened for both in-person and hybrid options, utilizing online platform technology and Swivl robot cameras to ensure Connected Learning for every student. By mid-fall semester, Illinois Conference Adventist Education proved to be a safe, viable option for elementary and high school students alike!

Nevertheless, Lori Aguilera, Superintendent of Schools, felt the Education Department was called to do more. She says, "Knowing the additional stress and anxiety that Covid-19 has brought to teachers, students, and their families, the Illinois Conference Office of Education thought it was necessary to have a qualified counselor available to help them navigate the difficulties they may be facing." So when La Sierra University's Center for Conflict Resolution Director, Richard Pershing, extended an offer to support Illinois Conference in enhancing school climate connectedness, Lori jumped at the chance. Through generous financial grant-funded support from the VersaCare organization, a Conference-wide School Counselor role was developed, tasking me to provide social and emotional support for the Illinois Conference students and teachers during the 2020-2021 school year. Despite my 17 years as an Adventist educator and school counselor, I entered into this role with trepidation, never before having to serve ten schools simultaneously, much less during a pandemic! Yet, I embraced this challenge with the same attitude that we had adopted for our family: "Let's make lemonade from lemons." Our "zested" home-classroom now doubled as a virtual office, allowing me to utilize online meeting platforms to "Zoom" into classrooms all over the state.

As role-understanding by teachers, students, and parents grew, so did my counseling caseload. Support services provided students with private one-on-one sessions, small online community groups with several schools, and whole-class guidance lessons with both in-school and online learners.



MAKING LEMONADE FROM LEMONS



Mindy Salyers
Illinois Conference School
Counselor

Student connections were being built. Small-school teacher Del Jean Murray-Dickens observes, "With our school counselor, students are more able to be mindful, to focus, to not worry about their home lives as they did before."

Parent connections have been a focus area and offer mental health support for families as they navigate remote learning, loss of income, and increased child anxiety and depression. In response to the monthly counselor's Kid Connection newsletter, Janet Rondina, parent to a Junior at Hinsdale Adventist Academy, wrote, "Thank you so much for dedicating your life to minister our vulnerable kids."

In addition to connecting students and parents, the Care and Climate Connectedness project supports the 42 educators and support personnel of the Illinois Adventist schools. Knowing that teaching in a pandemic brings a sense of loneliness and additional pressure, counseling services aim to provide resources and relief and emphasize teacher self-care and resiliency. Mabel Noverola, the teacher for grades 5-8, shared that "teachers can feel very isolated at times where they care about the deeper concerns that their students are dealing with, but they may not know what to do or how to help."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Our

ULTIMATE Preparation?



John Gryss,
Illinois Conference Executive Secretary

Educator Parker Palmer asserts that education is a spiritual journey. As Adventists, we've sensed this from our earliest days as our female founder reminded her readers when she wrote, "It [education] is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of service in the world to come." (Education p. 13) Two significant words leap out for me as I consider this spiritual journey.

First, education is about development—not mere knowledge. Perhaps the apostle Peter recognized this when he concluded his final letter with these words, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Pet 3.18) The spiritual journey of education finds core to the quest the reality of growth, of development. And here, at this point, we find one of the greatest contributions of knowledge—to make us more like Jesus as a person. If our knowledge does not make us better people, it is possible that through the accumulation of knowledge, we've fallen into the trap of believing that we are better just because we have the knowledge. And it is this developmental quest that provides the groundwork for education. Is it

possible that education as a process makes us more curious and less knowledgeable? Consequently, we stand on the edge of eternity with inner humility because we know that we do not know. And it is this unknowing that sets us up for an eternity of learning. Is it possible that one of the real reasons for education as a spiritual journey will be to set us up with a greater sense of agency to handle what eternity will bring?

And because eternal curiosity generates a spirit of humility, one of the primary fruits of this spiritual journey is "joy." And the context of that joy will be "this world." I am absolutely challenged by this "outcome." The ensuing joy of serving in this world remains continually fed by this spirit of inquiry, this tension of knowing and not knowing. And this paradox requires that education "produce" the kinds of people who can live with the tension. The kinds of people who lean into the tension do not surrender to the immediate need to resolve the tension and hold the uncertainty without that uncertainty shattering the soul.

To be more transparent. The joy of service (from an inner world of humility and unknowing) does not remain within "the church." I grow weary when our focus becomes the church and not the world "that God so loved." This spiritual journey of harmonious development has been intended by the Creator for forming people whose ultimate purpose is not their congregation but their city, their town, their village, their tribe. This spiritual journey of harmonious development finds fulfillment in those beyond our halls and our congregational buildings. Harmonious development can never be as fruitful or fulfilling by remaining insular and fortified off from this world that God so loves.

Is it possible that many who are not experiencing this joy of service are not experiencing it because they have sealed themselves off from service in this world? If congregations and educational institutions fall into the trap of believing this whole story is about us, we can never experience the fullness of joy. And if we are unable to engage with joyful service to those outside our walls, we will not find ourselves prepared for an eternity of wider and more joyful service.



BIBLE CLASS Projects



Mabel Noverola
Hinsdale Adventist
Academy
5th & 6th Grade
Teacher

Our 5th and 6th grade Bible class at Hinsdale Adventist Academy read about the body of Christ and all the members. The Bible class divided into groups, describing the whole class's talents, and what they thought the class could create if they pooled all those talents. We learned so much that I thought was applicable: for my heart, the school, our global church, etc... and I wanted to share:

- * we're better as a team
- * if one person doesn't do their job, it can hurt the group's purpose... each job, even if it's not high profile, is very important
- * we get farther when we focus on the good things each person offers instead of the bad in each other
- * God can do so much if we offer Him our talents

Based on everything they had learned, they were able to create ANYTHING: a business, a government, an organization, etc... many groups chose to help people showing how they had internalized, "purpose, service, leadership!"

ACTA
With all our class's abilities and skills, we think we would make a great....

Adventist Care and Travel Agency in the Amazon Rainforest. Because our class has humor, creativity, and knowledge. With this mission we help people, animals, and create fun games about Jesus. We even have a cafe called the ACTA Cafe with nice scenery, of the Amazon Rainforest. And whoever loves gaming like me we have a cool gaming station with all the new games and even an animal center where you can look at the hurt animals we are helping.

This is our station

With our group's abilities and skills, and our classes, we think we would make a great....

Mission Group. We could travel the globe finding countries and cities that have gone through a natural disaster or that don't have enough food or resources. We would also preach the Gospel and teach the Word of God. So many people in our class are great at explaining in a kind way. We're smart in different ways and we can use that for research and managing. We can help the world by saving up money to travel around the world to help different countries. (Ms. Noverola could teach kids who can't afford school) :)))

Our Group's Abilities and Skills for this Job:

- ~Kyara is good at speaking, and explaining to people about The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit. She can make people smile, and has a gentle way of teaching people what is right.
- ~Matthew has a talent with making tools and other things we may need on a mission trip, he could help make homes in places where people might need us most.
- ~Ania is very good at talking to people, she is good at explaining and is very good at helping others and making them feel better.

With all our class's abilities and skills, we think we would make a great....

We as a group have decided we would make a great overnight Christian Summer Camp and at this camp we have art, math, many kind people, spelling lessons, science, sports, band lessons, and even tablets to play roblox! All of us will be Camp Counselors and we will help everyone with all of their camping needs, so if you need anything just come to us!!!

With all our class's abilities and skills, we think we would make a great....

I think we would be good at making a school because we have a lot of people who are good at math and spelling and more. We are good at purpose, service and leadership.

This was brought to you by -Laura Kyla Michelle Isaac

ADVENTIST EDUCATION: WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE? **continued from page 1**

I began a friendship in an Adventist school, and they have been a spiritual influence throughout my life.

will bless my family and my child as learning occurs and the child grows. It's worth the drive, it's worth the financial expenditure, and it's worth my child's earthly education and eternal well-being. Looking back, I am thankful for the commitment my parents made to send me to Adventist schools, and, as I did the same for my children, I am grateful that we also made that commitment for them.

These are just some of the reasons why I believe parents should do all they can to send their children to Adventist school. Because even though my child may not be perfect, and the school and teachers not as ideal as I think they should be, God is there—and God

- Ron Aguilera

ADVENTIST EDUCATION: THE BIG PICTURE



Pete Braman

Illinois Conference Ministerial Director

In our ever-increasing secular culture, where truth is relative and morals declining, now more than ever, our children's religious training and education must be an even higher focus and priority. There is a need for a "broader scope, a higher aim."¹ Often, when we think of "Adventist Education," we think primarily of our schools. As important as our schools are, the home and church are vital parts of a united educational model for educating and discipling our children and youth. True education must be centered on God, who is "our wisdom and strength" (Job 12:13), and in Him are "hid all the treasures of wisdom." (Colossians 2:3)

Parents are the most important educators of their children. Parents should jealously guard this sacred responsibility and be valued as the "first place of all true education."² When Moses gathered the wayward children of Israel together to reinforce God's covenant and commandments, he gave two key instructions. First, the covenant promise is established when "you shall love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your strength." Secondly, he commands the parents to "teach them diligently to your children." Loving Jesus with "all our hearts," knowing His word, and modeling Christian values, is foundational to the parent's ability to teach their children effectively. (Deuteronomy 6:5-8) God never intended for teachers, pastors, Sabbath school teachers, or youth leaders to assume the primary role of training and discipling our children. However, these special leaders play a vital role in supporting, reinforcing,

and resourcing parents for the spiritual instruction of children. As home, school, and church unite in educating our young people for "the life that is now," and the "world that is to come,"³ greater is the potential of our children embracing a saving relationship with Jesus and living life through a Biblical worldview.

Along with raising the banner of Adventist education higher, we need a realistic audit of current educational trends. How can we address the challenges of lower enrollments and higher tuitions while renewing our unique Adventist mission? Allow me to offer a few (not exhaustive) insights to reflect on:

1. We are not like any other "Christian School." Our unique beliefs and apocalyptic vision represent a movement called by God to proclaim the three angels messages and the good news of Jesus' soon return. We should not compromise our identity with the temptation of becoming a more "mainstream" education system. We are preparing our youth to serve as missionaries in their sphere of influence.
2. Ellen White reminds us that we are called to teach the "harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers."⁴ Educating the "whole" person must involve the spiritual component. She also notes that, "As far as possible, all of our children should have the privilege of Christian education."⁵ The cost of Adventist education is

a legitimate challenge to many families. While homeschooling provides a meaningful option for some, others need or prefer the regular school setting. The first question for parents is: "What can I sacrifice to contribute to my child's Adventist education?" Secondly, how can church members and leaders assist families who struggle to send their kids to our schools? The ultimate goal is that no child is denied the opportunity of attending our schools.

3. Adventist education should be much more than just preparing our students to be competitive in the marketplace. We should endeavor to "reach a higher standard of intellectual and moral culture than any other institution."⁶ We can praise God that according to a recent Adventist Cognitive Genesis study (2009), our students in all grades, in Adventist schools of all sizes, exceeded grade levels in all subjects.

As a former educator, I know that our teachers need our support, encouragement, and prayers. To them, we say thank you for being "servant heroes" to our children through the challenges of virtual learning, covid risks and protocols, and long hours. A final challenge to each of us is: who can we invite to check out our special Adventist schools?

¹ Ellen G. White, *Education*. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), p. 13.

² White, E.G. *Child Guidance*. (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1954)

³ White, *Education*, p.13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁵ White, *Child Guidance*, p.307.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), vol. 4, p. 425

TEACHING THEM BY YOUR OWN EXAMPLE

Arkadiusz Bojko
Illinois Conference Stewardship Director



Education methods can take various shapes and forms. The best one is teaching by example. When the Israelites were getting ready to inherit the Promised Land, God commanded them to teach their children the ways of the Lord. *"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."* Deuteronomy 6:7 (NKJV) It is easy to understand that God is talking not about the classroom environment but the one of the family home. How can you be a spiritual mentor for your child? First, by having your own meaningful relationship with God. The preceding fragment of the above Bible verse reads: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."* Deuteronomy 6:5. The "you" is directed toward the parents, not the children. The following testimony is an excellent example of this principle put into practice:

"Training children to give tithe is very simple. We must explain and demonstrate how to tithe. While our children don't earn an income, they can practice giving tithe as they receive gifts or pocket money. My [thirteen years old] daughter states that she learned best when she observed me always setting aside tithe at the very beginning of income and gifts received. She has become a natural at tithe giving because she has been giving it for several years now. It's a joy to see your children respecting God's portion of any increase they receive."

We frequently refer to children in our congregations as *"the future of the church."* First, they are not the future, they are already here, they are the *present* of the church. Second, equipping them for their adult journey into a faithful tomorrow starts with the example of faithfulness today. Remember, words can instruct, but nothing is more inspiring than actions.

Testimony used by permission of Tanya Lincoln,
Deer Park SDA Church, Illinois Conference



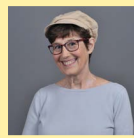
MAKING LEMONADE FROM LEMONS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

The counselor role adds "a layer of support I didn't have before to reach my students in a much more effective way. I wish we had this resource every year as teachers."

In this year of Covid, where parents, students, and teachers squeeze out every last drop of energy and perseverance, my role works to pour into them support that will strengthen their mental and emotional well-being. Says Superintendent Aguilera, "We desire to meet the needs of the whole child, including the mental health challenges they may be experiencing this year." While this virus has brought with it a set of sour circumstances to our school-aged children, the additional counselor-kid connection enhances the sweetness of Adventist education, turning this "year of lemons into lemonade."

- Mindy Salyers



Patricia Williams
Principal, Downers Grove Adventist School

FUR, FOAM, AND FUN

For many children, Christmas is a time of joy with sweet smells, colorful decorations, joyful songs, and presents – lots of presents with beautiful paper and sparkling bows disguising the gifts inside until finally the wrappings are removed, and the secret contents are finally revealed.

Other children, who are struggling just to keep warm and have enough to eat, do not get to experience the sights, sounds, and smells of Christmas. They are the children living in shelters or in hiding, afraid of what might happen if they are discovered.

For this second group of children, Christmas may be a time of sadness, disappointment, envy, and hurt. Jesus came to relieve suffering and pain. The students in grades 5-8 at Downers Grove Adventist School (DGAS) want to follow Jesus by helping to alleviate the sadness of these little ones who do not get to experience the delights of Christmas.

This past November, the DGAS students embarked on a sewing project to make Christmas stockings for distribution at a local homeless shelter. They cut out and sewed colorful stockings. Then they made foam nativities and other little gifts to put inside the stockings. For some students, it was their first time making any type of stitchery project. For others, it was their first time using a sewing machine. For everyone, though, it was a happy time as the projects rapidly took shape. The task of creating something for someone else was over much too quickly, with some of the 5th – 8th grade students surprised at how much fun the project turned out to be.

The students prayed for the unknown recipients who would receive these stockings and also that the nativities would remind the children that there is One Christmas Gift freely available to every person regardless of their situation – the Precious Gift of Jesus.



As one student put it, "It was fun to make something for someone else to enjoy."

Another student summed up the project by saying, "For the children who are struggling to get through Christmas, I am hoping that these stockings will make them know that they are being thought of and that they can have hope that things will get better. I think our class enjoyed making the stockings because they were for a good cause."

Mrs. Patricia Williams is retiring at the end of this school year after many years of service teaching children in Adventist schools. After 30 years teaching in California and Texas, she joined the Hinsdale Adventist Academy staff in Illinois in 2004, quickly becoming principal. Mrs. Williams served as principal at HAA until 2008, when she transitioned to Downers Grove Adventist School's principalship. She was also a two-term member of the Illinois Conference Executive Committee. Much beloved by students and staff alike, we thank her for over 40 years of faithful service and wish her well in her retirement years.

FOCUS ON YOUTH

At times our greatest challenge as youth leaders is that there is often a disconnect between faith and work. For youth, that work consists of history, English classes, and everything in between. So often, however, Christian students don't view school as an area for meaningful and sacred work.



Here are three simple practices to help:

1. CELEBRATE SCHOOL

We've all complained about school—the complex subject, the demanding teacher, and so on. To try and relate to youth and enter their world, we can encourage their negative thoughts about school. A question like "What's your least favorite class?" can give you a quick connection but can produce a long-term disconnect between students' faith and their work. Instead, recognize the real struggles they face and help them refocus on positive aspects.

2. COMMUNICATE SCHOOL AS MEANINGFUL WORK.

Remember that our teaching prepares youth for what they spend most of their time doing and those in your youth group spend most of their week engaged in their school work. Read From Colossians 3:2 and challenge them to see their time at school as one of the primary places they follow and obey Jesus.

3. CONSIDER THE FUTURE

This will help create an environment where all work is discussed and valued. College and trade schools both teach invaluable skills that serve our society. As a youth leader, seek to come alongside upper-level students as they consider the next steps and ask questions like, "What are you most interested in?" or, "What are you good at?" Then share what you see in them and offer to pray as they consider possibilities.

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE
OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

We exist to make healthy
disciple-making churches

PROCLAIMING **Jesus**
PASSIONATELY

LUKE 4:18

Connect with us on Facebook!
www.ilcsda.org

Phone: 630.716.3560
Fax: 630.734.0926
Email: info@ilcsda.org

Address:
619 Plainfield Road
Willowbrook IL 60527

Illinois Focus Editor: Shona Cross
Design: Heather Lanphear

