

The School and Community Resources

A Cooperative Venture

By James Hammond, Adrian Westney, and Lizette Westney

The Old Testament story about Elisha and the floating ax-head illustrates, in addition to divine providence, the concept of school-community cooperation. The school of the prophets at Jericho did not exist in a vacuum; it was a part of and interacted with its community. The *SDA Bible Commentary* makes this statement about the students who eagerly set themselves to enlarge their school:

One of the objectives of the schools of the prophets was to give the students a practical training for life. The young men were trained to work like the people about them, for they were not to hold themselves aloof from those it was their responsibility to serve.¹

The young man whose axhead fell into the water was justifiably distraught since he most likely borrowed the ax from a member of the community and was probably too poor to replace it.²

Elisha's miracle undoubtedly saved the day and preserved the good relationship between the school and its community. In this respect the axhead can be considered a community resource utilized by the students at Jericho.

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Both schools and senior citizens benefit when they work together.

Interacting With the Community

In like manner, our schools today do not exist in a vacuum; they are part of a community and should find appropriate ways of interacting with it. While it is the school's responsibility to serve the community, the school should also make use of those community resources that can enhance its service.

Purposeful school administration and classroom teaching require the coherent and comprehensive utilization of all types of resources and personnel. No one teacher embodies all the knowledge and insight required to carry out the ministry of teaching in the most effective manner possible. Resourcefulness and imagination can help school personnel use a

variety of means that will contribute to an effective program while guarding against introducing or utilizing any methods or resources that would conflict with or hinder the educational process.

A Definition

At this juncture we should define the major terms used in this discussion: *community* and *resources*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* points out that the word *community* is derived from the Latin word *communis* meaning "common relations and feelings, fellowship." In medieval Latin the word was used concretely to mean "a body of fellows or fellow-townsmen." In chapter one of *The Educative Community* Roger Hiemstra, after examining the many and complex ways in which *community* may be defined, concluded with Roland L. Warren that a community is "that combination of social units and systems which perform the major social functions having locality relevance. In other words, the organization of social activities and units are designed in such a manner so as to facilitate the daily living of given sets of people."³

The word *resources*, now usually plural, is derived from the Latin *re* and *surgere*, meaning "to rise again." This seems to have little bearing on the present meaning,

which is "a means of supporting some want or deficiency; a stock or reserve upon which one can draw when necessary." Upon closer examination, one can, however, see a relationship between the old and new usage, defining resources as an abundant supply that "rises" again and again when needed. In any community, resources may be divided into *people* and *things*. Forward-looking school personnel will tap the possibilities of each.

School principals should take the initiative in tapping community resources. John Whitelaw emphasizes this in the following statements:

School-community relations is an area of community life that involves every member of the community, but the initiative and leadership for effective action must come from the school.⁴

Even without the understanding and support of the superintendent, a school principal can make tremendous advances in bringing about productive school-community cooperation in all areas of the school's work.⁵

First of all, principals must see

themselves as resource persons who keep abreast of developments in teaching methods in a variety of fields. Such a role will entail considerable breadth in reading and in personal contacts. Moreover, principals should make sure that they utilize all the energies and resources on their own doorsteps and in their own faculties. They should challenge their teachers to recognize and use the strengths of every other member of the staff.

At the same time, interschool sharing should not be ignored. Schools and classrooms must learn from one another. Although the experiences and techniques of one school cannot be encapsulated and released in another school with the same effect, principals and teachers can learn much by sharing both positive and negative experiences.

Finally, as principals look beyond the confines of their own schools, they should become familiar with all the community services that will benefit their schools.

Types of Resources

The authors of *The School and Community Relations* list 12 categories of community resources that can be tailored to fit the local school situation. As Adventist schools attempt to select and judiciously utilize these resources they will reap benefits for themselves and establish a wholesome relationship with their communities.

Some Community Groups

1. Civic: Service clubs, Lions, Jaycees
 2. Cultural: Groups allied with the arts
 3. Economic: Farm organizations, chamber of commerce, real estate boards
 4. Fraternal: Fraternities and sororities concerned with educational and social matters
 5. Governmental: Local, county, state, and national government agencies that provide a variety of services: health, recreation, law enforcement, safety, family life, housing, et cetera
 6. Patriotic: A variety of groups teaching about government and civic responsibility
 7. Political: Major political parties, League of Women Voters, et cetera
 8. Professional: A wide range of groups in such areas as law, medicine, dentistry, engineering
 9. Religious: All aspects of church life. Religious groups can help promote moral and spiritual values.
 10. Retired groups: These offer a large number of retired professionals and other senior citizens with varying interests and skills.
 11. Welfare: These might overlap somewhat with governmental agencies for health, family life, child care, and recreation.
 12. Youth groups: 4-H clubs, YMCA and YWCAs, Junior Red
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Community professionals can serve as resource persons for schools.

Community Resources

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Cross, et cetera.⁶

One word of caution: As Adventist administrators and schools reach out to utilize these community resources, they should beware of groups whose aims are not in harmony with Christian principles or that might conflict with or hinder the educational process. In addition, some groups may have a certain agenda or point of view that they wish to promote, so schools should be careful to present opposing viewpoints on controversial issues.

Occasionally special problems may arise. For example, substance abuse, a perennial problem, has assumed epidemic proportions as alcohol and drugs have become

widely available even to young children. The February, 1984, special edition of *Listen* magazine has made the Adventist community keenly aware that we are not immune to drug and alcohol problems. That issue included a resource list of magazines, brochures, and books, as well as civic organizations which all educators should become familiar with and utilize.⁷

Community Resources for Special Education

Schools also need assistance in dealing with the problems of the exceptional child. Adventist schools, like public institutions, should concern themselves with offering equal educational opportunities to all who desire to learn. Their administrators ought to be familiar with the many community resources available to assist them in this task. A good place to begin is the "Selected Guide to Public Agencies Concerned With Exceptional Children" compiled by CEC Information Center on Exceptional Children. This list is printed in the book *School and Community Resources for the Behaviorally Handicapped*, pages 37-53.⁸

Innovative Uses for Community Resources

Traditionally, teachers have used community resources in at least three basic ways:

1. By inviting guest speakers to address their students
2. By organizing class visits to appropriate agencies and locations, and
3. By integrating resource materials in their lesson plans.

Principals should encourage their teachers to be constantly alert to other means by which they may utilize appropriate community resources. Principals themselves might make more use of intern-

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ships (apprenticeships) associated with work-study programs.

Administrators and teachers arriving in a community should, at their earliest opportunity, visit the personnel of appropriate agencies and reaffirm their commitment to good school-community relations. Thus, the "Elisha message" can be preached in more than one way. □

FOOTNOTES

¹ *SDA Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1954), vol. 2, p. 882.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 882, 883.

³ Roger Hiemstra, *The Educative Community: Linking the Community, School, and Family* (Lincoln, Neb.: Professional Educators Publications, 1972), p. 11.

⁴ John B. Whitelaw, *The School and Its Community* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), p. 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁶ Leslie W. Kindred, et al., *The School and Community Relations* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976), pp. 159-160.

⁷ *Listen*, February, 1984, p. 22. Copies of this issue may be obtained at a cost of \$2.50 for three. Bulk prices are also available. For additional information, contact Narcotics Education, 6830 Laurel St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20012.

⁸ Thomas J. Kelly, et. al., editors, *School Community Resources for the Behaviorally Handicapped* (New York: MSS Information Corporation, 1974), pp. 37-53.

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