

# Do Your Students Have a Time Deficit?

## *A Survey of Boarding Academies*

By Eugene Rau

**U**nlike other resources time can only be spent, and its value depends on how well it is used. The better our time is used, the greater our efficiency.

The Adventist Church's first and major writer on education theory wrote that "Every hour, every minute is precious."<sup>1</sup> "Time is golden."<sup>2</sup> "The value of time is beyond computation. Time squandered can never be recovered."<sup>3</sup> The use of time affects our goals and objectives in education.

Students in American SDA boarding academies appear to be recording a daily time deficit. This fact was revealed in a recent study of 2,000 students in grades 10-12, with their 55 administrators from 18 boarding academies across the country.<sup>4</sup> Some prescribed activities are either not fulfilled at all or only partially completed during school days. With the current emphasis on marketing our educational wares, it should be help-

ful to review student time usage and needs.

Student time needs as they and their administrators describe them are shown in Table 1.<sup>5</sup> Because the daily time entries do not apply to every day of the week, their sum cannot be used for time comparisons. The total time for a typical week of school that includes the 27 listed activities was 171.60 hours, 3.60 hours more than the clock time available.

Many students could not find enough study time to prepare for classes. Only 23 percent said they had sufficient time for study, while 77 percent said they needed more time. Since students at all levels of academic achievement expressed this view, it is plain that a time deficiency exists in this area.

### Homework

Only one-fourth of the students believed that their teachers were reasonable in the time limits set to complete assignments, while 75 percent of the students felt time pressure in this area. Is inefficient use of available time the

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cause for these ratings? Apparently not, according to other student replies throughout the questionnaire.

Although lack of time was seen as a constraint to academic achievement, students at all achievement levels wanted to study as many subjects and learn as much as possible in each. One-fourth of the students surveyed wanted more electives. To accomplish this, administrators would probably have to lengthen the school day.

Of the 47 percent of respondents who held a student office, 11 percent said there were definite constraints on available study time. Only 15 percent felt able to hold a student office and still have sufficient study time.

### Leisure Time

Leisure was deemed nonexistent for 13 percent of the students, too little for 30 percent, and skimpy for 25 percent. Students requested 1.40 hours of free time on school days. But the administrators allowed for only 0.92 hours. The provision for 1.16 hours in Table 1 is an average of these two figures.

Two-thirds of the students felt that their schools provided enough time for

**TABLE 1**  
**Rounded Mean Time Provisions for Student Needs**

Time Question	Frequency	Time in Hours	
		Daily	Weekly
1. Meals	3/day, S-Sa	0.50	10.50
2. Morning worship	S-F	0.17	1.02
3. Chapel	2/week	0.50	1.00
4. Play period	S-Th	1.00	5.00
5. Evening worship	S-F	0.25	1.50
6. Free time	M-F	1.16	5.80
7. Library	M-F	0.58	2.90
8. Prayer bands	1/week	0.25	0.25
9. Committee work	1/week	0.50	0.50
10. Exercise	M-F	0.75	3.75
11. Classroom	M-F	3.58	17.90
12. Devotions	S-Sa	0.33	2.31
13. Dressing	S-Sa	0.83	5.81
14. Walking to appointments	S-Sa	0.58	4.06
15. Sabbath witnessing	Sa	1.00	1.00
16. Sunday play	S	2.25	2.25
17. Study, evening	S-Th	1.75	8.75
18. Work	5 days/week	3.70	18.50
19. Sleep	S-Sa	8.00	56.00
20. Sunday library	S	1.60	1.60
21. Sunday TV	S	1.50	1.50
22. Religious services	F-Sa	4.20	4.20
23. Sabbath free time	Sa	4.75	4.75
24. Sunday free time	S	4.00	4.00
25. Saturday night	Sa	2.75	2.75
26. Band	3/week	0.67	2.00
27. Choir	3/week	0.67	2.00

social interaction. Juniors and the male population were the strongest proponents for more social time.

### **Sleep**

Although Table 1 allots 8.00 hours for sleep, the average for all 18 academies at the time of the study was 7.10 hours. Eighty-three percent of the students felt they did not have adequate sleep time. Boys wanted more sleep than girls, but they were able to fill their needs more easily than were girls.

On the average, students were able to log 37 minutes of exercise each day, but they preferred a period of 45 minutes. Work assignments did not fill this need for 73 percent of these youth.

### **Health**

One distress signal: A third of the students claimed that they had poorer health while at school than when they were at home. For girls the figure was 38 percent, while for males it was 32 percent. Juniors had the highest claimed rate of illness at school, with 36 percent, while sophomores had the lowest, with 33 percent.

Seniors had the least problem finding time to talk with a guidance counselor about careers and professions; juniors had the greatest problem. Nevertheless, 63 percent of all students said these

resources were not available when they could use them.

### **Religious Experience**

More than half of the 2,000 students surveyed said they would not accept any church office because of lack of time. A quarter of the student population felt they had insufficient time to hold daily personal devotions, and 58 percent had to forgo sleep to tuck in a devotional period before their regular rising time.

Ellen G. White did not provide a daily time schedule for students. She did mention a "thoughtful hour"<sup>6</sup> in devotions, "certain hours for study,"<sup>7</sup> "a few hours of manual labor each day,"<sup>8</sup> "a time lapse of five or six hours between each meal,"<sup>9</sup> "a regular time for sleep,"<sup>10</sup> and enough physical exertion to balance mental taxation.<sup>11</sup>

### **Possible Solutions**

This study shows that our boarding academy youth do not have enough time in each day to include all the requirements for a balanced education. Removing any of the 27 activities in Table 1 would throw the education program into a state of stress for everyone involved. Extending the school year might provide some relief, while raising other problems.

In England and other industrialized

**students to work.**

countries, students attend school eight hours a day for 220 days each year. By contrast, American schools provide approximately five hours of instruction each day for 180 days.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education recommended that schools should strongly consider a school day of seven hours and a year of 200 to 220 days.<sup>12</sup> Other suggestions include increasing time on task or adding a fifth year to the secondary school program.

Lengthening the time allotted for academy education could improve academic achievement, produce more socially mature graduates, reduce indecision in career choices, increase religious experience, and enhance physical health. These attributes are certainly worth the effort to accomplish. By restructuring the school day and year, we might be able to provide our students with a credit balance rather than a time deficit. □

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REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1938), vol. 9, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1954), p. 645.

<sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Child Guidance* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1954), p. 123.

<sup>4</sup> Eugene W. Rau, "A Review of Educational Balance and Its Relationship to the Daily Schedule in 18 Seventh-day Adventist Residence Academies in the United States." Doctoral dissertation, Andrews University, 1986.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1940), p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 138.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 265.

<sup>9</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1942), p. 304.

<sup>10</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1952), p. 205.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>12</sup> National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1983), p. 22.