

Guest Editorial

Service-Learning Makes a Difference

The articles in this issue center on service to others, which our authors argue should be an integral part of a Christian school's curriculum. However, achieving this goal will require changes in the way things have usually been done.

A Different Model

A new model for Christian education is needed. Instead of the traditional liberal-arts, subject-oriented model, we need a Christ-centered, Bible-based, service-structured model. Christ's atoning death on the cross, His estimate of the value of humanity, and His life of self-sacrificing love and service to other must take center stage.

A Different Administrator

Our schools need administrators whose concerns go beyond finances, plant maintenance, and discipline. They must be deeply involved in curricular matters, including the service-training program. Their leadership is vital to the success of a service program.

A Different Teacher

A different kind of educational philosophy calls for a different kind of teacher. Students can gain knowledge about biblical principles through several avenues. While subject matter does convey facts about God and His will for humanity, it lacks the dynamic of a living witness. Only through the teacher can the witness of faith be modeled and transferred.

A Different Teacher-Training Program

Most teachers are unprepared to evangelize students or to participate with them in Christian service projects. College education classes need to provide practice in soul winning and community service. Merely teaching about service is inadequate. Christian teachers need to be trained to do service, just as ministerial students receive practical training to become pastors and evangelists.

A Different Curriculum Committee and Curriculum

An educational philosophy anchored to service requires a different kind of curriculum committee and a different kind of curriculum. Refocusing of objectives and commitments must affect all levels—from the General Conference through the local school. This revised curriculum would not deemphasize classroom studies or other educational programs. On the contrary, these activities will take on elevated meaning when focused toward the goal of service to humanity.

A Different Learning Environment

A different kind of educational philosophy calls for a transformation in the learning environment. Cooperation and service must replace the spirit of competition and "me first" attitudes. For too long our grading and honors system has been based on self-glorification and conquest of others. Such a philosophy is alien

Continued on page 44

THE JOURNAL OF

ADVENTIST EDUCATION

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THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION publishes articles concerned with a variety of topics pertinent to SDA education. Opinions expressed by our writers do not necessarily represent the views of the staff or the official position of the Department of Education of the General Conference.

THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION (ISSN 0021-8480) is published bimonthly, October through May, and a summer issue for June, July, August, and September by the Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. Telephone (301) 680-5075. FAX (301) 680-6090. Subscription price, U.S. \$14.95. Single copy, U.S. \$3.25. Second-class mailing paid at Silver Spring, Maryland, and additional mailing office. Please send all changes of address to Southwestern ColorGraphics, P.O. Box 677, Keene, TX 76059, including both old and new address. Address all editorial and advertising correspondence to the Editor. Copyright 1991 General Conference of SDA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION, P.O. Box 677, Keene, TX 76059.

survive. They are also more likely to use birth control.—Reported by *American Demographics*, May 1991.

Apprenticeships for Success

In olden days, a youngster learned to make a living by serving an apprenticeship with a skilled craftsman. Apprenticeships remain a common practice in Europe today, even for young people who attend college.

U.S. students aren't so lucky. "For the 50 percent of our young people who leave school with a high school diploma or less, there are few viable paths to the future," states a new report on vocational education. "Poorly educated, unskilled, and unprepared for the future, these young people drift from one low-wage job to the next."

Helping young people avoid this future and obtain the training necessary for good-paying jobs is the goal of *Youth Apprenticeship, American Style: A Strategy for Expanding School and Career Opportunities*, published by the Consortium on Youth Apprenticeship, Jobs for the Future, 48 Grove St., Somerville, MA 02144 (Send \$4 to receive a copy).

To improve vocational education, the study recommends a mix of academic and occupation-related instruction "at a level of quality sufficient to certify the ability of individuals to perform entry-level tasks in skilled occupations." Specifically, the study recommends a three-year apprenticeship program that encompasses the final two years of high school and—to ensure the education level needed in today's technical workplace—one year of community college.

The proposed apprenticeship model could begin as early as seventh grade, when students would begin to "explore a wide range of occupations and careers, through site visits, work 'shadowing,' job sampling, and employer visits to schools. In tenth grade, students [would] begin to receive career counseling, interview employers, and seek apprenticeship openings."

An actual apprenticeship would last

three years. In 11th and 12th grade, students would spend part of each week learning academic, technical, and occupational lessons relevant to their chosen field. They would also spend part of each week in on-the-job training. After graduation, they would attend a community college for one year, but spend "the bulk of their time at the work site developing their skills in preparation for their final certification examination."

The report flatly rejects the idea that an apprenticeship program would limit students' futures. "Some 50 percent of our young people . . . are tracked right through . . . school and then simply shunted out into the world of work without the skills to survive there."—Reported by *The American School Board Journal*, May 1991.

Community Service and Grades

In a report by Terry Anderson on San Marcos, California, community-service programs that stressed values, educators reported that within three years test scores were up 26 percent for eighth graders and 29 percent for high-school seniors. The dropout rate was 1.9 percent compared with the state average of 21.2 percent.—Reported by Donald Ratcliff and James A. Davis, ed., in *Handbook of Youth Ministry* (Religious Education Press, 1991), p. 195.

Guest Editorial

Continued from page 4

to the Christian principle of selfless service to and affirmation of others.

A Different Schedule

A different educational philosophy requires a different daily and weekly schedule. Class time has to be adjusted to include service-learning activities. Though this is one of the most difficult tasks facing the administrator and curriculum committee, it can be accomplished if teachers and administrators

make it a priority.

One aspect needs special attention—that of bringing together the school, the church, and the home to serve the needs of the community. In addition to the service-learning experience at school, the Sabbath needs to be rediscovered and utilized in the manner patterned by Christ, to do good to others.

A Different Training of Student Leaders

Peer pressure is a dynamic influence on campus. Young people look up to student leaders and listen to their advice. This presents a challenge to the staff. They must provide training and guidance to help the student "stars" become models of compassionate concern and unselfish love to others, rather than simply being celebrated for their captivating personalities, athletic skills, or academic achievement.

A Different Student Recruitment Program

Perhaps the reason why many schools are struggling financially is that parents and church members fail to see a significant difference between the Adventist school and public school. This would change if the school challenged students to live out their Christian commitment through service to others. The spiritual atmosphere of the school and the changes in student attitudes would inspire parents and young people to support and join this dynamic Christian community. Using this philosophy as the basis for student recruitment just might ensure the survival of Christian education! ✠

Based on Edward M. Norton, Implications for Service-Learning in the Curriculum, doctoral dissertation, Andrews University, 1985, pp. 240-254.

Christian Service

Continued from page 9

cation. Practice adds focus and purpose to theory.

The critical "ingredient," of course, is the teacher. Our teachers need the training and the freedom to include service-learning in the educational program. They need the encouragement and support of church members and administrators to accomplish this sacred task. As one sophomore student wrote after sev-