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THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION publishes articles concerned with a variety of topics pertinent to Adventist 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 of Seventh-day Adventists.

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) 622-9627; E-mail: 74617.1231@compuserve.com. Subscription price, U.S. \$17.25. Add \$1.00 for postage outside the U.S. Single copy, U.S. \$3.75. Periodical postage paid at Silver Spring, Maryland, and additional mailing office. Please send all changes of address to P.O. Box 5, Keene, TX 76059, including both old and new address. Address all editorial and advertising correspondence to the Editor. © Copyright 2000 General Conference of SDA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION, P.O. Box 5, Keene, TX 76059.

The Task Ahead

HUMBERTO M. RASI

FIRST, THE GOOD NEWS. As of January 1, 2000, the Seventh-day Adventist Church operated 5,846 schools, colleges, and universities in more than 100 countries, with 53,989 educators and 1,055,189 students. These figures represent an increase, during the past quinquennium, of 8 percent in schools, 18 percent in teachers, and 16 percent in students. We praise God for that growth. Adventist education continues to have a transforming influence on children and youth, as well as a positive impact on our global mission, earning the respect of other churches and national governments.

Now, the not-so-good news. As we contrast the growth in Adventist membership with the number of students in our schools during the past 50 years, we notice a widening gap. Whereas in 1950 there were 26 students for every 100 members, by 1999, the ratio had declined to 10 for every 100. Even more worrisome, only half of the one million students now attending our schools come from Adventist homes. We know that many of the non-Adventist students eventually join our church, frequently with their families. However, millions of Adventist youth do not benefit from having Adventist teachers and chaplains guiding them in their acquisition of knowledge and their spiritual development.

How shall we respond to this challenge? We cannot reverse this alarming trend alone. Church administrators, pastors, lay leaders, and parents will have to play a major role. However, there is much we can do. Let me recommend four initiatives that will make a difference in the institution where you serve:

Mission. To be successful, an Adventist school needs a clear statement of mission that tells why it exists and what it seeks to achieve. Does your institution have a recently revised statement of mission, as well as a spiritual master plan? Were they developed with faculty and staff involvement and endorsed by the board? Are they concise, specific, and realistic? Do they clearly connect the school's objectives with the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, highlighting the salvation of our youth? Has the mission statement been embraced by everyone at the institution? Does it permeate every activity on campus?

Commitment. An Adventist school's success depends on the commitment of administrators, teachers, and support staff to preparing students for a useful life on this earth and for life eternal. Do you and your colleagues have a clear sense of the academic and spiritual responsibility entrusted to you by the parents and the church? Is your passion for education still strong? Do you keep up with developments in your field, prepare carefully for your classes, and seek to improve your teaching methods? Do you see yourself not merely as an employee but as a Christian missionary, willing to make sacrifices for your students? Do you pray for their salvation?

Identity. Successful Adventist schools foster a dynamic campus atmosphere and project a positive image. This is achieved through the professionalism of their facilities, the mutual relationships of the school family, the quality of their programs, the demeanor of the students, and the success of their alumni. Does your attitude and lifestyle contribute to this image? Is your personal friendship with God such that you provide a worthy role model for your students? Do you make yourself available for students to share their dreams and concerns, seek wise counsel, and pray for each other? Are the priorities of campus life, the standards of dress and behavior consistent with biblical principles and the philosophy and objectives of Advent-

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Separate Article
Removed

Adventist Historians Meeting

The triennial meeting of the Association of Adventist Historians will be held April 12-15 at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Submissions requested of papers by Seventh-day Adventist historians on any subject, research on Adventist history by all scholars, and papers on pedagogical issues by Adventist teachers in both secondary and higher education. Student papers in these areas are also welcome. Send proposals by December 31, 2000, to Dr. Gary Land, Department of History and Political Science, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI 49104. E-mail address: land@andrews.edu.

Corrections

On page 50 in the Summer 2000 issue, the center caption should have read: Stephen Guptill, Director of Education, Southern Asia-Pacific Division, and Martha Johnson, division curriculum coordinator, examine the new Bible textbooks.

In Tables 2 and 3 on pages 14 and 15 in the Summer 2000 issue, the categories should have been Strongly Agree/Agree, Undecided, and Strongly Disagree/Disagree.

EDITORIAL

Continued from page 3

ist education? Does discipline have a redemptive objective? Do you zealously preserve and defend the good name of your school?

Promotion. After taking the previous steps, an Adventist school is ready to expand and grow under the blessing of God. But first, it needs a mutually supportive alliance with the local church families and leaders. Do they visit the school and participate in its activities? Are you and your students actively involved in the programs of your local congregation? Is the school board active and representative of the constituency? Is the school administration responsive to the needs of the students' families? Do you seek opportunities to stress the value of Adventist education, both in private and in public? Has your school developed a marketing plan that will attract new students and raise needed funds? Do you personally seek and encourage children and youth to enroll in your school or in any of our Adventist schools?

If the administration of each Adventist school, college, and university devotes time to discuss these issues prayerfully in faculty meetings, God will provide the inspiration and guidance needed to succeed in our noble mission. Parents and church members will believe that their investment on behalf of our youth is worth the sacrifice. True, changes in school priorities, policies, and even personnel may be required, but "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26, NIV). He always honors those who honor Him. ☺