

Of Interest to Teachers

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Have you ever wished you could find Adventist curriculum materials when you need them most? CIRCLE, the North American Division (NAD)-sponsored Curriculum and Instruction Resource Center Linking Educators, is a growing database accessible online at <http://circle.adventist.org/>.

CIRCLE already includes:

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- Selected *JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION* articles, downloadable at a click;
- Links to services like the Adventist Education Forum, NAD job listings, and conference newsletters online;

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- Links to the South Pacific Division frameworks for integrating faith and learning in a variety of subjects;

- Links to many other online Adventist education resources.

Connecting Adventist educators to quality resources anytime, anywhere is the goal. You are invited to both access and share materials at CIRCLE. Your contributions to CIRCLE will help Adventist educators worldwide who, like you, are committed to continuing the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ.

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National Parent Survey: Class Size and Teacher Pay Matter More Than Tax Cuts; Opposition to Standardized Testing and Voucher Programs

A newly released national survey by Teachers' Insurance Plan reveals that U.S. public school parents have their own set of answers that runs counter to some of the solutions currently proposed by legislators. And the parents are prepared to put their money where their mouths are to pay for their priorities.

When given the choice, 65 percent of American public school parents would rather see more money go to public education than toward a tax cut. That preference had wide support within virtually all demographics of Americans surveyed, including even the parents of children in private schools, of whom 55 percent agreed.

When asked to set priorities for schools, the 1,046 Americans polled by telephone May 3-6, 2001, ranked class size and teacher salaries at the top of their list. Twenty-nine percent said reducing class size was their number-one priority. Paying teachers a "fair wage" came in a close second, with 26 percent of those surveyed ranking it number one. Those two items beat out all other education priorities by substantial margins, which included tutors for failing students (16 percent), providing classroom computers (11 percent), school building repair (7 percent), voucher programs (5 percent), and additional pre-kindergarten classes (3 percent).

The survey also revealed that some of the other high-profile solutions currently being considered by legislators around the country lack public support. Public school parents believe using standardized tests as a measure of a school's success has a down-side; 53 percent saying that standardized testing forces teachers to "focus too much attention on subjects to be tested," to the detriment of a broader education. However, when faced with a school that is failing on standardized tests, 54 percent believe education funding should be increased to "bring up the quality of the education" being provided, rather than developing alternative programs.

One such program, school vouchers, which is often cited as an answer to failing schools, proved highly unpopular in the survey. Just 35 percent of Americans supported the creation of a voucher program to improve the education system, with 56

percent believing the program would ultimately reduce the money available to local public schools. The only category of adults polled who favor vouchers are parents of children already in private schools. Sixty-six percent of private school parents support the creation of voucher programs.—From "Teachers' Insurance Plan National Education Survey," sponsored by Teachers' Insurance Plan, developed with Leflein Associates and conducted by Opinion Research Corp. Full survey results are available on the Internet in the Press Room of www.Teachers.com.

Helping New Students Succeed

Time Magazine recently analyzed a variety of college programs that are highly successful in helping first-year students make a successful transition to college life. John Gardner, executive director of the Policy Center on the First Year of College, and leader of a panel that advised *Time* on this topic, along with other academics, have established that colleges can boost freshman retention by

- training faculty to mentor and support new students;
- creating first-year seminars, orientation courses, and intimate "learning communities";
- teaching students organizational and study skills; and
- arranging dorms so that freshmen live among students with similar academic interests.

More than 71 percent of the more than 4,000 accredited U.S. campuses currently offer such courses, and about 85 percent of freshmen take them. The survival rates of students who take the courses is three to 10 percent better than that of students who do not.

Specific programs at various colleges include the following:

- small three-week courses taught just before school starts, which encourage new students to live and bond with peers and older students who help teach courses, as well as with their professors,
- freshman interest groups/learning communities, in which they live and study with other students who share their academic interests;
- drop-in academic support centers that stay open until late at night and offer writing and math tutors in the residence halls;
- lectures for parents on youth development, along with opportunities to talk to the parents of current students and to get tips on how to gauge their children's academic progress

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- opportunities for one-on-one interaction with professors in informal situations on and off campus;
- sessions several times a week given by an upper-class student to reinforce lectures in various courses and discuss students' questions.—Reported in *Time*, September 10, 2001, pp. 64-71.

Education by the Numbers

While American education is mostly a state and local responsibility, the federal government

contributes to schools through grants to disadvantaged students, the Agriculture Department's school lunch program, and college financial aid, among other programs. Here is a numerical look at the government's role in education and facts about U.S. schools:

9% Percentage of national education spending that comes from the federal government.

\$40 billion Amount of money the federal government spent on elementary and secondary education in 2000.

2% Portion of the federal budget that goes to the Department of Education,

4,700 Approximate number of Education

Department employees.

1867 Year the original Education Department was created.

1980 Year the Education Department became a Cabinet-level agency.

39% Percentage of undergraduate college students who received financial aid in the 1999-2000 school year.

\$5,230 Average amount of federal student aid received by undergraduate college students in the 1999-2000 school year.

27 million Number of students who receive low-cost or free lunches through the Agriculture Department's school lunch program.

\$5.6 billion Cost of the national school lunch program in fiscal 2000.

\$2.09 Amount a school is reimbursed for each free lunch it serves.

47 million Number of children enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in the United States.

11% Percentage of people 16 to 24 years of age who have dropped out of high school.

10.5 million Number of computers available for use in elementary and secondary school classrooms.

95% Percentage of public schools with Internet access in fall 1999.


Sources: Census Bureau, National Center for Education Statistics, Agriculture Department.

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Facts About American Private Schools

Private school enrollment has risen little over the past decade, with 11 percent of all elementary and secondary students attending private schools in fall 2000. Total private school enrollment at the elementary and secondary levels was estimated at 6.0 million in fall 2000.—From *Mini-Digest of Education Statistics 2000*, U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

More Young Children Attending School in U.S.

Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten enrollment of 3- to 5-year-olds increased 30 percent between 1989 and 1999 in the U.S. The proportion of 5-year-olds enrollment in kindergarten has changed little in the past 10 years; however, the enrollment of younger children in pre-kindergarten programs has risen dramatically.—Ibid. 

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The Adventist Health Study-2

By Patti Herring, Ph.D., R.N.

Cancer is a major killer of people around the world. In the United States alone, in one recent year, it was estimated that 1,221,800 new cancers would develop and that 563,100 persons would die of this disease. While the role of genetic and metabolic predispositions are undisputed, lifestyle choices such as diet and exercise play an important role. Black Americans suffer disproportionately from cancer, having a higher incidence of colon and prostate cancer and the worst survival rates for breast cancer of any group. However, we know little about the reasons for this discrepancy. Only large-scale investigations such as the upcoming *Adventist Health Study-2* can answer these questions.

Because the tenets of Seventh-day Adventism promote a healthy lifestyle (i.e., no alcohol or tobacco, no pork or seafood, regular physical activity, and a preference for a vegetarian diet with modest quantities of eggs or dairy products), church members in California have been chosen for several studies since 1958 to determine the impact of the church's recommended lifestyle practices. Although Adventists adhere in differing degrees to the church's recommendations, these studies have helped provide much insight into possible mechanisms related to nutrition and health. The studies revealed that about 35 percent of the California Adventists were lacto-ovo vegetarians; 20 percent ate flesh foods less than once a week and the remainder ate beef at least three times a week and fish or poultry at least 1.25 times per week (which is quite similar to non-members). Only about three percent of the church members reported eating a vegan diet, although a large number of the vegetarians said they ate very little dairy products or eggs.

There has been less emphasis on physical activity among Adventists, but the evidence from southern California shows that Adventists exercise an average of 50 percent more than their neighbors. The Oxford University Press will soon publish a book demonstrating the advantages of the Adventist Lifestyle, based on a summary of some 350 scientific studies on the health of church members from around the world.

The previous studies found, among other things, that white Adventists have lower risks of various cancers, fatal heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, arthritis and obesity. A 2001 study by Fraser and Shavlik revealed that Adventists live longer than other Californians (7.3 years for men; 4.4 years for women), and vegetarian Adventists live longer yet. California Adventists are probably the longest-lived population in the world that has been formally studied.

The 2001 study also concluded that white Adventist males who drink soy milk at least once a day experienced only one-quarter the risk of prostate cancer as those who never drank soy milk. However, the number of participating black Adventists in previous studies was too small to generalize this finding to them. Investigating this factor among black Adventist men is especially important, since the blacks have an unusually high rate of prostate cancer. Furthermore, black Americans have higher rates of certain other cancers, high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease, findings that also need further investigations. Thus, it is the goal of the *Adventist Health Study-2* to recruit a larger number of black Adventists to investigate these disparities.

The National Institutes of Health recently funded Dr. Gary Fraser and his co-investigators at Loma Linda University to enroll 125,000 Adventists from across the U.S. in a new multimillion-dollar diet-cancer study—one of the largest dietary research studies ever conducted. It will eventually include an analysis of the effects of diet on diseases other than cancer.

Enrollment to the study will proceed geographically from the West Coast to the East Coast to the South during a three- to four-year period. All members in selected churches will be invited to participate. Here is how it will work:

Participants will complete a questionnaire. This will require some commitment, as measuring diet is not easy.

The researchers will then follow up on these individuals for five to 10 years, noting all deaths and cases of cancer and heart disease during this period.

The data will provide a wealth of descriptive information about those members who respond. Sensitive information about specific respondents (i.e., names, addresses, etc.) will not be released or stored on the same computer file with responses to the questionnaire.

The initial focus of the study will be to determine how eating soy products, meat, and calcium affect the risk of contracting prostate, colon, and breast cancers. While soy products are widely touted for their supposed health benefits, there is as yet insufficient evidence of their benefits in preventing cancer.

The researchers anticipate broad participation from members and strong support from pastors. The benefits of healthful lifestyle practices must be shared with our non-Adventist neighbors. Today, credibility for health claims comes only from studies based on scientific data. We can easily provide this—the Adventist health advantage is not difficult to demonstrate. Participation in this study will bring good publicity for the church and provide information of great relevance to all Americans.

The researchers hope that you will participate when the study comes to your area.

For more information, call Loma Linda University School of Public Health and ask for Hanni at (909) 558-4753; or send an E-mail to hbenett@sph.llu.edu.

Patti Herring is on the faculty of the School of Public Health and director of the Office for Public Health Practice at Loma Linda, California.