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The Way to Plan

Recently, I attended a professional baseball game between two rather mediocre teams. I arrived at the ball park about two hours early so I could watch batting practice. During the pre-game activities, I observed many items on the field: batting cages, screens to protect inattentive players from inadvertently being hit, tarps covering part of the field to slow down ground balls emanating from home plate, and sections of the field cordoned off to protect fans and players from stray baseballs. Special care had been given to the playing field. The groundskeepers had raked it, sprinkled it with water to keep down the dust, and dragged wire mesh over the dirt infield to remove rocks and other debris. The lines around the batter's box and between the bases had been freshly painted; the base pads were brand new. As I sat in the stands waiting for the first inning, it occurred to me that although this was just a "game," to those involved in its preparation, it was serious "business." The game could not begin until everything was in readiness.



C. Garland Dulan

During the game, spectators engaged in such traditional activities as eating, clapping, chanting, and rooting for their respective teams. Sometimes the crowd was quiet, sometimes boisterous, sometimes thoughtful, sometimes nervous or anxious. But they were never apathetic or disengaged—they came to participate, to cheer their team on to victory.

What if we prepared for the coming of Jesus the way the groundskeepers prepared for the game? Then there would be no doubt of our readiness for Him to come. But of course, the groundskeepers knew exactly when the game would begin, when the national anthem would be sung, and when the umpire would shout "Play ball." Even if there was a rain delay, it was for a designated amount of time.

The philosophy underlying the education system of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to prepare each student for an eternal encounter with Jesus Christ. Studying to show oneself "approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15) is not a game. It is preparation for eternity. Yet as a church, our preparation at times seems much less serious than that of those who prepare for a baseball game. Our attention appears less focused than spectators at earthly games; our cheers less enthusiastic; our anticipation less buoyant.

It is in Adventist schools where preparation of the field for service begins. Ellen White wrote that "With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained . . . how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world" (*Education*, p. 271)! Teachers carry a heavy responsibility in preparing the field (doing the groundwork) and in helping our children understand what God's plan is for their lives. Things that seem like barriers, such as guidelines, requirements, codes of behavior, philosophy, and so forth, serve as the screens, the wire mesh, the painted lines—all there to protect the players. This is no game; it is real, and they are teaching our young people about ideas with eternal implications.

Christ warned that we should always be ready for His coming, for "in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh" (Matthew 24:44, KJV; Luke 12:40). But unlike the consequences of failing to attend to temporal activities like games, the consequences of being unready for the coming of Christ are terminal. Planning now, in advance of His arrival, preparing the field, is the only way to go. Prepare your child by sending him or her to an Adventist school. The benefits are eternal. ✍

C. Garland Dulan, Ph.D., is Director of the Department of Education at the World Headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland.

contents

Summer 2005 Volume 67, No. 5

Features

6 WHY HAVE ADVENTIST EDUCATION?

BY GEORGE R. KNIGHT

10 TIMELINE FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST EDUCATION

COMPILED BY FLOYD GREENLEAF

Adventist Education Around the World 2000-2005: Division Reports

16 East-Central Africa Division LOOKING AT THE CHALLENGES WITH HOPE

BY HUDSON E. KIBUUKA

20 Euro-Asia Division NEW FREEDOMS AND CHALLENGES

BY HERIBERTO C. MULLER

24 Euro-Africa Division REORGANIZING, UPGRADING, AND INNOVATING

BY ROBERTO BADENAS

27 Inter-American Division SURVIVING AND SUCCEEDING

BY CARLOS ARCHBOLD

30 North American Division JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE: MISSION, CURRICULUM, AND COLLABORATION

BY GERALD KOVALSKI

34 Northern Asia-Pacific Division TOWARD THE UNIVERSITY OF THE REDEEMED

BY MASAJI UYEDA

38 South American Division GROWTH, PLANS, AND PUBLICATIONS

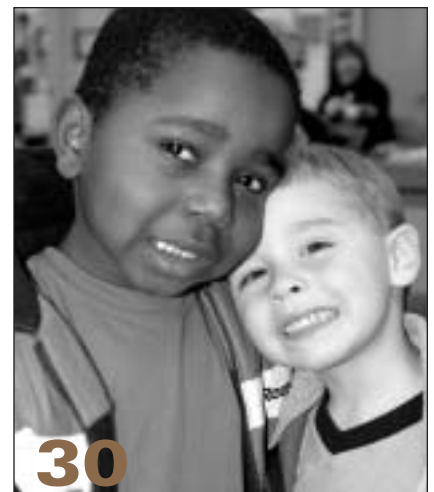
BY ROBERTO CÉSAR DE AZEVEDO

40 South Pacific Division REORGANIZATION, ECONOMIC PRESSURES, AND ADVENTIST DISTINCTIVES

BY BARRY HILL

44 Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division RIGOROUS AND RELEVANT LEARNING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

BY TOM NKUNGULA



**48 Southern Asia Division
FROM SOWING TO REAPING: AN UNDIMMED
VISION**

BY GORDON CHRISTO AND S. SUNDARAM

**52 Southern Asia-Pacific Division
GROWTH, OUTREACH, AND INNOVATION**
BY STEPHEN R. GUPTILL AND GLADDEN O. FLORES

**56 Trans-European Division
BREAKING NEW GROUND**
BY ORVILLE WOOLFORD

**59 West-Central Africa Division
QUALITY AND GROWTH**
BY CHIEMELA IKONNE



Departments
5 Editorial

Photo and art credits: Cover, p. 6, Raymond Wade; p. 4, courtesy of C. Garland Dulan; pp. 7, 9 (center), courtesy of North American Division Office of Education; p. 8, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division; p. 9 (top), Euro-Asia Division; p. 10, courtesy of Howard Bullard; p. 11 (bottom), courtesy of the Pacific Union College PR Dept.; pp. 11 (center), 15 (bottom), *Journal of Adventist Education* archives; pp. 12 (right), 13, 14, 16-62, courtesy of the respective divisions/schools; p. 12 (bottom), Loma Linda University PR Dept.



In April 2005, the directors of education from 11 of the church's 13 worldwide divisions met with the General Conference (GC) Department of Education directors/staff and presenters for strategy sessions. Members of the GC Department of Education in the front row are, left to right, John Fowler, associate director; Linda Torske, secretary; Esther H. Rodriguez, administrative secretary; Beverly Robinson-Rumble, editor, *Journal of Adventist Education*; Andrea Luxton, associate director; and (second from right) Chandra Goff, the *Journal's* editorial secretary. In the back row, C. Garland Dulan, director of education, is fourth from the right. Enrique Becerra, associate director, is at the far right in the third row.

World Education Statistics December 31, 2004

	Teachers Total	Teachers Elementary	Teachers Secondary	Teachers Tertiary*	Students Total	Students Elementary	Students Secondary	Students Tertiary*
East-Central Africa Division (ECD)	8,667	5,554	2,741	283+89	262,380	200,483	56,468	3,883+1,546
Euro-Africa Division (EUD)	542	143	216	125+58	4,741	1,510	2,017	842+372
Euro-Asia Division (ESD)	154	125	0	29	1,150	801	0	349
Inter-American Division (IAD)	9,202	4,431	3,755	1,016	149,613	90,438	46,784	12,391
North American Division (NAD)	7,705	3,764	1,472	2,469	84,880	44,288	17,274	23,318
Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD)	1,123	216	644	263	20,511	4,098	8,919	7,494
South American Division (SAD)	12,919	8,370	3,282	1,267	190,491	139,560	34,060	16,871
South Pacific Division (SPD)	1,699	870	656	151+22	34,305	22,760	9,342	1,917+286
Southern Asia Division (SUD)	5,525	827	4,294	293+111	92,189	15,601	73,549	2,039+1,000
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID)	3,434	2,076	1,228	74+56	107,893	81,437	22,801	3,108+547
Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD)	5,676	3,435	1,517	724	110,894	74,518	22,563	13,813
Trans-European Division (TED)	1,280	622	428	219+11	17,665	11,747	3,713	2,078+127
West-Central Africa Division (WAD)	7,056	5,745	1,013	230+68	218,820	190,035	23,017	4,451+1,317

	Schools Total	Schools Elementary	Schools Secondary	Schools Tertiary*	Education-Related Baptisms	
East-Central Africa Division (ECD)	984	712	254	6+7	2000	28,622
Euro-Africa Division (EUD)	44	21	11	7+5	2001	32,860
Euro-Asia Division (ESD)	10	7	0	3	2002	28,673
Inter-American Division (IAD)	1,029	680	336	13	2003	30,849
North American Division (NAD)	1,033	892	126	15	2004	36,222
Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD)	44	21	17	6	TOTAL	157,226
South American Division (SAD)	773	551	210	12		
South Pacific Division (SPD)	277	224	47	4+2		
Southern Asia Division (SUD)	246	97	129	6+14		
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID)	306	225	73	4+4		
Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD)	994	884	96	14		
Trans-European Division (TED)	118	69	40	8+1		
West-Central Africa Division (WAD)	998	934	47	4+3		

* Second number is for teacher-training institutions.