



CREATING A SERVANT

BY TRACY ARNETT

Adventist schools have been established to help complete a mission—God’s mission. Our young people are to see Christ, know Christ, and emulate Christ. Our role, as teachers, is to provide an environment that keeps them focused on these goals.

In the Gospels we see Jesus as a Servant, a lover of people. “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good

news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people” (Matthew 4:23, NIV). He spent hours every day serving others (Matthew 15:30; Luke 9:11, NIV).

Jesus’ message to us is to put others first (Matthew 20:26-28; Luke 6:32-36, NIV). Following His example, our schools should produce a servant mentality in our youth; they are to be others-focused, giving and kind. “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are

members of my family, you did it to me” Matthew 25:40, NRSV).

Beginning with the primary grades, the daily curriculum should be intentionally infused with service activities that model Christ-like actions. Young people will develop a love for service—a love for others—through projects, activities, discussions, and outreach opportunities. Thank-you cards and notes can be written during English class, while crafts, poetry, stories, and other activ-

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ities can be integrated into the daily curriculum in connection with an adopt-a-grandparent program. Students will enjoy knowing that a particular craft will be given to their adopted grandma or grandpa. Even primary students can tutor younger students or show them how to do something new. First- and 2nd-graders will enjoy helping the kindergarteners. Third- and 4th-graders can experience the joy of giving as they help their classmates play math games, read stories, and teach them how to work the computers. Even very young students can present the school worship program and help out during the church service. It is important for them to know that these things are service actions—ways to give to others, and to show their love for Jesus. “Every follower of Jesus has a work to do as a missionary for Christ, in the family, in the neighborhood, in the town or city where he lives. All who are consecrated to God are channels of light. God makes them instruments of righteousness to communicate to others the light of truth.”¹

As your students grow older or become more experienced givers, they can be involved in more complex outreach projects. There are many local project options: food banks, soup kitchens, nursing homes, hospitals, and other community-service facilities.

Make sure that your students are well-prepared and have practiced prior to participating in any event beyond school property. They need to know well in advance what they are expected to do, as well as the behavior that is appropriate for the activity. Don't assume that they know what is expected; practice ahead of time so that the experience is positive for everyone. Anyone who observes your class during the event should see well-behaved young people provid-

ing a positive reflection of your school.

To infuse a service orientation into your classroom, you must be purposeful; it will not happen by accident. Start with a yearly plan that outlines how you will help your students advance from an understanding of basic concepts to a lifelong desire to serve others. Success in this program is measured by *what the students become*, not by what you, the teacher, provide.

Classroom Options

Students of all levels can benefit from a plethora of local activities. Letter/card ministries, crafts, penny wars (a fun competition between classrooms),² food drives, and phone-athons are inexpensive ways to get started. Student mentorship can be extremely positive if planned well and supervised. Children of all ages enjoy having the opportunity to teach something to others. When the older grades study about various genres of writing and public speaking, these are perfect opportunities for ministry. Although the students will be nervous at first, they will gain confidence as they work with their peers to provide a school worship service. If the students are given more responsibility as they gain experience, this encourages them to personalize the programs more each time. Some teachers find this challenging, but the students should be allowed to plan and present every detail possible.

Nursing Home Visits

If teacher and students take the time to develop a positive, interactive program, this can be a very powerful outreach. The cross-curricular opportunities are endless. Use worship time in your classroom to talk to your class about the value of sharing one's faith with others. Discuss the loneliness that people feel when they are iso-

lated from their families in an assisted-living facility, have the older students explore other options (social studies). Discuss ways they can share Jesus' love with others (Bible). Then, collaborate on a program that the whole class can provide (language arts). This can include music, poems, verses, short stories, etc. Students will enjoy handing out crafts that they have made (art), and the residents will treasure these gifts.

Check with the local facility to be sure that there is a sound system available. If not, a basic karaoke machine can be carried in and used to amplify your students' presentations. The nursing home activities director will appreciate having a regularly scheduled visit by your school; be sure to be prompt and let them know in advance if you must reschedule.

Take some balloons and play a little indoor volleyball. The older students will enjoy this more than they think! Practice your Christmas program by providing it for the residents—allow your older students to give a short worship thought or special music. Use all of your students' talents.

Here again, advance preparation is essential in order to create a life-changing experience for your class. It is helpful, for all grade levels, to discuss what might cause the behavior they will see in the elderly residents. Provide guidelines on what to do when the residents reach out to them, make nonsensical statements, repeat themselves, or talk about things that aren't happening, etc. Depending on the age of the students, this preparation can happen through stories, discussion, drawings, or books.

Beautification Project

If you contact the mayor's office, they will doubtless welcome your school's donation of time and effort to beautify a section of your town. You

may find that nurseries are willing to donate plants if they are given credit. Older students can spend a day clearing an overgrown lot or plant attractive landscaping in a section of town. This is hard work, so the students will need to be prepared for the event.

Social studies, science, and language arts classes can include activities from your service curriculum. The students learn that being a citizen involves both rights and responsibilities (social studies). They can visit the local nursery to learn about plants and horticulture (science). They can

tions about the homeless community. They became more able to internalize what Jesus must have felt when He looked at the lonely, broken, sickly people who came to Him each day.

It's important to dedicate worship times before and after these visits to the topic of service. Students need to understand the purpose of their visits

Prayer Meeting and Programs

Students of all ages should be active in the local church. Whether or not the students attend church regularly, they can all participate and receive a blessing from various programs. Even if younger students are participating, it's best to have the older students plan the program.

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write letters to get donors for the project and report on what they've learned in an essay about the experience (language arts).

Shelters and Soup Kitchens

"Whether in the home, the neighborhood, or the school, the presence of the poor, the afflicted, the ignorant, or the unfortunate should be regarded, not as a misfortune, but as affording precious opportunity for service."³ After donating one morning a month to a soup kitchen, my students lost many of their preconceived no-

and discuss what they saw, heard, felt, and learned from each experience. Let them draw their own conclusions with your guidance, and provide the opportunity for them to share.

Here again, it is important that the class is well-prepared for the visits; they should know what to do and what behavior is expected of them. Guidance such as staying with the group, walking in appropriate places, and staying on-task are all important reminders for students at every grade level.

They can provide an entire church service, student-led week of prayer, prayer meeting, vespers, or another program. From your local Christian bookstore or a nearby Adventist Book Center, obtain a selection of drama books, performance tracks, praise books, short story books, and other resources.⁴ Put these books on a table, and watch the students go to work. If they have never planned a program before, they'll need more guidance.

Start with a shorter program like prayer meeting, and suggest a theme. Your students may need an outline and help in planning. If younger students will be involved, the older ones will need to provide age-appropriate opportunities for them (help with song service, offering prayer, reciting a memory verse, etc.). Students are happy to participate when they have planned the program themselves. The event should be presented entirely by the students.

Sit back, relax, and enjoy the show! Then discuss the program the next school day so that students have an opportunity to think about its impact on those watching. You will be amazed at how eager they will be to begin planning their next program.

Distance Activities

As your service integration expands and your youth become more experienced, the older students will need bigger outreach opportunities.

Check with your local Red Cross Chapter; they offer extensive volunteer training (including CPR) and volunteer opportunities for most age groups. Your class could be called in to help with a disaster situation!

This is the time to plan your first distance outreach, such as a mission trip. For your students' first mission experience, you can plan multiple day trips during one week. Or you can plan a week-long trip farther away. For location ideas, check with <http://www.hesaidgo.org>.

My first mission trip was to the Navajo School in Holbrook, Arizona, with my class of 7th- to 10th-graders. We planned the trip for several months. I presented worship talks discussing ways to reach out to others. We talked about the purpose of our trip and looked up texts about the value of giving to others. My students and I made multiple calls and e-mails to the principal at Holbrook. Each morning during the trip, we had worship together and discussed friendships that were forming with the Navajo students. My class was required to split up during meals and meet new people. It was amazing to hear the experiences that they were having; the work was difficult, but rewarding. I cannot say enough about the value of planning for each detail. Don't be afraid to ask church members to help.

Make It Powerful!

To achieve the greatest return from service activities, be sure to conduct pre-service and post-service discussions and activities. The students must know why they're doing what they're doing. They must make personal connections to their actions and understand the value of giving to others and of treating everyone with respect. Stories and texts about service, discussion, and even role-play can easily be integrated into your worship talks before and after each event. Youth who are unaccustomed to giving will feel nervous; role-playing helps them understand what might happen and how to accommodate.

MAKE SURE THAT YOUR STUDENTS ARE WELL-PREPARED AND HAVE PRACTICED PRIOR TO PARTICIPATING IN ANY EVENT BEYOND SCHOOL PROPERTY.

Have them practice looking into people's eyes, talking politely, listening, and demonstrating good manners. Even older students need practice.

The Gospels are saturated with examples of service, which you can incorporate into worship, Bible class, or even social studies class. The disciples were instructed to serve others;

integrate technology: get your students to design bulletin inserts!). Put up a Christmas tree any time during the year (this might be more effective separate from Christmas) and invite the church members to pledge cash or time. Have students spend a couple of hours soliciting donations from area businesses.



Paul speaks repeatedly of how we are to live our lives.

Provide time for the students to journal about their experience and share with the class. English class projects can be built around your service theme. Students can combine writing talks, hunting texts, planning programs, and creating projects as they integrate service into their studies!

Fundraising

Another challenge when planning an outreach curriculum is financing, although many programs will have minimal cost. Place announcements in area church bulletins to ask for basic tools that are needed for small, local projects (here's an opportunity to

For larger projects or distant programs, you will need to tap into community resources. Need help gathering these resources? Put your older students to work. Letter-writing and grant-writing are valuable English lessons that will profit your service curriculum. Our church families are usually providing many financial resources to the school already; try fundraising opportunities that tap the community as well. One successful fundraiser at one of my previous schools was selling ads on T-shirts. Each business paid \$250 for an ad, and multiple ads were printed on the backs of T-shirts. We raised more than \$3,000 in one day from area businesses for the ads. Students wore the T-shirts on field trips, outreach activ-

ities, etc. during the school year.

Another successful fundraiser for my school was sending letters to non-constituent family members describing the planned mission experience; most of the students raised more than half the necessary funds using letters. A tip: If you're going to use sales-related fundraisers, choose ones where the products are either delivered by the company or can be purchased immediately with no orders (such as candy sales). Both of these options enable you to contact customers only once—the students don't have to return to the homes to deliver the products. Pre-printed cards (buy one item, get one free) are economical and popular. Using blank business cards, it's easy to print multiple cards for



your students to sell. Be sure to contact the companies first to be sure they will honor your discount cards. Suggestions might be “buy one, get one half-price or free”: salads, sub sandwiches, pizzas, ice cream cones, drinks, etc. The students sell the cards for \$10 each, and it's almost entirely profit. Big bonus: no return trip to deliver the product!

Drivers, Chaperones, and Other Fun Stuff

As usual, when leaving your school campus for any activity, there are multiple details to work out. Your local school board must vote on all trips off campus. Depending on the length of the trip, your conference or K-12 Board may need to give their approval. Be sure to complete criminal background checks on all volunteers who will chaperone on your trip. This is essential for your students' safety. Adventist Risk Management requires

that all drivers complete a driver application indicating their personal driving record. Go to <http://www.adventistrisk.org> for safety resources including their “Field Trip/Outing Planner” (15-passenger vans are not permitted). Drivers are required to have high liability insurance. See if Risk Management requires specific trip insurance for your event.

Make sure that your students will have safe transportation and excellent supervision. Each staff member in attendance should have each student's emergency contact information as well as a copy of his or her notarized, consent-to-treat form in case of illness or injury. Along with this form, I always have a copy of the student's immunization records, allergies, and medical history. Students under duress may not be able to quickly remember this important information, and some children may not know it.

You and your staff and teachers must develop policies and detailed plans *before* discussing them with participants. Then you can share them briefly with the parents, students, and adults who will be chaperoning the trip. If parents attend, make it clear that your rules supersede theirs. Participating adults must be informed about the rules in advance, and agree to follow the required procedures. Will your students be expected to stay together? What are they to do in the case of an emergency? How will you stay in contact if the group becomes separated? Who is in charge? What rules are being given to the students? What resources are available if a student misbehaves? Having the answers to these, and other, questions in advance helps to ensure safety and unanimity within the staff.

Get Started!

The impact of a service curriculum on the lives of your students will be eternal. Start today! First, define your goals. What do you hope to accomplish by implementing an “others-focused” environment in your classroom? How will you reach those

goals? “The life on earth is the beginning of the life in heaven; education on earth is an initiation into the principles of heaven; the lifework here is a training for the lifework there. What we now are, in character and holy service, is the sure foreshadowing of what we shall be.”⁵

Your yearly plans should begin with worship and Bible-class discussions on our commission to serve others. The students will be naturally led into fun, simple, local projects where they can begin to get involved. Larger, more complex outreach projects can then be introduced.

Finally, be certain that your own heart is fed. Matthew 10:8 tells us, “freely you have received, freely give.” Pray that your young people will be open to the Holy Spirit, and a blessing is guaranteed! ✍



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REFERENCES

1. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1948), vol. 2, p. 632.
2. Provides a safe way to fundraise for charities: <http://www.pennies.org/wars.html>.
3. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1903), p. 268.
4. The Youth Ministries section lists many books with dramas, short stories, lesson starters, etc. Spend a couple of hours scanning books before you buy. The Performance Tracks are valuable resources, as well as split-track CD's containing praise songs—these will indicate on the cover that they contain a split track.
5. Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1958), p. 360.