

PRESSING FORWARD,

During the 2015-2020 quinquennium, the General Conference Department of Education had the privilege of conducting a Leadership, Education, and Development (LEAD) Conference at Annual Council, October 2016, which extended into additional regional LEAD conferences in different parts of the world and subsequent developments in K-12 education and in higher education. We worked with denominational church and educational leaders to update the handbooks on medical, dental, and pharmacy education, and theological and ministerial education. The framework for endorsement by the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education was revitalized to affirm the unique role and contributions of those in theological and ministerial education. We also strengthened the special work being done for Adventist students in non-Adventist colleges and universities by going digital with the *Dialogue* journal.

Educating for Eternity: LEAD and Subsequent Regional Conferences

Education was placed in the driver's seat during the quinquennium! Every year, the General Conference conducts a LEAD conference for members of its Executive Committee. With the newly voted leadership in place, the 2016

TOGETHER

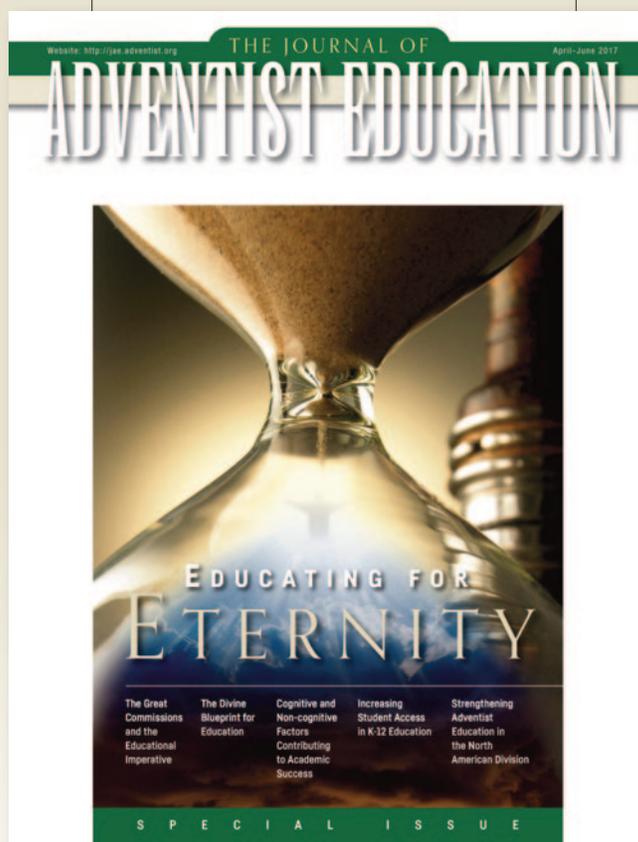


Figure 1. The special April-June 2017 issue of *The Journal of Adventist Education*[®] published plenary presentations from the 2016 LEAD Conference at Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

LEAD conference had the theme of “Educating for Eternity.” Plenary presentations made at the conference were published and shared with the general public through a special issue of *THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION*[®] (see Figure 1).¹ The conference was then expanded to four other LEAD conferences over the next 16 months.² Altogether, it involved 1,234 denominational church and educational leaders, treasurers, and university presidents meeting in different parts of the world. Expressing appreciation that treasurers had been invited to participate in these regional conferences, one educator whispered, “Now we can have a serious conversation!”

George Knight’s book, *Educating for Eternity*,³ set the tone for the LEAD conferences, with a philosophical overview boldly punctuated by his assertion that, “An Adventist educational ministry that has lost its hold on the apocalyptic vision has failed—not just partially, but totally.”⁴ Each regional LEAD conference met for three-and-a-half days and consisted of plenary presentations combined with half days of small working groups that focused on how to implement the objectives voted at Annual Council 2016.⁵ There were presentations relating to data and trends on the percentage of Adventist teachers, enrollment figures, financial

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barriers to enrollment, and outcomes of enrollment in Adventist schools such as improved retention in church, higher rates of marriage to an Adventist, and mature faith development. A statement on Adventist education was voted at Annual Council 2016 (see Sidebar), and this was accompanied by a cascade of initiatives across the world field, some of which are described in this article.

K-12 Education

Churches in the Shape of Schools

Andrew Mutero, director of education for the East-Central Africa Division (ECD), and Edgard Luz, then director of education for the South American Division (SAD), collaborated to help ECD develop capacity, expand education, and build schools. From February 1 to 13, 2017, a group of African church and education leaders visited primary, secondary, and tertiary schools in São Paulo and Brasília, Brazil, to study school design, learn about best practices in marketing and managing schools, and develop action plans for advancing the ministry of education in their institution or field. They also observed the role of the Brazil Publishing House in supporting education. The group included union leaders, especially ECD Board of Education members, university council chairs, chancellors, institutional managers/treasurers, publishing leaders, and selected other union and conference administrators.

The SAD provided an inspiring model for Africa. President Erton Kohler explained, “We don’t have schools. Rather, we have churches that we build in the shape of schools!” Schools are a powerful engine for church growth and discipleship in this division, where the church is young and energetic. These concepts found a ready reception among the African leaders.

Immediately upon returning from Brazil, the group participated in one of the four regional LEAD conferences, this one held in Rwanda, for church and educational leaders from ECD, the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, and the West-Central Africa Division. Informed by what they learned in Bra-

Education, viewed in the context of the great conflict between good and evil, is a ministry involving the home, church, and school. In the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one. Seventh-day Adventist education is a divine imperative, not a privileged option, and it is at the core of God’s redemptive processes. In God’s ideal all His people should experience the transforming power of Christ-centered education.

Such education is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, the emotional, the social, and the spiritual powers. It addresses the whole person in a wholistic manner and extends through the whole period of existence open to human beings, including into eternity. Its aim is to cultivate in students character that exemplifies principles of love, grace, truth, obedience, honor, integrity, justice, diligence, and purity that will make them effective disciples of Jesus and a positive force for the stabilization, edification, and uplifting of society.

The source of this education has as its foundation the Word of God. Godliness, that is, godlikeness, is its goal. Every human being is created in the image of God and endowed with a power similar to that of the Creator—individuality and power to think and to do. True education is designed to develop this power, to cultivate thinkers who are not mere reflectors of other people’s thoughts. Seventh-day Adventist education, provides a sustained and transformational environment that attempts to turn human beings from their self-serving, destructive lifestyles to a life lived in harmony with God’s highest ideals for humanity.

To these ends Seventh-day Adventist education compels the involvement of families, church members and leaders, and educators who believe that all true knowledge and genuine development have their source in God. They collaborate to serve under the power of God, in the wisdom of Christ, and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They seek to inspire passionate commitments in students to the message and global mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, leading them to reach the highest standards in spiritual intelligence and academic achievement as they prepare for unselfish service.

They are committed to modeling and providing to students paths of continuous progress in academic, physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual expansion, advancing them as fast and as far as possible as responsible members of the Church, and citizens of this world and the world to come.

This statement is based on and draws largely from *True Education*, an adaptation of *Education* by Ellen G. White, along with the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its scriptural support includes: Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; John 17:16-17; Ps. 19:1-6; Ps. 33:6-9; Ps. 32:8-9; Gen. 2:7; John 3:16; Rom. 1:3-4; Eph. 2: 4-10; 2 Pet. 1:5; 2 Pet. 3: 18; Eph. 2:8-10; Eph. 6:4; Rom. 12: 1-2; 2 Pet. 3:13; Deut. 6:6-9; Deut. 11:19; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Tim. 3:15,16; James 1:5, James 3:1; Eccl. 7:12; Jer. 3:17, Jer. 33:2-3; Col. 2:8; Col. 3:16; Dan. 1:17; Tit. 2:7-8; Prov. 16:16; Prov. 18:15; Prov. 4: 13; Prov. 9:10; Prov. 16:3; Prov. 22:6; Prov. 23:12; Isa. 54:13.

zil and through the conference, the energy and excitement was palpable!⁶

From Concept to Action in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

To illustrate the power that an idea

can have, consider this example: Rudatinya Mwangachuchu, North East Congo Union Mission president, was one of the attendees. Upon his return to Goma, DRC, he lost no time in implementing lessons learned. The union mission purchased a house and

lot next to the union compound and built a school there. They started with five children in 2018. When the younger ones would start to cry, the teachers bundled them up and carried them on their backs—just as all mothers do in this part of the world—and before long, the whimpers would cease, and the loved and reassured children were ready to learn. These children learned to love their teachers and school, and three years later, this same school (Bethel School) had enrolled 480 children and needed four buses to transport students. Construction of a three-story building is under way, and Mwangachuchu anticipates

that the school will grow to 1,000 students.

In the DRC, the government has partnered with Adventist educators, and the church administers some 1,200 schools in the country. A full-time Seventh-day Adventist liaison has his office at the Central Kivu Field compound for the 326 primary and secondary schools it administers. The largest number of teachers in ECD are those teaching in the DRC, so Adventist education is at work not only in schools owned and operated by the church but also in those it coordinates in collaboration with the government.

Remodeling Administrative Offices and a Factory Into Schools

In another part of the world, then Director of Education Vladimir Tkachuk, along with the leadership of the Euro-Asia Division, had a vision of opening 50 schools and 50 training centers between 2015 and 2020 across the vast territory of the former Soviet Union all the way to Siberia. In 2018, Tkachuk was voted to become the division treasurer, which strengthened the link between vision and alignment of resources.

The leaders of the Bukovinskaya Conference took an action to move their offices into a local church so that their



(1) Excited children at Bethel Adventist School, Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, give General Conference Director of Education Lisa Beardsley-Hardy a high-five greeting; (2) A factory in Tiachiv, Ukraine, which was turned into a school, opened with 36 children in September 2016; (3) Students at this school, called the Happy Place Seventh-day Adventist School, eating in the cafeteria, and (4) working together in the classroom. Photo 1, courtesy of Lisa Beardsley-Hardy; Photos 2, 3, and 4, courtesy of Vladimir Tkachuk.

headquarters building could be used as a school in Chernovtsy, Ukraine. Their opening enrollment of 30 children quickly grew to 200. The Western Ukrainian Conference also moved its operations into a church building in order to convert their three-story headquarters building into a school. The church leadership in Chisinau, Moldova, followed suit and remodeled their headquarters, making it a new school in 2018. One Ukrainian businessman even turned his factory into an Adventist school!⁷

Affirming the Role of the Pastor in Adventist Education

When home, school, and church work together, the combination of parents, teachers, and pastors produces “a threefold cord [that] is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12, KJV). The role of the pastor as a gatekeeper to Adventist education cannot be overestimated. “Adventist Education: The Pastor’s Role on the Front Lines of the Great Controversy”⁸ headlined the June 2017 special issue of *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors* (see Figure 2).⁹ Affirming the importance of the pastor’s role in education, Jiří Moskala, dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.), announced that all Master of Divinity students now take a course and have experience with the ministry of education. Moskala believes that church schools must be “powerful evangelistic centers for building bridges in the community.” They can be centers for creative programs that draw people to the school who might not readily come to events in the church. “The school,” he says, “should be a church during the week.”¹⁰

Higher Education

Accreditation of Institutions

A core function of the General Conference Department of Education is to ensure that all colleges and universities operated by Seventh-day Adventists around the world can be accredited as operating at an international level of competence while also meet-

ing the criteria that distinguish Adventist education and ethos. It does this through an independent board, the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (AAA). A primary purpose of AAA is to ensure that a degree issued by any of our higher education institutions can be accepted by all universities in the system. Accrediting tertiary institutions involves the voluntary services of many academic colleagues and peer reviewers. More

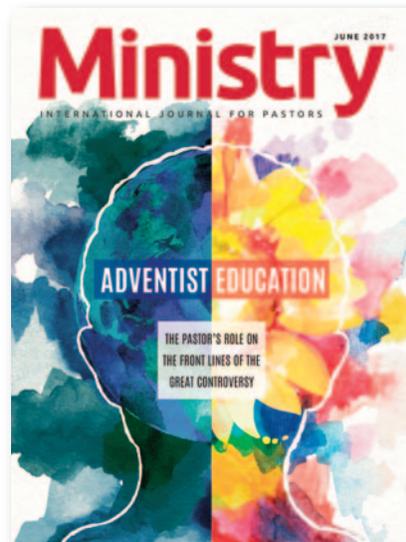


Figure 2. Special issue of *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors* on Adventist education, June 2017.

than 1,000 served as volunteers during the past quinquennium, with an average of five experts for each of the 228 accreditation site visits conducted. Our heartfelt thanks go to each of them. We could not do this work without them.

Theological and Ministerial Education and Endorsement of Professors

For individual professors, there is also a mechanism for recognizing professional competence and affirming their unique ministry in higher education. During the past quinquennium, an updated process of endorsement was adopted by the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE). The board that oversees this process is independent of AAA, and independent of the boards

of any university whose professors receive endorsement. Upon recommendation of the employing university and its division Board of Ministerial and Theological Education, IBMTE has endorsed some 425 professors of religion and theology in 10 of our world divisions, as well as in three of the four universities operated by the General Conference (Andrews University, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies [AIAS], and the Adventist University of Africa).

In Kenya, when this idea was introduced, some secondary religion teachers in the audience asked, “Could we be endorsed, too?” They were eager for an opportunity to be recognized as trusted expositors of what the Bible teaches and as members of the global fraternity of Seventh-day Adventist religion teachers.

During this past quinquennium, the General Conference Department of Education facilitated the work of the IBMTE to update its standards for theological and ministerial education, starting with the competencies required of a Seventh-day Adventist minister. In order to better describe the context for ministry and competencies needed, its handbook was completely reworked through a series of working sessions in four locations around the world: Andrews University (U.S.A.), AIAS (The Philippines), Avondale College [now University] (Australia), and the Adventist University of Africa (Kenya). The revised handbook entitled, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial and Theological Education*, was completed in 2017 and is available online in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese,¹¹ as these are the languages in which all major resources developed by the department are published.

Education in the Health Professions of Medicine, Dentistry, and Pharmacy

In 2020, the General Conference Health Professions Education Committee (HPEC) began revising its 2010 accreditation guidelines for the estab-



**White Coat Ceremony for medical students at Adventist School of Medicine of East-Central Africa (ASOME), Kigali, Rwanda.
Photo courtesy of Lisa Beardsley-Hardy.**

lishment of new schools of medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy. Sessions of this committee were held at the General Conference, at Loma Linda University, the denomination's leading health-sciences institution, and in a series of teleconferences. The revised guidelines entitled, *Accreditation Guidelines for Establishing Schools of Medicine, Dentistry, and Pharmacy*, are available online at <http://www.adventistaccreditingassociation.org>.

Medicine. During this past quinquennium, the church's fourth, fifth, and sixth medical schools each held their first graduation of newly minted physicians. These schools are the Benjamin Carson Sr. School of Medicine at Babcock University (Nigeria, June 4, 2017), Peruvian Union University (January 27, 2019), and the Adventist University of the Philippines (June 23, 2019).

The church's seventh medical school, the Adventist School of Medi-

cine of East-Central Africa (ASOME), at the Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA), was inaugurated in Rwanda on September 2, 2019, by General Conference President Ted Wilson and by Republic of Rwanda President Paul Kagame. Enrollment of medical students and the start of instruction, however, was delayed until March 9, 2021, due to COVID-19 related public-health restrictions.

Dentistry and pharmacy. New dental schools were opened during the quinquennium at Bahia Adventist College (Brazil, 2016) and River Plate University (Argentina, 2017). Two new pharmacy programs were opened at Manila Adventist College (Philippines, 2018) and Brazil Adventist University in São Paulo (Brazil, 2019).

Adventist History Points to the Future

College and university presidents are the spiritual leaders for their campuses. A few university presidents have theological degrees, but rarely in

denominational history. Many are graduates of public universities with doctoral degrees in areas such as the natural and behavioral sciences, business, finance, and the humanities. As such, they have not studied Adventist denominational history in depth. Yet, college and university presidents are responsible for seeing that the mission of Adventist education and the quinquennial strategic plan, "Reach the World," are implemented on their campuses.

An Adventist History Study tour provided college and university presidents with firsthand exposure to the places where our Adventist pioneers lived and worked. It also provided a context for how Adventist mission and theology were formed, and built confidence in the role and prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White, then and now. Seventy-three tertiary-level presidents and division directors of education from around the world joined together in a 10-day study tour covering some

3,000 miles of riding and walking in the footsteps of the pioneers while visiting Adventist history sites in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, New York, and Michigan (U.S.A.). One busload heard the stories in Spanish and Portuguese, the other in English. All presentations on site were translated.

No Adventist gathering would be complete without taking up an offering. The group rallied together and contributed US\$41,386 in cash and pledges to restore the Little Red School House on the William Miller farm.¹²

The study tour was a treasured

experience, that bound the group together on multiple levels. The educational leaders appreciated the affirmation that they are part of a strong network of consecrated peers with whom they may confer to make better decisions, and who are partners in the vital, global educational work of the church. As a result, they returned to their universities with renewed vision and enhanced capacity to provide leadership in carrying out the quinquennial strategic plan and the mission of Seventh-day Adventist education.

**College and University Dialogue
and Public Campus Ministry**

Adventist education is broader in

outlook than just operating schools. It also has a deep concern for Adventist students enrolled in non-Adventist schools, by far the larger part of our church's young people. In partnership with the General Conference Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries and Youth Ministries, the GC Department of Education collaborates in the area of Public Campus Ministry to disciple university students, publishing *College and University Dialogue*¹³ in four languages to help students know their faith, live their convictions, and share their faith with classmates and others on public campuses.



Clockwise from top: Adventist History Study Tour group at Ascension Rock, Hiram Edson's barn, and singing at Annie Smith's grave. Photos courtesy of the GC Department of Education.

**THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION®:
Serving Adventist Educators Worldwide**

Adventist education continues to thrive because of dedicated teachers, administrators, and educational personnel. The General Conference Department of Education supports this group of professionals through THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION® (JAE), a professional journal for Seventh-day Adventist educators worldwide. JAE seeks to inspire teachers and leaders to model and nurture biblical values, pursue excellence through encouraging caring, competent practice, and above all, educate for eternity. This award-winning peer-reviewed professional journal is for teachers and educational administrators at all levels. Each issue features informational articles on a variety of topics relating to Christian education with practical applications of Christian education and the integration of faith and learning in the classroom.

In 2017, JAE transitioned to an all-digital format, well before COVID-19 struck and dispersed educators most needed it.¹⁴ The digital version is now available to anyone who wishes to receive it, free of charge through the new JAE App available from the Apple App Store (iOS devices) and Google Play (Android devices), and in HTML and PDF formats on the JAE website: <http://jae.adventist.org>.¹⁵ Also in 2017, JAE collaborated with CIRCLE (<https://CIRCLE.adventist.org>) to launch Adventist Educators Blog, a digital “staff room” for educators to share best practices and insights on professional development and the ministry of teaching among the 113,640 educators employed by Adventist schools, colleges, and universities around the world.¹⁶ For *College and University Dialogue*, JAE, and Adventist Educators Blog, original articles are published in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish, and can be translated into several other languages using web-based translation tools built into the websites and apps.

Conclusion

No one could have anticipated the impact of COVID-19 on Adventist education worldwide. By the early months of 2020, as the quinquennium drew to a close, the pandemic began to shut schools. We salute the heroic efforts of teachers and administrators to quickly adapt their modes of instruction. Schools with sufficient resources to do so moved instruction online. But schools in rural areas and in large parts of Africa and Asia had neither the resources nor the digital infrastructure to make online education available. The pandemic has elicited creativity, perseverance, and sacrifice by teachers, parents, and church members to stay the course in the noble cause of educating our young people for eternity. Undaunted, under the banner of Christ, we press forward, together. ✍



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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Presentations from the 2016 LEAD Conference were published in the April-June 2017 issue of THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION®. The entire issue is available online at <https://jae.adventist.org/2017.79.3>, and the print version is can be downloaded from <https://jae.adventist.org/assets/public/issues/en/2017/3/2017-79-3.pdf>.
2. Marcos Paseggi, “Adventist Education Training Goes Global With Pan-African Conference,” *Adventist News Network* (February 23, 2017): <https://adventist.news/es/news/adventist-education-training-goes-global-with-pan-african-conference>.
3. George R. Knight’s book, *Educating for Eternity: A Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Education* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2016). The plenary presentation to the 2016 LEAD Conference is available

at <https://jae.adventist.org/2017.3.2>.

4. Knight, *ibid.*, 134. Italics in original.
5. See Table 1 for a breakdown of participants, location, dates, number of attendees, and percent of Adventist enrollment represented at LEAD conferences 2016-2018.
6. LEAD 2017, Kigali, Rwanda: <https://vimeo.com/205378849>.
7. Andrew McChesney, “Businessman Turns Ukrainian Factory Into Adventist School,” *Adventist Mission* (n.d.): <https://www.adventistmission.org/businessman-turns-ukrainian-factory-into-adventist-school>.
8. See LEAD 2017, Kigali, Rwanda: <https://vimeo.com/205378849>.
9. See Figure 2 for a cover picture for an issue of the June 2017 *Ministry* magazine: <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2017/06/>.
10. For more, see Jiri Moskala, “The Church School: Where Churches and Schools Collaborate in Mission,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 80:2 (April-June 2018): 4-8: <https://jae.adventist.org/2018.2.2>.
11. International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE), *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial and Theological Education* (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2017): https://www.academia.edu/40792098/HANDBOOK_OF_SEVENTH_DAY_ADVENTIST_MINISTERIAL_AND_THEOLOGICAL_EDUCATION_International_Board_of_Ministerial_and_Theological_Education_General_Conference_of_Seventh_Day_Adventists.
12. For more information, see the following articles: Faith-Ann McGarrell, “Adventist History Study Tour: Walking in the Footsteps of the Pioneers,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 82:1 (January-March 2020): 36-41: <https://jae.adventist.org/2020.82.1.9>; and Lisa M. Beardsley-Hardy, “Little Red School House Restoration Project,” *ibid.*: <https://jae.adventist.org/2020.82.1.10>.
13. *College and University Dialogue* (<http://dialogue.adventist.org>) is also available as an app for iPhones and Android devices.
14. For more on the transition from print to digital, see “We Are Digital!” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 79:2 (January-March 2017): 3: <https://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae201779020301.pdf>.
15. The transition to digital was one more step toward fulfilling the intent of the 1976 Annual Council vote: “To request employing organizations (conferences, academies, colleges, and universities) to provide THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION for all teachers at all levels,” both in NAD and overseas (Action of October 21, 1976, GC Committee Minutes, 76-400): <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1976-10b.pdf>, 40.
16. For more on Adventist Educators Blog, see “New Adventist Educator Blog,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* (2017): <https://jae.adventist.org/new-adventist-educator-blog>.