

## Who is on the Bus?

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Earlier this year thirty-two members of the Apple Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church travelled from Toronto to Oklahoma City by bus to attend the wedding ceremony of one of its members. As we were about to depart, the driver, Ralph Janes remarked, "This bus is bound for Oklahoma, a trip that will last approximately thirty-six hours. You have no control over who is driving or exactly when you will get there, but you do have control how much you enjoy the experience." Many chuckled, but he was so right. Fortunately, it was a memorable trip in spite of its length. Everyone was quite willing to sacrifice privacy, comfort and other amenities to achieve the goal of reaching Oklahoma to participate in the wedding celebration. Thus a warm, social, and spiritual climate was established.



There seemed to be an endless stream of infectious laughter, amusing anecdotes, animated discussions as well as homemade delicacies contributing to the camaraderie. The group used that which was under its control to realize the ultimate goal.

As I thought of us as educators commencing another school year, a number of parallels from that experience swirled through my mind. Full of plans and expectations we have boarded the bus of Christian bound for the ultimate destination, heaven. There, the marriage of education and redemption would be finally consummated in the celebration of saved souls. Therefore as a colleague and fellow passenger one needs to ask the question, "Who is on the bus?" the answer to which would determine the quality of experience and the success of the journey.

In the teaching vocation there are factors that are beyond one's control. Very often one may have no input with regards to students who are assigned to the class, the budget that is available, or the composition of the staff.

Each one however, has the privilege of being a catalyst that can contribute to the creation of a school climate conducive to the joy and satisfaction of all.

One of the first observations gleaned from the trip was that on the bus of Christian Education there is control over one's commitment which will determine the level of enthusiasm of accepting and ensuring that the vision and goals established are realized.

The second parallel is the humbling recognition that the challenges of Christian Education can be overwhelming, the journey long and the future blurred. However, a strong connection with the Master Teacher is available and indispensable. From Him who is in ultimate control and has called us to this ministry, emanates the power, confidence and reassurance that enable us to enjoy a rewarding experience as we trust in his guidance.

The third lesson gathered was the fact that while one may have no control of the choice of colleagues with whom we must interact; respect, tolerance, and professionalism are qualities at our disposal. As we strive to display these traits the climate of the school is enhanced, collegiality breeds confidence to share a burden, gratitude for prayerful support, and appreciation for mentorship unconditionally given.

As I viewed the tentative interaction of the group on the bus initially compared to the gregarious spirit exhibited by the end of the trip, it was very apparent that many were drawn into an ever widening circle by the caring concern exhibited for each other. Each year there are students assigned to classes who initially are just faces and names on a register. The caring teacher recognizes that it is a privilege and priority to establish a classroom climate; an environment that signals very clearly that everyone is precious and welcomed regardless of the challenge involved.

Finally every teacher does have control over creative initiatives however, the available resources may be limited to accommodate the various learning styles of the students.

This factor was firmly etched in my mind as I observed members transform the bus into a decorated mobile room with helium balloons to celebrate a birthday, enjoy an inspiring sing-a-long using songs that revolved around travel and using passing captivating scenes as themes for spiritual discussion.

Who is on the bus? It is my prayer that when the final evaluation of that question is done by the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ, that because of commitment, connection, collegiality, care and creativity we, along with the children entrusted to us will hear the words, "Well Done."