

Jigsaw Puzzles and Schools

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At the end of the school year it was time to clean out all the accumulated junk from the classrooms. In the pile of garbage from the teachers, I came across a jigsaw puzzle. It had made itself onto the junk pile for one reason. It had been junked because a few of the pieces were missing. There is very little use for a puzzle when you realize that one or more of the pieces are missing.



In a school you work with many different jigsaw pieces. Each division, each teacher, each program, each student, each parent, each supporting church is a piece of the puzzle. When all the pieces are in place you get great satisfaction in declaring the year 'A Success'. There have been years when there have been some pieces missing. This could have been as a result of too many discipline situations, or the academic results were disappointing especially when you spent a lot of time focusing on a particular subject, or the spiritual component was not as strong as it could have been. Each year I ask myself what pieces are missing in my school. Sometimes the puzzle is complete but most times there are pieces that need to be found or there are pieces that need a little repair before they can be placed back in the puzzle.

Think about some of the pieces that make up a puzzle and compare those pieces to your school, whether it is a small one-room school or a large boarding academy. Every puzzle is different and every piece of the puzzle is different. Just like in puzzles, you will get many pieces that are very similar and could almost fit into another spot, so too in a school, there are many parts that could be placed in another use, but no matter how hard you wish them to fit in another place, they only go in one place – the right place. No two pieces of the puzzle are the same nor are any of the pieces interchangeable. The Grade Two teacher is in her classroom because that is where she fits best, just like the Physics teacher would not fit in the Grade Two classroom. Try having the principal teach Kindergarten for a day! Have you tried to fit a puzzle piece in the wrong place? Then you know how frustrating it can be.

Every puzzle and every school is different. Every puzzle has a different number of pieces, just like every school has a different number of pieces. Your puzzle pieces are all different and that's also what makes each finished school puzzle different. What is it that is stopping your school program from being complete?

At the end of a large puzzle I get a kick out of being able to see the last piece dropped into the puzzle, even if I might not have been the one that spent hours getting it near to completion. There is a sense of accomplishment, a sense of finishing, of knowing the whole puzzle works. That's the way God made our school system to work and that's what our goal should be to see the complete puzzle, the complete school, the complete student.

And in the end, God sat back and saw that it was good ...