

Written Off.....That's For an Auditor

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The school year was rapidly drawing to a close when the parents of Sally-Ann were invited by her grade seven teacher to attend a parent-teacher's conference. During that particular year, their daughter had been experiencing academic challenges. Concerned about the situation, the parents exerted every effort to work closely with the school system. However the expected progress was not realized. Sally-Ann began to experience an unusually high level of stress and became increasingly socially withdrawn.



During the scheduled interview the parents were surprised to hear the teacher suggest their consider transferring Sally-Ann to another school that may meet her needs. It was also recommended that she be guided into a vocational stream because it would appear that postsecondary university education would not be in her best interest. The parents wondered to themselves *why would the teacher express an opinion that seemed to suggest Sally-Ann was being written off?*

The parents prayerfully and carefully considered the matter. They were disappointed that new initiatives were not suggested that could involve both school and home to remedy the situation. During the summer their daughter was enrolled into a remedial program to upgrade her math and language arts skills. The non-Adventist parents then became aware of our school system and decided to enroll Sally-Ann in eighth grade for the following year. At the end of the year Sally-Ann not only graduated with honors, but was the proud recipient of the *Most Improved Student Award*.

What made the difference in Sally-Ann's positive transformation? The support of her parents remained constant. The qualifications of the two teachers involved during her junior high school years were identical. However, one teacher connected with Sally-Ann while the other did not. One teacher saw liabilities, while the other saw possibilities. It would seem, therefore, that a teacher's attitude is very significant in determining the failure or success of a student.

The grade seven teacher had written off this student just as an auditor would do when a liability exists that is deemed a loss and most likely may not be recovered. The caring Christ centered grade eight teacher on the other hand, saw the same entity as an asset with positive potential.

Sally-Ann not only completed her secondary program but six years later graduated from Andrews University with a Masters degree in Education. At both celebrations, sitting next to her parents was the grade eight teacher who made such a significant difference in her life. In an expression of gratitude, Sally-Ann made a profound statement when she said, *I am going to be a remedial teacher because I am convinced that no child should be written off. Thanks to my supportive parents, a caring grade eight teacher and a Christ*

centered community I made it. Writing off should be left to auditors dealing with financial operations. We must be in the business of redemption.

It should be noted that since graduating from eighth grade, Sally-Ann must have had many excellent teachers and professors, but it was the grade eight teacher who had made such an indelible, positive impression on her.

In a society where there is a constant pressure for ‘instant’ results, and teachers are often caught in the rush to complete the curriculum as outlined, children such as Sally-Ann fall by the wayside because they do not fit into the one size fit all strategy of a particular learning environment and as a result, they are sometimes left behind, or worse still, written off.

Thankfully, in our Seventh-day Adventist school system, teachers are conscious of the fact that education and redemption are one, and that each child entrusted to their care is a gift from the Lord and a potential soul for the kingdom. Every Adventist Christian realizes that upon their shoulders rests a mantle of sacred responsibility and privilege. Recognizing that each child is uniquely endowed by God, it is not surprising therefore, and that a variety of teaching strategies are employed in our schools to address the needs of each student. Parents and students certainly appreciate the fact that in the Christ centered learning atmosphere, the Seventh-day Adventist Christian teacher, because of conviction and commitment, writes off no student. God has a plan and purpose for each life. The teacher is the catalyst in partnership with the home and church, helping to transform every possibility to a Christ directed reality. Let us continue faithfulness to our calling until that day when Christ the Master teacher shall appear, and we do hear the most rewarding words, *Well Done Thou Good and Faithful Teacher.*