

Attending to Our Children

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A quote on the cover of a recent report from BC's Provincial Health Officer caught my attention: "The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children." I read on. "The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children--their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born."

As I pondered the power of this statement, I mentally changed two words in the quote to make it more personal and relevant to me. How does this sound? "The true measure of OUR CHURCH's standing is how well it attends to its children."

I believe that much of the success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today can be credited to how well we attend to our children. We have followed God's guidance and counsel by providing Christian education for our children. That education may be offered in a one-room school or in a K- 12 academy, but whatever the package, the standard is always the same . . . dedicated teachers using faith-based curriculum, modeling Christian values, encouraging healthy lifestyle choices, providing emotionally and physically safe environments, with church members sacrificing financially to support their schools.

Parents, church members and teachers include children in social events, church services and outreach programs. And, of course, they teach them that their true value is the price that was paid for them. How could they not feel loved, valued and included?

We, as members of Seventh-day Adventist communities, attend well to our children's needs as we provide Christian education for them. But that task is becoming more difficult each year. School operating is more and more challenging with insufficient funds being at the top of the list of struggles.

A recent article in the *Adventist Review*, entitled "The 4/14 Window", reminds us of the importance of evangelizing our children by emphasizing that "...the 4/14 window is the demographic grouping that is the most receptive and moldable to any spiritual and developmental input."¹ How fortunate that our children, at just the right age, have dedicated Christian teachers who are experts at integrating faith and learning and who are as concerned with their students' character growth and spiritual connection as they are about their academic progress. Research states that most people who will ever make a decision to follow Jesus will do so between the ages of 4 and 14. Ellen White writes in *The Desire of Ages* that "...children are the most susceptible to the teachings of the gospel; their hearts are open to divine influences, and strong to retain the lessons received"²

Our children are the future of our church. Our educational system is the largest, most intentional, most effective evangelistic tool we have. My question is, when will the financial decision makers in our organization start funding our educational system as evangelism? I

believe it needs to be now so we can proudly say that our church's standing is strong because we attend well to our children.

Resources:

¹ Koh, Linda Mei Lin. "The 4/14 Window." *The Adventist Review*, 11 November 2010. Accessed December 15, 2010, from <http://www.adventistreview.org/issue.php?issue=2010-1536&page=18>.

² White, Ellen G. *Desire of Ages*, p. 515.