

You CAN Teach an Old Dog New Tricks

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My teaching career began in a one room school. It was an overwhelming experience, but I really enjoyed it. From there I taught in two-room schools where I taught Grades 1-4 or 5-8. It didn't take me long to discover that I preferred having all the grades in a one-room school. I liked the sense of family that was created by having the wide spectrum of ages in the classroom.

After I got married and started a family I stayed home to raise my children. When my children reached school age we did not live in an area where there was an Adventist school so I taught my children at home. We had a lot of fun together. A turn of events in our family brought me back to the education scene and I was able to get a job in one room school. In fact, the next two schools I taught in had started to relieve parents who were home schooling because there wasn't an Adventist school in their area so they started one of their own. My years of home schooling gave me a common bond with the parents and they created a wonderful support team.

Teaching in a one room school with a one church constituency provides a very focused support base. The church family becomes very involved as they support the various programs of the school. The school can focus its outreach programs to support the needs of the church and an integrated sense of community is formed.

However, my life was destined to change when my children grew beyond the elementary grades to high school. Since I didn't want to send my children away to school, I requested a school change near an academy. I was able to get a job teaching kindergarten four mornings a week and I taught some high school classes to make up a full time position. A piece of cake, or so I thought! How could such a light load even compare to orchestrating school for a grade span of 1 - 9? I made the move feeling that I would soon have a life outside of school. Those of you who teach in larger schools know that I had a lot to learn!

My colleagues graciously kept their mouths closed regarding my glib expressions of happy relief to have such an easy job. As my world spun out of orbit each colleague stepped in and did their part to help me land on my feet and adjust to this new world of education. It was so completely different from my previous years of teaching that I felt like a duck out of water looking for sign of familiarity.

Some of the major differences that threw me involved relationships. In the past, it had been so easy to develop relationships with the church family, parents, and the students. However, in a seven church constituency, it proved to be very difficult to form those close knit relationships with the church and parents. Developing relationships with the students proved to be easier said than done, at least in the high school level. Having the students for one class period at a time and sharing them with other teachers made it hard to develop relationships with them. Often times it felt like they viewed the teacher as the enemy and it was not easy to dispel that notion, when I only saw the students for such a short time. In a one-room school the teacher is involved in almost every activity the student participates in: scholastic, outreach, field trips, church socials, etc. This adjustment was the most overwhelming for me.

Nevertheless, I am adjusting and finding that there are plusses to teaching in a large school. Having

colleagues to confer with, belly ache to, and support has been a blessing. It has provided a whole new venue of skills that wouldn't otherwise be mine; like sponsoring a yearbook pushed me to developing my computer skills!