

Understanding our World

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While I have only been teaching a class of intermediate students for less than a year, one thing I have realized about them is that they are quickly coming into an awareness of themselves and those around them. At times I have almost come to the conclusion that there is no way that math, spelling, French or any other school subject can compete for their interest and attention with the events happening in their personal lives. However, I believe that we can capitalize on this emerging awareness by teaching the issues facing the world around them and exploring their important place in it.

I remember my grade seven teacher was passionate about environmental issues. He made us aware of the depleting forests and ozone layer and for the need to recycle. We celebrated Earth day and created posters to convey environmental messages to the rest of the school. I remember he even took us out to the forest and had us each hug a tree. His passion for the environment stuck with me for many years after I left his class and lives on within me today. I still do my best to recycle, stay familiar with environmental issues and now I convey the same respect for the environment to my students. I remember this teacher and his love for the natural world because of his passion for the subject and his desire that we all become aware of the issue and his encouragement that we become passionate about it too.

I believe that it is important to be passionate about learning. Not only of learning reading, science and writing, but also learning about the world around us-that we are all part of a world that needs our active participation in making it function. Choose your cause, be it humanitarian issues, the health message, or spreading the gospel, our students will pick up on our passion and will begin to see the world through a loving Christian perspective. They will also begin to grasp the importance of their role of service in it.

I did my student-teaching at a public school in a small prairie farming community at the time of the outbreak of the war in Iraq. The kids in my class were less than knowledgeable about world issues and events at the time. I felt that it was important that they become aware of the issues that our own and other countries were dealing with. While the students took an interest and gained a greater awareness and appreciation of world events, it occurred to me that I was only telling them half of the story. Being in a public school we were not able to discuss the "behind-the-scenes" story of the spiritual conflict that continues to unfold as world's history progresses towards its conclusion.

Now that I am teaching in an Adventist school I have the privilege of discussing openly the Great Controversy that involves not only the world at large, but also our own individual lives. I wonder how many of our students realize that they have been let in on the big "secret" about what is really going on in the world. For a group of kids who love to create and share secrets with one another, I would think that being in on the biggest secret in the universe should get them excited. And like all their secrets that they seem to never be able to keep, here is one that they should be encouraged to spread to the entire world.

The world is a complicated place and it can be discouraging and frightening if you do not seek to understand it first. I think that it is important that we teach our students to explore the issues that face them as individuals and as responsible members of this planet.