

Beyond Limitations

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‘To develop a strong three-way partnership between the home, school and churches which promotes and supports Christian education.’ North American Division Office of Education: *Journey to Excellence (Partnerships)*

Such describes the links which Adventist schools endeavor to foster in order to deliver a well-rounded educational product.

In this triad of connections, schools should be more than the third entity set apart from the other two—home and church—which are often considered as the main players. The need for interaction among all three is especially important in the wake of growing challenges inherent in our rapidly changing society, including technological advancement and the global expectation of cutting-edge pedagogical outcomes.

Too often the church school is left alone and afloat amidst a conglomeration of forces which tax the budget and the enrolment goals. This situation affects, not only the schools’ administration, but also its teaching staff. More and more teachers are faced with increasing challenges in delivering quality service in the classroom. But it is at this very juncture that the church and the home must unite their efforts to balance the existing disequilibrium.

The call to the church, corporately and individually, to hold up the arms of the church school is not to be viewed casually or with disinterest. The time has come for all members to take a personal interest in the well-being and effectiveness of our academic institutions, especially in practical terms, as various economies face more challenges. Ellen White “was shown by the angel of God that an institution should be established for the education of our youth” and saw that it would be “one of the greatest means ordained of God for the salvation of souls.” (Child Guidance, p.329)

For this reason . . . the salvation of souls . . . every effort should be put forth by all parties. As various schools seek resources to meet the present challenges, church and family members who have the means to assist can rise to the call. Such assistance would help church schools not only survive, but thrive, perhaps by recruiting assistants to raise teacher-student ratios or by purchasing much-needed resources to meet student needs.

Much can also be learned from other Adventist schools around the world. For example, Sydney Adventist College in Australia maintains small class sizes in order to focus on individual needs and better develop individual gifts and special abilities. Additionally, streaming enables students who master various concepts to progress to others in different rooms, while maintaining their place among their age level peers. Not all schools will be able to implement such a program, but such a global connection with sister schools can certainly inspire and challenge us.

Teaching staff can do much to initiate this kind of support, beginning with the development of favorable parent-teacher relations. I have set a personal goal for my keen and enthusiastic group of third and fourth graders . . . to purchase a computer and printer/copier for our classroom.

These tools are not only convenient but also essential for the times in which we live. Students who, for some reason, do not have access to a computer at home can benefit, and the teacher can more easily supervise a student rather than sending him/her to the computer laboratory or library.

Rather than waiting for the school to be able to provide such tools for our class, we are soliciting the help of what I call 'ancillary supporters.' As a result, our goal will be realized within the next two months. An equally important result of this venture is that our united efforts have provided my students with very relevant skills and experience. They appreciate the effort put forward and do not take their gifts for granted as they often did with materials that are automatically provided by the school. Also, having our own resources means ongoing maintenance and management. Recently, students suggested we have a class council. A president and committee were voted into office. Our goal of obtaining our own equipment was one of several stimulating ways to use this committee. Students undertook their tasks with a renewed sense of responsibility and ownership. The class committee will go on to oversee and make responsible decisions for maintaining our resources and, in this process, students will learn economy, management of resources, accountability and self-reliance, skills they will take with them when they leave school.

The involvement of our communities and churches extends beyond the tangible help provided. It gives students opportunities to learn life skills and lessons that cannot be taught completely through a text book. And as the recipients of external assistance, students become more inclined to give back to society.

The call for allied involvement is aptly summarized in the following thoughts taken from an interview E.G. White was invited to participate in. She noted that the "responsibility of the church for the education of young children" was ". . . a landmark meeting that would set the pattern for other church schools across the land." (*Selected Messages*, Vol. 3, p.207).

Resources:

- White, Ellen G., *Selected Messages Book 3*, Review and Herald Pub Assoc., Hagerstown, MD, 1980.
- White, Ellen G., *Child Guidance*, Southern Publishing Association, Nashville, TN, 1954.