

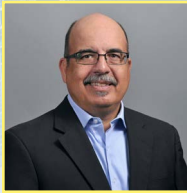


ILLINOIS Focus



Ron Aguilera, President

DOES SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST EDUCATION STILL HAVE VALUE?



I love Adventist Education! I am a product of Adventist schools and am forever grateful that my parents made it a priority to make sure their children received this blessing. I am forever indebted to the school's part in forming my character and helping to set a path toward God. I wish all Seventh-day Adventist families would experience the blessing and benefits of Adventist schools.

These days, we have a growing challenge in the area of Adventist Education. There are far fewer students and families who take advantage of this resource to help form their children. Far too many Adventist schools across Illinois and North America have closed in recent years. Many of the schools which once flourished are now either struggling or have closed. I desire to do all within my power to help our families raise our children in such a way that will significantly increase the likelihood that they will live eternally with our heavenly Father. Studies have shown that the triangle of focus (church involvement, SDA school attendance, and family worship and training) tremendously increases the likelihood that a child will pursue a life with God as an adult. Which leads me to the question, "Why would a parent

not do all they can do to improve the chances that their children will spend eternity with God?" Beyond that, I believe attending an Adventist school is very important to the development of our children. Satan is going about like a roaring lion trying his best to destroy our young people (1 Peter 5:8).

That is why today, I want to encourage each family to save, sacrifice, to find a way to place their

"In localities where there is a church, a school should be established, if there are no more than six children to attend." PH 131 6.3

"Establish schools for the children where there are churches. Where there are those who assemble to worship God, let there be schools for the children." PH 131 7.1

"We are far behind in what the Lord would have us do in this matter. There are places where our schools should have been in operation years ago. Let these now be

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children in Adventist Education. I want to encourage each church to give, to sacrifice, to financially support families who cannot afford to send their children to an Adventist school. What if there is no Adventist school nearby? I want to encourage our churches who have school-age children to make this a primary ministry, to sacrifice and open an Adventist school. Ellen G White had this to say about Adventist education:

"In all our churches, and wherever there is a company of believers, church schools should be established." PH 131 6.2

started under wise directors, that the children and youth may be educated in their own churches." PH131 7.2

I want to encourage you to consider this... if your church has six or more children, please seriously consider starting a school. Jesus is coming soon, and now is the time to boldly share Jesus through Adventist education.

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& MORE



We are blessed in Illinois with highly skilled teachers within our schools. As you know, most of our schools are multi-grade in nature. Each of our schools also has certified teachers within them. While this may sound like a matter of course, it is a huge blessing. In hiring teachers, we seek individuals with specific, highly-trained backgrounds that are skilled in the daily management of the different curriculums and students to ensure learning is occurring daily. Listed below are some of the fruits of our labors and general goals to address the overall Adventist education experience in Illinois.

IOWA TESTING FOR 2019 - 2020

Last fall, all our schools participated with the Iowa Standardized Tests. These provide us with a snapshot of where each child is performing academically. In Illinois, between the 2018 and 2019 tests, we witnessed a result that demonstrates something that is consistently presented about our schools. During the testing cycle of 2018, there were two groupings of quite low scores in reading and math. Those classes and students were

“... THE LONGER STUDENTS ARE WITHIN ADVENTIST EDUCATION, THE **BETTER** THE OUTCOME...”

identified and found to be new to the Adventist education system. We again compared them in the 2019 testing cycle. Those students showed a markedly significant increase in test scores from the 2018 tests, demonstrating that the longer students are within Adventist Education, the better the outcome academically!

2020 GOALS IN EDUCATION

GOAL ONE

As educators, we instruct our students on how to establish personal goals for their success. As an institution, the Illinois Conference Office of Education does this also. In conference with our various school leaders last fall, several goals were established providing guidance for the direction of education in Illinois Conference over the next year.

GOAL TWO

Identify home school families within the conference to determine ways to provide educational support in their journey with Christian Education. Home school participation with our conference activities such as Bible Fair and Small Schools Track and Field Day is offered.



Good News in EDUCATION

Ron Huff
Superintendent of Education

GOAL THREE

Digitally connect each classroom within the conference for the sharing of enrichment programming, peer collaboration, and staff communications. We have done some of this over the last year to determine the viability if the connections. Each of our schools is unique in what is technologically available because of costs and availability. While we were able to connect schools in different parts of the conference, not all schools or educators are on the same level when it comes to hardware, software, and teacher expertise.

PASSING THE GRADE

Many of you may have already heard, after several decades of working in schools, and conferences I am officially retiring at the end of this school year. It has been an incredible journey for me within Adventist Education, watching students grow and develop over the years. Many changes have occurred during my career with teaching and students. There has never been a dull moment! The lack of teachers and students in my daily life will be a challenge to fill. Thank you for allowing me to serve within the Illinois Conference!

North Shore Adventist Academy (NSAA)

IS...

Walter Turner, Principal, NSAA



NSAA IS ABOUT FAMILY

North Shore Adventist Academy students are surrounded by a loving environment, extending beyond the classroom, where they demonstrate care and concern for one another, cultivate relationships, and spiritual growth is encouraged. Our existence is nurtured by a very supportive constituent church, alumni, and Legacy Partners. These groups assist parents with their responsibility to raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by integrating God's truth in all areas of life. North Shore Adventist Academy is a refuge, a place under God's wings (Matthew 23:37), that allows young people the opportunity to become rooted and grounded in their faith without the onslaught of godless philosophies.

NSAA is a culturally diverse family legacy for students like Nathaniel (pictured) who came to NSAA this year following the horrific loss of

his firefighter father. We welcomed and surrounded him and his extended firefighter family with the love of Jesus.

We annually host family-bonding events like Fall Festivals, Fun Runs & Walks, Alumni Concerts, International Festivals, and Talent Shows that pull together our school community, church community, and the public community at large for the glory of God.

NSAA IS ABOUT SERVANT LEADERSHIP

North Shore Adventist Academy provides students with opportunities to serve God and others with humble attitudes while living courageously as Christian leaders.

Students lead out in Weeks of Prayer and various other worship experiences. They tutor other students needing extra assistance, understanding concepts, and completing assignments. Students also serve the elderly in our faith community and Chicago at large. Students from time-to-time also raise money and gather box items for those in need, such as those recovering from a catastrophic event, underprivileged families with children, and soldiers.

NSAA IS ABOUT A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

North Shore Adventist Academy prepares students to view all of life through the lens of Scripture, to deepen their commitment to Christ, and to develop personal convictions instead of being drowned in the polluting, corrupting influences of a secular worldview (2TT 458.1).

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NSAA Students with Nathaniel and Chicago Fire Department Officers on his first day

SPECIAL Education

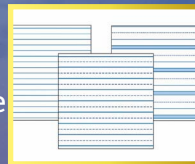


Lori Aguilera
Associate
Superintendent of
Education and
Special Education
Director

Teachers put the Special in Special Education. Very few of our Adventist Schools have a special educator on staff, but almost all of our schools have students in them that have special needs. In working with the students in the Illinois Conference, the biggest struggle that I have found is students who struggle with reading. Some are diagnosed with a reading disability; others are undiagnosed but read below their grade level. The second biggest problem that I have found is students with attentional or behavioral problems, some diagnosed with ADHD, others undiagnosed but can't sit still or focus. Lesser disabilities found are dysgraphia – a writing disability, dyscalculia – a math disability, and developmental delays.

What I have discovered is that even though most of the teachers have no special education background, they are doing special education in their classrooms. This is because at the heart of developing an Individual Education Plan (IEP), a 504 Plan, or an Accommodation Plan is common sense and good teaching. For instance, in one classroom, a 5th grade boy was reading at the 3rd grade level. The teacher didn't need an IEP telling her what to do, she had the common sense not to put the boy in the 5th grade leveled reader where he would struggle, but instead got a 3rd grade reader for him to use. Another teacher had a 7th grade girl doing math at the 4th grade level. It didn't take a special educator to see that it would not be a good idea to place the student in the 7th grade math book; instead, the student did math with the ALEKS computerized math program which took the child where she was and moved on from there. Teachers

have handed out Raised Lined Paper to students who struggle with handwriting so their writing would stay within the bumped up lines or asked another student to be a note-taker for them. Teachers have purchased pencil grips for 1st graders who do not hold their pencil correctly, electric spellers to help students with spelling, and incorporated a different phonics program to help those students who struggle with learning what letters make what sound.



One teacher has a student in her classroom that is autistic. The teacher's view is that in a community, there will be people with similar special needs and because her classroom is a community, the students will learn how to accept and work with students who are different then they are. Valuable lessons are being discovered in that classroom on how to accommodate and work alongside someone who learns differently.

For the students with 'extra energy,' I have seen teachers change their



whole classrooms to incorporate flexible seating so that the students could move in their seats without bothering those around them. Students put up dividers on their desk and put on headphones to block out extra distractions.

Teachers use timed timers to help the students remain on task, and use 'go noodle' movement activities during transitions to provide the movement these students need. While all of these things might be found on an IEP for a student with ADHD, they are just common sense things that can be done to help all students.



I am proud of the teachers in the Illinois Conference for not saying that they do not want to accept students with disabilities because they are not trained in how to work with them. Instead, they use common sense to develop an accommodation plan to meet the students where they are academically and then grow from there. They know that all children are not alike and learn differently and at different rates, so they treat each child as special. That is 'special education.'

“NORTH SHORE ADVENTIST ACADEMY (NSAA) IS...” CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Students voluntarily prepare for baptism during weekly pastor-led Bible studies and enthusiastically participate in various worship services on and off-campus.

NSAA IS ABOUT ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND MUSIC-MINDEDNESS

North Shore Adventist Academy students are being challenged and equipped in all subject areas and prepared to succeed in the world in which they live and to bring glory to God in their pursuits.

Our outstanding music program fosters the musical mind God created us with, providing students with opportunities to minister within the school community and outside to the public community at large. Our alumni come back year after year to perform and serve as role models for our students.

Here at North Shore Adventist Academy, we're growing the family of God! Jesus is coming again, and we are helping prepare families and spreading the Word.



NSAA Alumni Benefit Concert Performers (Band and Vocal)

- Walter Turner, Principal
North Shore Adventist Academy



INTRODUCING...

Pastor Luis Rivas was born in Ecuador and migrated to Chicago when he was twelve years old. At age 17, he became a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Inspired by God to study theology, Luis moved to Costa Rica in 1999. In August of 2001, he graduated from the Central America Adventist University (UNADECA) with his bachelor's degree in theology. After graduation, Luis decided to give one year of service to the church and moved to the University of Montemorelos in Nuevo Leon, Mexico. He served as a teacher for the Institute of Languages, teaching ESL and Spanish. While serving there, Luis decided to continue his studies and graduated in May 2003 with a Masters in Family Relationships.

The following year he married the love of his life, Veronica Rivas, and they have two beautiful daughters. By 2005, Luis came back to Chicago and served the community working for The Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicago for two years. Then Luis received an invitation from the University of Illinois to join the faculty of education. During that time Luis and his family also served as volunteer pastors in various churches: Humboldt Park, Wicker Park, Lakeview Hispanic, among others. In 2013 Luis received an invitation from the Indiana

Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to pastor a three-church Hispanic district. In 2016 Luis graduated from Andrews University with a Masters Degree in Pastoral Ministry, and three years later the Indiana Conference invited him to be the Family Life Coordinator for the Conference and also pastor two English-speaking churches and one Hispanic church. Later that year, after seven years of service in Indiana, Luis accepted a call from the Illinois Conference to be the pastor of a four-church Hispanic district starting in January 2020. His love for family and his passion for serving others is what makes Luis be at his best.



Fawn Scherencel
Principal
Hinsdale Adventist Academy

THE JOY OF SERVICE

The forecast on January 23 called for steady snow throughout the day, and many students were hoping for a snow day, but The Hinsdale Adventist Academy (HAA) Difference Makers had a special “field trip” planned for the morning. The Difference Makers are the HAA branch of the National Honor Society (NHS), and on that snowy Thursday, they spent the morning standing in the parking lot of Hinsdale Seventh-day Adventist Church volunteering at the Rx Mobile Food Pantry sponsored by the church and AMITA Health Adventist Medical Center Hinsdale. The twelve teenagers happily hauled boxes, passed out food, and loaded groceries for people for hours as the snow piled up around them. It may seem unlikely that teenagers would choose to spend a morning this way, but The Difference Makers have made community service a top priority.



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To be selected as a member of The National Honor Society, students must meet rigorous standards in four areas; scholarship, leadership, citizenship, and service. On top of maintaining excellent grades and being student leaders, the HAA Difference Makers do an additional 30 hours of community service beyond the standard requirements each semester. The NHS members at our academy embody both the school's mission statement of preparing students “for lives of purpose, service, and leadership” and the school's spiritual theme this year “send me.” Inspired by Isaiah 6:8, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I. Send me,’” HAA students are focused this year on serving wherever God sends them. Students in NHS are leading their peers by example through dedication to service opportunities as often as possible. Over the school year, they have returned to the mobile food pantry multiple times and served more than 150 individuals. After one of the events, Janet Kennedy, from Mission Integration at AMITA Health, told the students, “your ability to serve with such humility and kindness will truly make our world a better place.”

Not only do service projects like the mobile food pantry benefit the community, but they also fulfill the core mission of Adventist Education as laid out in the book *Education* “true education means more than the pursuit of a certain course of study...It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.” (White, p. 13) The Difference Makers are learning the ability they have to impact those around them and to reflect on the ways God has blessed them. “I learned to be thankful for the food in my pantry as I saw people who are less fortunate struggle to make it month to month,” said August Martz (senior). Another student, Jason Goliath, Jr. (senior), noted, “I didn’t realize how many people there are in our communities that are less fortunate than us. It just showed me how blessed we are. How we need to be grateful for all the things we have.” These service experiences, combined with strong academic classes grounded in the Adventist faith, are leading students to carefully examine the purpose God is calling them to in the future. Their experiences in NHS are impacting plans for college and their careers. Many students recognize God’s purpose for their life as one where they can continue to serve others and make a positive impact on the future. As Kennedy also stated, “after serving alongside each of you, we are optimistic that our future is bright! Each of you served with an abundance of grace, poise, and commitment during Thursday’s Rx Mobile Food Pantry... You were truly the face of Jesus on Thursday.”



DIFFERENT TIMES, SAME PRINCIPLES

Associates for Biblical Research have been excavating at Shiloh since 2017. The archaeologists discovered not only the evidence for the destruction of Shiloh, to which prophet Jeremiah referred several centuries later, but also a place which was most likely hosting the tabernacle of God. The unique structure is surrounded by adjacent storage rooms, which were used for collecting tithes and offerings. Yes, in those early years of agrarian society, gifts to God were accepted in the form of the natural produce of the land – animals, grain, olives, and the like. Although today we give offerings by placing bills on the plate, or by clicking a mouse, or tapping the screen of our smartphone, we follow the same principle as the ancient Israelites. This principle is described in Leviticus 27:32: “And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord” (NKJV).



The text points to two realities. First, tithe is one-tenth of the total amount; in other words, it is 10 percent. Second, every believing Israelite, acknowledging God’s right to claim tithe as His portion (“holy to the Lord,”) – engaged in the process of separating it from the rest of his income. A Simple, but practical principle. Those who are faithful in returning tithe first must be faithful in separating it. Comingling what is holy with what is common will jeopardize faithful stewardship.

So, whether you are dealing with banknotes or numbers on your LCD screen – if you don’t separate, it is unlikely you will ever donate. Remember this next time you are doing your finances.

- Arkadiusz Bojko, Director of Stewardship

Knowing Jesus **INTIMATELY!**



Connect with us on Facebook!

www.ilcsda.org

Phone: 630.856.2850

Fax: 630.734.0926

Email: info@ilcsda.org

Address:

619 Plainfield Road
Willowbrook IL 60527

Illinois Focus Editor: Shona Cross
Design: Heather Lanphear

