

Boarding Academy Enrollment— A Challenge

By Virgil Bartlett

Among the cacophony of voices heard by the academy principal is that of the board of directors emphasizing the importance of enrollment. Unless the principal is personally attuned to the need, it is easy to allow this voice to be drowned out by other needs and responsibilities such as curriculum planning, academic leadership, discipline, finance, plant construction, maintenance, personnel, and student labor. It is easy to rationalize that if these are done well, enrollment will take care of itself or that enrollment is a responsibility of the conference director of education, the conference youth leader, or the church pastors.

When the school personnel, from the principal to the custodian, fully recognize that they have accepted a part in the gospel commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel," they will see themselves as youth evangelists.

An effective evangelistic program requires a well-planned advertising and promotional program. Seventh-day Adventist evangelists well know the importance of good preaching,

good singing, proper building facilities, and an *esprit de corps* in the team. They also recognize that without good attendance the results will be minimal. Experience has reinforced the belief that attendance is dependent on previsitation on a one-to-one basis and that the results of advertising through the media, be it newspaper, radio, or television, are small.

The same basic principles apply for school attendance as for attendance at public evange-

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listic meetings. School enrollment will rise and fall in direct proportion to the amount of personal contact with parents and students. Marshall McLuhan made common the phrase, "The medium is the message."¹ Only as the medium is composed of the personnel of the school can the message be clearly given.

The expression *integration of faith and learning*² has recently been developed to express the need for bringing concepts of Christianity into all areas of teaching and learning. This concept also needs to be applied to school promotion. Faith must be integrated with a conference-wide program of learning about

and belief in the importance of Christian education.

Educators have identified three domains of learning:³ the *cognitive*, from knowledge to evaluation; the *affective*, from receiving to valuing; and the *psychomotor*. True academic learning is based on integrating all three in the development of the whole person. Effective school promotion that leads to good school enrollment requires (1) active acceptance of the importance of integrating faith and learning; and (2) a recognition that knowing, feeling, believing, valuing, and doing must be coordinated. Thus the total dedication of the person who is the walking and living message becomes the true medium for communication and promotion.

The communication problem must be clearly defined and clearly stated. Only as the enemy and the tools he uses are identified can effective strategies be developed to combat his designs.

The school's evangelistic field is its designated enrollment territory. In the boarding academy this may be part of a State or as much as two or more States. All SDA students of secondary school age in the given territory are candidates for enrollment and thus are the evangelistic field.⁴ Frequently, even without any promotion being done, up to 40 percent of eligible students will attend the boarding acad-

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emy, and another 20 percent will attend church-operated junior academies where these are available. Approximately 20 percent more may not be eligible for a variety of reasons. (Family conditions, family finances, student health, special learning problems, or student behavior patterns may be barriers to attendance that cannot be removed by school visitation.) The remaining 20 percent are the field in need of promotion. In most areas, from six to ten percent of conference membership is composed of academy-age youth. In a conference with a membership of 6,000, there will be from 360 to 600 prospective academy students.⁵ This is the academy's territory for evangelism.

For ease of computation, let us assume a hypothetical situation where there are 500 academy-age students in the territory. Approximately 40 percent, or 200 students, will attend the academy. There may be approximately another 100 in

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the ninth and tenth grades at junior academies. The remaining 200 are in public schools, and of these 100 would not be eligible for admittance to the academy. By careful planning and appropriate personal contact, the remaining 100 students can be added to the current enrollment. The addition of these students would swell the current enrollment by 50 percent.

It is not easy either to identify or convince these additional 100

students. I have personally used the following program successfully in three different States and at three different academies. Since it may take several years to effect the increase, specific long-range goals must be developed.

Program Steps

1. The academy must develop an accurate register of all sixth-to-twelfth-grade children from Seventh-day Adventist homes. The student's name, address, age, grade level, and current school attendance should be included. This information should be listed on a cardex file and kept up to date. Every means available should be uti-

lized in developing the file. Church clerk records, pastors, and church school enrollment are sources of valuable information.

2. A regular newsletter circulated to all students in the register who are not currently in attendance at the academy can serve as one means of communication. However, a form letter personally addressed and personally signed is much more effective than any formal or informal newsletter.

3. A personal letter to the parents of potential students is essential to developing positive school and parent relationships.

4. A personal contact, pref-
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Recruitment is an effective means of increasing academy enrollment.

during that time.

As an economical time factor, the waiver of a PE class in lieu of industrial employment is appropriate. But if the work does not provide the student with full, vigorous exercise, then the waiver subtracts from the achievement of educational balance. Academies should also provide students with guidance in choosing proper leisure-time activities. The four academies that do not teach any health

Instruction in computer programming is available at 12 of the academies.

course should plan to do so promptly in fulfillment of their educational philosophy.

The granting of credit by examination could serve to reduce class loads and could confer credit for skills learned at home or on the job. Only six of the 40 academies provide for conferring such credit. This area deserves investigation by principals, guidance counselors, and curriculum committees.

The curricular programs in the SDA residence academies are strong and dynamic. The education supplied the youth of the church in the United States is Christian and Seventh-day Adventist. It is balanced, or close to it, in providing for the physical, mental, and moral aspects of the student's developmental needs. The total programs of these schools serve as good examples of Christian education and of the accomplishments of dedicated staff members in helping guide the high-school-age youth of the church.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Walton J. Brown, "What Is Balanced Education?" *THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION*, vol. 42, No. 4 (April-May, 1980), p. 46.

² Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1903), p.13.

³ *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd Ed. Unabridged (1959), s.v. "harmonious."

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erably from the principal, should be made to students who are in their final year of attendance at their respective schools. It is not too early to discuss academy attendance with students who still have an additional year before they graduate from their respective schools.

5. An academy open house for parents can be an effective tool in soliciting enrollment. Invitations should be extended to parents whose children are already attending the academy as well as to those whose children are academy age or close to it. A forum encouraging open discussion and a question-and-answer session are basic to the success of the day.

6. The regular academy day, or a day set aside for all prospective students to attend, can be an effective recruitment option. However, its effectiveness is determined by the activities planned and the warmth of the welcome accorded the visitors.

7. The key to public evangelism is home visitation. The key to school enrollment is also home visitation. Christ's most effective means of communication was the "one-soul audience."⁶ The same is true today.

8. Students may be the most effective method of communicating with prospective enrollees. The degree to which students can be effectively used is limited only by the principal's imagination.

9. A careful record must be kept of every contact with parents and students. Every interest should be followed up at once. The only right time for decision-making is the time when the parent and student are ready to

make a decision. Usually July and August are too late for the school year that begins in September. However, a return call by the principal to a few select cases in late summer may be effective. I have found that if I visited a select list of perhaps 50 homes in August, approximately half of the students would attend who otherwise would not. This is economical and effective evangelism.

10. During the 15 years I was an academy principal, I personally visited 400 homes each year. I also planned to preach in at least 25 churches. This meant three Sabbaths out of four, December through May, and at least nine during the summer. As academy principal I was thus on campus and very visible for one of the four weeks. I retained personal responsibility for all Friday evening vesper programs and thus maintained visibility on the campus for the primary religious service that is the direct responsibility of the academy. Carefully organized school activity programs with delegated responsibility and understood authority provided for a smooth-running program during the Sabbath hours.

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I have found that the conference is more than willing to provide additional funds for travel to churches if the principal is actually willing to preach and visit homes for regular church speaking appointments.

11. Effective promotion includes an accurate and realistic appraisal of the existing program. This means that unsupported claims are not made and "dirty linen is not washed in public."

12. A positive result of the additional enrollment will be a larger number of youth prepared to serve God and the church. Economic benefits that will accrue include an improvement in plant facilities, an increase in academic offerings, an enriched spiritual program, and improved student morale.

The above emphasis on enrollment was followed at Indiana Academy during the years 1960-1968. A comparison of the years 1951-1959 and 1969-1977 with

that period clearly demonstrates the positive results of planned promotion.⁷

Fluctuations within the nine-year period 1960-1968 reflect interruptions in the use of the promotional program. Potential student enrollment was nearly constant during this time.

The availability of potential SDA ministers, teachers, and other professional workers is largely dependent on their enrollment in an Adventist school. Failure to increase

enrollment robs God's work of those whose talents are needed in finishing the gospel commission. And students who choose secular employment also need a Christian education! Many of these young people later serve as leaders in their home churches. The academy administrator who does not place the increasing of enrollment high on his list of priorities may one day need to answer the question, "Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?" (Jeremiah 13:20).

INDIANA ACADEMY Closing Enrollment

Nine Years 1951-1959		Nine Years 1960-1968		Nine Years 1969-1977	
Year	Enrollment	Year	Enrollment	Year	Enrollment
1951	124	1960	216	1969	202
1952	126	1961	196	1970	192
1953	151	1962	215	1971	192
1954	161	1963	233	1972	155
1955	180	1964	255	1973	148
1956	171	1965	241	1974	177
1957	180	1966	211	1975	164
1958	189	1967	231	1976	196
1959	180	1968	237	1977	214
TOTAL Enrollment			2035		1640
MEAN Enrollment			226.1		182.2
<i>Mean Enrollment Comparisons by Percent</i>					
1951-1959 — 163.5				72.3%	
1960-1968 — 226.1				100.0%	
1969-1977 — 182.2				80.6%	

FOOTNOTES

¹ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), pp. 7-21.

² George Akers, "The Measure of a School," *THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION*, vol. 40, No. 2 (December, 1977-January, 1978), p. 8.

³ Benjamin S. Bloom, Ed., *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., Inc., 1956), p. 7.

⁴ The boarding school principal should, of course, obtain permission before recruiting students who are eligible for day academies near their homes.

⁵ Based on an analysis of students eligible for academy enrollment in three very different conferences—New York, North Dakota, and Indiana—from 1948 to 1968. The estimates include non-Seventh-day Adventist students who indicated an interest and Seventh-day Adventist students from outside the specific academy territory who wrote for information, indicating an interest.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1900), p. 229.

⁷ Closing enrollment statistics for the years 1977-1978 through 1980-1981 range from a low of 171 (1980-1981) to a high of 210 (1978-1979), with a mean enrollment of 188.3. Current enrollment (1981-1982) is 178.

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calls for marketable skills which may be those of a typist, housewife, carpenter, or farmer, as well as those of a dentist or physician.

Organization

Today the church and its schools are truly moving toward an international mold in organization, as well as in thought. The Department of Education has pioneered in recognizing the dual character and function of its offices, that of serving the world field as well as providing a staff for the division within which the General Conference is located. During this quinquennium, 3.5 staff members with strong international background are designated to serve the world field, along with the General Conference vice-president assigned to us; and 4.5 staff members with strong roots in

North America will carry on regular assignments as a division staff. The day is past when any individual or small group can specialize in the entire spectrum of concerns in education. The international staff will identify and coordinate the exchange of talents and ideas. It will also encourage the use of resource persons at our universities and other institutions in the world divisions, as well as share its own expertise.

Conclusion

In my new capacity as director of the Department of Education of the General Conference, I am writing this editorial with the humble consciousness that while "I'm supposed to be in charge of this place," the achievement of our goals and objectives may only properly be realized "under the power and direction of the Spirit of God." May each of us who leads have the abiding confidence that such is indeed the case.—C.R.T.