

# Of Interest to Teachers

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**Left to right: Beverly Robinson-Rumble, editor, JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION, holding the EdPress award certificate; and Shellie Dale, a second-grade teacher from Salem, Oregon, who wrote the winning article, at the 1996 EdPress conference in Baltimore, Maryland.**

## Journal Wins Again

**F**or the third year in a row, and the fourth time since 1990, THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION has won a prestigious Distinguished Achievement Award from the Educational Press Association of America.

The official 1996 awards ceremony occurred in June during the EdPress annual conference held in Baltimore, Maryland.

The prize-winning article, "I Didn't Even Know I Liked You," dealt with the social benefits of cooperative education. It was written by Shellie Dale, a second-grade teacher in Salem, Oregon, and appeared in the April/May 1995 issue of the JOURNAL.

Founded in 1895, the Educational Press Association is a prestigious international organization that nurtures and promotes the quality,

health, and community of educational publishing. Core services include conferences, awards, publications and other professional activities.

Each year since 1963, EdPress has held an awards ceremony honoring excellence in educational publishing. This year, the contest received 1,554 submissions in the magazine program, and 134 in the adult feature-article category. Dale's article was one of six that received an award in this category.

In previous years, the JOURNAL has won EdPress awards for feature articles on use of animals in Adventist schools (1995), integration of faith and learning (1994), and distinguished achievement awards for single theme issues on multicultural education (1990) and 100 years of Adventist education (1973).

## Students Worried About the Environment

The environment is the number-one concern of America's schoolchildren, according to a recent survey.

Twice as many children expressed concern for the environment than any other specific issue, a survey of 40,000 public and private school students by the Caring Institute, a Washington-based organization, found.

The students ranked environmental problems—along with racism, homelessness, violent crime, and abuse—as the country's most serious challenges. They also expressed concern about poverty, abortion, drugs, war, floods, and AIDS.—Reported by *Education Week* XIV:32 (May 3, 1995).

## Judge Upholds Graduation Test for Private School Students

A federal judge in Cincinnati has rejected a claim by Ohio private schools that they should not have to administer the state-mandated graduation test.

The decision by U.S. District Judge Herman J. Weber is believed to be the first time a U.S. federal court has ruled on whether a state can force private schools to participate in statewide testing. The law had been attacked as unconstitutional and overly invasive by the Ohio Association of Independent Schools (OAIS), which represents 30 college-preparatory schools in the state. OAIS also held that the law violated the schools' right of free speech—in terms of what curriculum to teach—and their right and the rights of students' parents to direct the education of their children.

Taking part in Ohio's test is not too heavy a burden for private schools, the judge ruled, given the state's compelling interest in ensuring that its residents are adequately educated.

The decision upheld a 1993 state law that says non-public schools will lose their state charters and the authority to grant high school diplomas unless they give their students the five subject-area exams that make up Ohio's ninth-grade proficiency test.

Judge Weber found that the law does not require private schools to change their curricula. He said that the schools already teach the subjects mandated by the state's minimum academic standards and that the testing program measures the related skills and knowledge.

Because of the "excellent education" provided by the independent schools, the judge found that the "only real burden" placed on the schools was the time it took to administer the test—less than

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three hours a day for five days. The OAS executive director argued that minimum standards did not include a citizenship-course requirement, although the exams specifically test on citizenship. He also complained that preparing students for the state's citizenship and math tests would take away 25 to 40 percent of the lesson time from a year-long course.—Reported by *Education Week* XV:20 (February 7, 1996).

## Benefits of Small Schools

A report from the Small Schools Workshop at the University of Illinois at Chicago has summarized what it calls a compelling body of research showing that students are more successful when they are part of small, intimate learning communities.

The study credits small schools with improving grades, test scores, attendance and dropout rates, safety and security, and services to students with special needs.

Small schools also encourage teacher innovation and improve the performance of female and non-white students, the study found.

The study, "Small Schools: The Numbers Tell a Story," is free from the Small Schools Workshop, University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Education, 115 S. Sangamon St., 3rd Floor, Chicago, IL 60607.

## Reading Problems Often Mis-labeled as Disability

Many children are being identified as learning disabled and placed in special-education classrooms simply because they have trouble reading, according to a recent report from the International Reading Association.

The term "learning disabilities" has become too vague and has strayed from its original meaning: a reference to a child with a neurological problem that has an academic component, the report says. It recommends that children with reading problems receive intensive help in that area rather than special-education services.—From "Learning Disabilities—a Barrier to Literacy Instruction."

## U.S. Special Education Population Growing Rapidly

The number of American children receiving special-education services grew 4.2 percent between the 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 school years, the largest increase since the federal government began tracking such information in 1976, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

The record increase was fueled by significant

growth in the number of very young children identified as needing special education.

A total of 5.37 million children with disabilities from birth through age 21 were served during 1993-1994. Although children age 5 and younger make up only 10.9 percent of all children receiving special education, they represented 33.4 percent of the growth in the special-ed population during the period studied. The number of school-age children, defined as those ages 6 through 21, involved in special education grew 3.5 percent.

The fastest-growing categories of disability are traumatic brain injury, "other health impairments," and autism, though these categories represent less than three percent of all disabled students. Children with learning disabilities still account for more than half of all students age 6 through 21 with disabilities. Growth in the "other health impairments" category can be attributed to the growing recognition and diagnosis of children with attention-deficit disorder, the Education Department concluded, based on interviews with officials in eight states.—

Reported by *Education Week* XV:9 (November 1, 1995).

## Trends Toward Inclusion Seen

Between 1990 and 1995, the number of school-age disabled American children being educated in regular classrooms increased by nearly 10 percent. Age seems to play a significant factor in placement,

according to a study by the Office of Special Education Programs in the U.S. Department of Education. Nearly half of all disabled students ages 6 to 11 spend most of their school day in regular classrooms. That figure drops to 30 percent for students age 12 to 17, and 23 percent for students ages 18 to 21. The nationwide average is 40 percent.

Vermont, North Dakota, Idaho, Oregon, and South Dakota respectively reported the largest percentage of special-ed students in regular classes, with figures ranging from 89 percent down to 65 percent. Areas on the low end of the scale include Arizona, with only six percent; West Virginia, with seven percent, and the District of Columbia, Iowa, and New York, which mainstreamed between 10 and 24 percent of their special-ed students.—Based on reports by the U.S. Department of Education and *Education Week* XV:9 (November 1, 1995).

## Prayers Not Sanctioned in Most Nations' Public Schools

Most nations do not sanction prayers in public schools, and there is an international trend toward separation of religion and education, according to a recent report by an American Civil Liberties Union chapter.

Proposals in the U.S. for a constitutional amendment authorizing some prayers in public

## Elementary Concerns

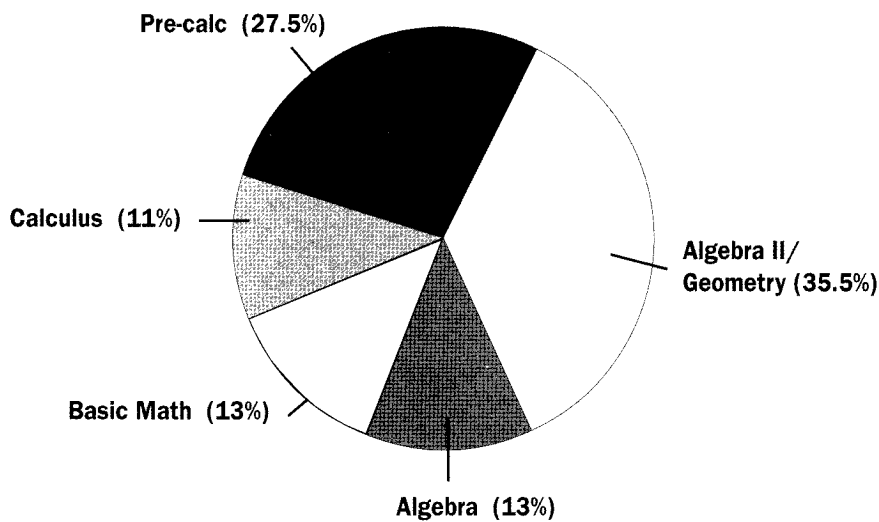
Early in 1996, the National Association of Elementary School Principals asked its members' views on the importance of a number of school-related issues. Here are some of the results:

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	LESS IMPORTANT
Finding ways to motivate students and maintain high expectations	74%	23%	3%
Keeping schools safe for students and staff	49%	37%	14%
Competing with—or adjusting to—for-profit companies	8%	24%	68%
Educating children (and families) who don't speak English	20%	32%	48%
Finding time to effectively supervise and evaluate staff	62%	31%	7%
Handling discipline and violence problems with students	41%	44%	15%
Finding ways to help parents become more committed and involved	65%	29%	6%

SOURCE: National Association of Elementary School Principals

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## U.S. Students Grouped by Highest Level of Math Course Taken in High School



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

schools would run counter to the trend, according to the A.C.L.U. of Southern California, which surveyed school-prayer policies in 72 countries.

Of 70 countries in the survey that had unified prayer policies, 11 have state-sanctioned prayer periods in schools in which students pray together. Most of these are religiously homogeneous nations such as Greece, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Thailand.—Reported by *Education Week* XIV:36 (May 31, 1995).

## Popular Materials for Teachers

Want to know about the best-selling books, journals, and videos for teachers? Technomic Publishing Company describes these products in its new catalogue, *Books for Educators*. Resources on the most talked-about topics in education are listed in the catalogue. To get a free copy, call (800) 233-9936.

## What Is a College Degree Worth?

For American men with a high school diploma, the average full-time worker's salary in 1994 was \$31,081; for those with a college bachelor's degree, \$61,008.

For women, the average full-time worker's salary with a high school diploma was \$30,161; with a bachelor's degree, \$39,271.

On the basis of these figures, after working 30 years, a man would have earned approximately \$900,000 more if he had a college education than if he had only had a high school diploma. Over the same period, the average woman would have made \$270,000 more by earning her bachelor's degree.—*USA Today*, February 21, 1996.

## Teacher Literacy

An important issue in the education reform debate is the effect of comparatively low salaries on teacher quality. Prose literacy scores are one of the best available measures of verbal ability, a factor identified by research as being associated with teacher quality. If teachers have lower prose literacy scores compared to college graduates in other occupations, this could indicate that relatively low salaries in education may not be attracting (or keeping) the most skilled college graduates. If, however, the literacy levels of teachers are as good as their counterparts in other occupations, other benefits (e.g., job security, a shorter work year, the opportunity to work with children, good retirement benefits, etc.) may be more important for attracting quality teachers than salary alone.

The National Center for Education Statistics

found that in 1992, American teachers had literacy skills similar to private-sector executives and managers, engineers, physicians, writers and artists, social workers, education administrators, and registered nurses. Scientists were the only professionals who had measurably higher prose literacy skills than teachers.

Although teachers had literacy skills similar to college graduates in many other professions, their earnings were often substantially less. However, the average number of weeks worked in 1991 was lower for teachers than for college graduates in many other occupations.—From "Indicator of the Month: Literacy of Teachers," U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, November 1995.

## Student Use of Computers

In an increasingly technological world, computers are an essential tool. Students need to become computer literate in order to function effectively in society. In the U.S., the likelihood that young people will have access to computers is directly related to socioeconomic factors.

According to a study by the U.S. Department of Education, in 1993, more than two-thirds of all American students in grades one to 12 used a computer either at home or at school, with a majority, 59 percent, using a computer at school.

The percentage of students using a computer at home more than doubled between 1984 and 1993, increasing from 29 to 59 percent. Twenty-eight percent of students reported using a computer at home in 1993, up from 12 percent in 1984.

Whites were more likely than blacks or Hispanics to use a computer either at home or at school, both in elementary school and high school. In 1993, approximately 40 percent of blacks and Hispanics in grades one to six did not use computers at all, compared to 20 percent of their white counterparts.

Between 1984 and 1993, the proportions of students in grades seven to 12 who used a computer either at home or at school increased at similar levels across family incomes. On one hand, the gain for low-income students can be explained primarily by their increased use of computers at school, which rose 32 percent; on the other hand, the gain for high-income students can be explained by their increased use of computers both at home and school—with a 30 percentage point increase at school, and a 29 percentage point increase at home by such students.—From "Indicator of the Month: Student Use of Computers," U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, December 1995. ☞