

Chapter 1 : Review and Herald Association - Products -

How to kill Adventist Education This is an excellent book which I wish that more Adventist, Christians and educators would read. My non-Adventist husband and myself sacrificed to send put 2 girls through Adventist school.

In this excerpt from his provocative new book, *How to Kill Adventist Education and How to Give It a Fighting Chance*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, pastor and educator Shane Anderson offers his prescriptions for increasing the enrollment and influence of Adventist schools from preschool to university. When I have asked concerned Adventists this question, they give a fairly limited range of answers, such as the following: If more people knew about them, they would be thriving. First, they are usually followed by conversations that are lamentably short. A bit of speculation followed by a moving on to other subjects seems to satisfy our limited curiosity on the topic or perhaps our fatalism sees further conversation as pointless. In days past, Adventists often took pride in their highly developed subculture though we rarely put it in those terms. We had our own publications, our own traditions popcorn and fruit at sundown on Sabbath, and of course, our own schools. In addition, we even had our own manufacturing facilities that produced choice morsels of food that no self-respecting Adventist potluck would be without. In giving was at By it had declined to 4. This decline represents a 58 percent decrease in the portion of income being given by church members. Church members are voting with their feet and with their dollars. Far too often, members and education leaders that I have personally talked with in various portions of the United States have repeatedly retreated to this simplistic explanation, almost as though it were still and that institutional loyalty was still a widely held, finely tuned, and much-lauded part of the Adventist mind-set. But it simply is not! Think of it this way: Do we really believe that there are large numbers of passionate, highly committed Seventh-day Adventists—who also just happen to think that a school that would teach their children that that very same Adventism is not worth considering? Here is the core of our current crisis as we will discuss further shortly. Again, more on this in chapter 2 and subsequent chapters. What about the common thought that Adventist education is too expensive? Certainly Adventist education is far from free in some cases, exceedingly far. And, as we saw earlier, there exists a definite trend away from spending money on church-related institutions, one that certainly contributes both directly and indirectly to the perceptions of educational cost. Proponents of Adventist education have often answered the charge of being overpriced with sound financial information to the contrary. They point out, for instance, that their particular Adventist school teaches Adventist values both by example and verbal instruction. For committed Adventists, this is of immense importance. Additionally, proponents note that if we also think in terms of above-average academics as well as extracurricular activities cultural field trips, sports, advanced classes for qualified students, etc. This can be doubly true when one compares certain facets of Adventist schools to their public school counterparts. Many of our teachers, for instance—particularly long-tenured or postsecondary teachers—receive markedly lower wages in comparison to their peers in the public school system. Of course, Adventist parents, even though they may send their kids to Adventist schools, still have to pay local and state taxes. But the cost comparison between the two systems is nonetheless helpful in shedding light on the relative affordability of many of our schools. I remember the story of one of our most expensive academies being visited by some non-Adventist parents to see if their child might attend there. So based on what their school offers, these proponents argue that while Adventist education is not what we would call cheap, their particular school is reasonably priced when viewed within an Adventist values, academic, and extracurricular activity perspective. Probably so—again, for their particular school. It may be that upon inspection of the alternatives, they will find that Adventist school to be a relative bargain instead of a bank-busting lemon of an education. Can they too be correct in their assessment of Adventist education? They can, and in at least four ways. It simply offers a product they are not interested in, and they will instead choose a good Christian school usually closer to home geographically or a quality public school. And when push comes to shove, the toys win out over tuition. Thus, for them, school tuition is indeed too expensive. Allow me a brief sermon here. I am not saying it is of necessity a sin to have the toys. Abraham, as I recall, was lavishly wealthy and had the hardware to prove it. But I am saying that hedonism

and selfishness may be coming to play far too great a role among some Adventists when it comes to making educational choices for their kids. Big tuition bills may not be the problem. Instead it may be misplaced priorities, which leads to the obvious question: Which is more important in the scope of eternity? Third, even for Adventists who are heavily committed to their God and their church, there is absolutely no doubt that while Adventist education may be a relative bargain for what you get in return, it can still cost a ton of money! Ten to 18 thousand dollars for a year at our boarding academies, for instance, is the norm. For lower- and middle-income families, that price tag can be a real challenge to meet. And speaking of high school! The reason for that relief? But ultimately that may be beside the point. The bottom line still is that Adventist education, even for the dedicated lower-to-middle income member, is becoming very highly priced indeed. Fourth and last, for those parents who are deeply concerned about passing on Adventist values, Adventist education too often is also deemed too expensive for them. And no wonder such parents are concerned! At the risk of stating the obvious, Adventist education should seek to achieve a goal far greater than superior academics, outstanding extracurricular activities, or even superior character development, as important as all these may be. It should seek to establish in our children a personal relationship with Jesus Christ so that they may be lifelong Seventh-day Adventist witnesses for Him. And if that unique goal is absent, devout Adventist parents rightly look at high tuition prices and deem correctly that they are indeed too expensive! Obviously the question of the price of tuition is a major concern when discerning the causes of Adventist educational decline.

Are We Poorly Marketed? I mean no harm when I say that in my experience, many of our schools and churches, for that matter, while not intentionally so, are not experts in presenting themselves to their communities. Most school leaders understandably are not marketing professionals and may lack the money, time, and other resources to become marketing-savvy. In those days mass mailings, community focus groups, demographic studies, niche marketing techniques, etc. While Adventist education is struggling today, on the whole it was thriving 20 and 30 years ago--a time when our marketing efforts were supposedly inferior. Why did we thrive back then, even with subpar marketing approaches? Adventists of that time naturally filled our schools. So we have instead turned to marketing to non-Adventists. And certainly some non-Adventist students would come to our schools if they were properly marketed to. I wish I could say otherwise, but experience is a good teacher, and with very few exceptions,² my observation has been that even the best of marketing to non-Adventists rarely yields the results we crave. An Adventist school gets another drop in enrollment. The board convenes and determines that marketing to the community is the answer. After much thought and many late nights, they have a stack of shiny, high-quality brochures printed up. The principal is frustrated, the school is out a chunk of change, and the enrollment continues its downward slide. There are a number of reasons, but right near the top is that we Adventists are unique--and, in the eyes of many non-Adventists, downright strange. And non-Adventist, Sundaygoing and non-Sundaygoing, mainstream, carnivorous parents generally sense this strangeness and are accordingly cautious. They understand that schools tend to teach values that last a lifetime. And so they rightly ask: So these parents are careful and, in my experience, rarely choose to come to our schools in any significant numbers. Our schools in this sense and, I should add, in the North American Division are not generally the community-targeting evangelistic powerhouses that some have imagined them to be. But I hasten to add that there is a vastly different dynamic that occurs in a local church as compared to that which occurs in a local church school. At the church the parents are usually the guests who are checking Adventism out, then--if the parents give the all-clear--the children may possibly follow. So what to do? In my opinion, marketing to non-Adventists should be done, but only as extra time and money allow. Instead, we should spend the bulk of our time promoting to drum roll, please Adventists. After all, there are tens of thousands of Adventist student-aged kids--the ones who would most naturally come to our schools--who already know that our schools exist and still do not attend. I believe the six primary factors behind Adventist educational decline are: A misunderstanding of what constitutes biblical discipleship. Poor pastoral support of Adventist education. Knowing almost how we got into this mess will not suffice. Instead we have to uncover these deeper, more core reasons that Adventist education is in decline. Only then can we understand what steps to take to move our schools back into health. Part two will look at each one of the above causes in detail.

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How to Kill Adventist Education (and How to Give It a Fighting Chance), Review and Herald Publishing Association (), pastor and educator Shane Anderson offers his.

Chapter 5 : Adventist Review : Are We Killing Adventist Education?

Shane Anderson discusses his book How to Kill Adventist Education.

Chapter 6 : How to Kill Adventist Education by Shane Anderson

Between and Seventh-day Adventist Church membership in the North American Division increased by 75 percent. In that same year period K enrollment in Adventist schools dropped by nearly 25 percent.

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And why?How to Kill Adventist Education takes a hard look at the troubles plaguing Adventist schools. Not only are those problems identified, along Between and Seventh-day Adventist Church membership in the North American Division increased by 75 percent.

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