



Early Perspectives
on the **Value**
of Adventist Education

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Adventist Education

- 10,364 institutions
- 120,485 teachers
- 2,330,305 students

Primary through tertiary, December 31, 2023 (<https://www.adventist-education.org/education-statistics/>)

2

Was this always the case?


3

In the beginning...

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Millerite movement: Oct 22, 1844

- Many families withdrew their children from school
- "The children of those who embraced the message at that time, were all taken out of school, because the Lord was coming so soon."




(Mary P. Cummings to Flora H. Williams, December 9, 1927)

Flora H. Williams Papers, RG 9, Box 58, General Conference Archives

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After 1844

"At the time of the disappointment in 1844 and after, the children of Adventists were subjected to **not a little petty persecution** on the part of their schoolmates, who would call them 'Millerites,' ask them when they were 'going up,' and otherwise taunt them."



M. E. Olsen, A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists, 1932, p. 331

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James White (1852)

"It is a fact that many who profess to be looking for Christ and the judgment, have greatly neglected their duty to their children. Some have thought that **because Christ was so soon coming**, they need not bestow much labor on their children. **This is a grievous error.**"

James White, "An Address," The Youth's Instructor, vol. 1, no. 1, August, 1852, p. 1.

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In 1862, W. H. Ball wrote to Review

- "Is it right and consistent for us who believe with all our hearts in the **immediate coming of the Lord**, to seek to give our children an education?"
- "If so, should we send them to a district or town school, where they learn twice as much evil as good?"

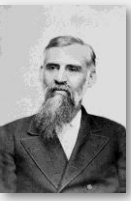
"Questions and Answers," Review and Herald, vol. 23, no. 4, December 23, 1862, p. 29

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As late as 1872

George Butler, General Conference president:

Certain Adventists who felt "much distressed at the prospect [of establishing a denominational school], thinking it is a **denial of our faith** in the **soon coming of Christ**, and that it will all end in formality and spiritual death."



G. I. Butler, "Our School at Battle Creek," Review and Herald, vol. 39, no. 25, June 4, 1872, p. 197

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Nonetheless...

- Not many years passed after 1844 before at least some Sabbath-keeping Adventists began to recognize the need for education for their children
- Typically, one or more families would hire a teacher to teach their children
- In this case, the education was provided by someone who shared their religious beliefs


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Early Sabbatarian Adventist schools

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Bucks Bridge School (NY)

- Commenced: December 16, 1853
- Leadership: John Byington
- Setting: Home of Aaron Hilliard
- Teacher: Martha Byington (19)
- Enrollment: 17 students
- Continued for several years
 - Lucinda Payne (26)
 - John Fletcher Byington (23)



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Some other early schools


- Jackson, MI (1854): Member congregation
- Northfield, VT (1854): Mary Baker
- Oswego, NY (~1854/1855): Marion Stowell

May have been influenced by an article by Joseph Bates in the *Review*, "Duty to Our Children," in which he urged parents to **provide religious instruction** to their children.

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Early Battle Creek schools

- Mrs. M. M. Osgood (1855)
- Robert Holland (1856)
- Mary Louise Morton (1857)



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Early Battle Creek schools


- Around this time, James White would write a three-part series of articles in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, advocating that it would be **better for children to be educated at home by parents or by a Sabbath-keeping tutor** than to be exposed to immorality in the public schools

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Early Battle Creek schools

- John Fletcher Byington (1858)
- James White:

"Much anxiety has been expressed by several brethren and sisters in other towns in regard to sending their children to a good School in Battle Creek. This, and the wants of our own children, has induced us to invite Bro. Byington to open a School here."




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Early Battle Creek schools

- John Fletcher Byington (1858)
- Willie White:

"The high hopes of Elder White and the officers of the Battle Creek Church regarding this school effort were never realized. The people who criticised Robert Holland for too little discipline, criticised Fletcher Byington for too much discipline, and after a brief and stormy experience, the enterprise was abandoned."



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James White disheartened

- In 1861, William Russell wrote to the *Review* proposing to establishing a school
- James White replied:

"We have had a thorough trial of a school at Battle Creek, under most favourable circumstances, and have given it up, as it failed to meet the expectations of those interested. We therefore wish to be excused from acting any part in reference to your enterprise."

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“Number Three” public school

- In 1862 the city of Battle Creek built a new school in the west section of the town where most of the Adventist families lived
- W. C. White: “Good teachers were hired, who endeavored to conduct the school in harmony with Christian principles.”
- Many Sabbath-keeping Adventist parents sent their children to this public school

W. C. White, "Memories and Records," p. 3

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“Number Three” public school

However, as students would graduate from Number Three and move to the High School: “Parents became perplexed and anxious as they observed that the **worldly and irreligious influences were moulding the character** of their children.”

W. C. White, "Memories and Records," p. 3


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**Groundwork
for the first
denominational school**

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Context of mid-1860s

- Denomination formally organized: 1863
- Civil war ended: 1865
- Health Reform Institute established: 1866
- Review and Herald publishing expanding
- Battle Creek Church: 400 members



Library of Congress

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Goodloe Harper Bell

- Michigan schoolteacher
- Studied at Oberlin College




Olsen Family Photograph Album, University Libraries, Loma Linda University

23

Goodloe Harper Bell

- Came to the Health Institute in 1867
- Regained health
- Became an Adventist




Ellen G. White Estate

24

Goodloe Harper Bell

- Began to teach grammar and writing to several Adventist young people, including Edson White
- In 1868, Battle Creek Church employed Bell to teach a day school




Olsen Family Photograph Album, University Libraries, Loma Linda University

25

Goodloe Harper Bell

- Continued the school for another year or so as a personal endeavor



https://ellenwhite.org/media/image/1209

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Meanwhile...

- Young people working at the Review began to clamor for further educational opportunities
- Ellen White recommended: “The Review and Herald hands should have the opportunity of school privileges combined with their work”
- Early morning classes in penmanship and evening grammar classes, along with instruction in Bible doctrines and the sciences with Bell contributing

Maud Sisley-Boyd to Mary Kelly-Little, April 16, 1931

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Bell succumbs

- To the heavy pressure of responsibilities at the Battle Creek Church and criticism, and left Battle Creek sometime during 1871
- On December 10, 1871, Ellen White wrote a stern rebuke to the Battle Creek Church regarding their treatment of Bell, while acknowledging that he had also made mistakes

E. G. White Estate, Pamphlet 222, pp. 1-20.


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The School Committee

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Early 1872

- James and Ellen White convened several meetings in Battle Creek on the topic of education
- As a result, a committee was formed to arrange for the "immediate establishment of a school"
- Uriah Smith served as chair



W. E. White, "Memories and Records," p. 4.

30

Committee: April 16, 1872

"Shall we take hold, as a people, of the subject of education, and form an **educational society**? Shall we have a **denominational school**, the object of which shall be, in the shortest, most thorough and practical way, to qualify young men and women, to **act some part**, more or less public, in the **cause of God**?"

School Committee, "A School in Battle Creek," Review and Herald, vol. 39, no. 18, p. 144.

31

Committee: April 16, 1872

"Shall there be someplace provided where are young people can go to **learn** such branches of the **sciences** as they can put into immediate and practical use, and at the same time be **instructed** on the great themes of **prophetic** and other **Bible truth**?"

School Committee, "A School in Battle Creek," Review and Herald, vol. 39, no. 18, p. 144.

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Committee: April 16, 1872

- "The more immediate need is to **start the school in some form**. To this end we would like an immediate response from all who would be glad to attend such a school."
- Asked perspective students to respond to perhaps the **first market survey** in Adventist education

School Committee, "A School in Battle Creek," Review and Herald, vol. 39, no. 18, p. 144.

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Committee: April 16, 1872

1. What studies have you already taken, and what proficiency have you made in them?
2. What studies in the regular English branches do you wish to take up?
3. Do you wish to learn French, German, Greek, or Latin, one or all?
4. **Is it your special object to fit yourself to take some part in the work of God?**

School Committee, "A School in Battle Creek," Review and Herald, vol. 39, no. 18, p. 144.

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Butler: May 7, 1872

"There are **plenty of places** in the land where any of this class could go to obtain an education in other languages, grammar, rhetoric, logic, history, philosophy, and the sciences in general; but they would lack the **other advantage** which they would need, that is, the **society and influence of those of like faith**, and lectures and **instruction on the different points of Bible truth** as they hold them."

George Ide Butler, "The Proposed School," Review and Herald, vol. 39, no. 21, May 7, 1872, p. 168.

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May 14 reported...

- The school committee had formally requested the General Conference Committee to assume management of the project, and it had agreed
- First denominational educational endeavor
- "A place is provided, and teacher engaged."

"The School," Review and Herald, vol. 39, no. 22, p. 176.

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Butler: June 4, 1872

“We want a school to be controlled by our people where **influences of a moral character may be thrown around the pupils** which will tend to preserve them from those influences which are so common and injurious in the majority of the schools of the present day.

G. I. Butler, "Our School at Battle Creek," *Review and Herald*, vol. 39, no. 25, June 4, 1872, pp. 196-197

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Butler: June 4, 1872


“We want our children to have a chance for **mental culture without moral loss.**”

G. I. Butler, "Our School at Battle Creek," *Review and Herald*, vol. 39, no. 25, June 4, 1872, pp. 196-197

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Smith: June 11

The school commenced on June 3 as planned, with 12 students and G. H. Bell as teacher



Uriah Smith, "The S. D. A. School," *Review and Herald*, vol. 39, no. 26, June 11, 1872, p. 204


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The Proper Education articles

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Elle White's support

Starting in September 1872 – September 1873, Ellen White supported the school project through a series of articles published in *The Health Reformer*, in nearly every issue




Adventist Digital Library

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Elle White's support

- Most were titled “Proper Education” and were based on her first extensive essay on the topic of education, with the same title, written in January 1872
- Not only addressed parents, but “teachers of schools,” providing guidance for formal learning to take place outside of the home




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Began the series...

“It is the nicest work ever assumed by men and women to deal with youthful minds.”

While the final portion would address health and physical development, its primary emphasis was on “how to direct the developing intellect.”



E. G. White, "Proper Education," *The Health Reformer*, vol. 7, no. 9, September, 1872, pp. 284-286

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Subsequent articles

- Importance of manual labor in school program
- Role of research and reflection
- Need for school breaks
- Advantages of delayed start for young children
- Teaching through example
- Need to develop task commitment
- Education for practical life
- Pernicious influence of ungodly classmates

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Concluded full essay

“We **need a school** where those who are just entering the ministry may be taught at least the **common branches** of education and where they may also learn more perfectly the **truths of God's word** for this time.”



E. G. White, "Proper Education," *Testimony for the Church* — No. 22, p. 48


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**Transition
toward a college**

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A higher vision

- James White and others envisioned, not merely Bell's select school, but an institution of higher learning
- In a March 11, 1873, address to the General Conference in session, James White declared:



E. G. White Estate

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James White


"We want a school. We want a denominational school... in which the languages, especially the **spoken and written languages** of the present day can be taught, and learned by young men and women to prepare them to **become printers, editors, and teachers.**"

Review and Herald, vol. 41, no. 23, May 20, 1873, pp. 180-181, 184

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James White

"I know of no branch that needs our attention so much at the present time as a **denominational school.**"



Review and Herald, vol. 41, no. 23, May 20, 1873, pp. 180-181, 184

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Three resolutions

- "To take immediate steps for the formation of an Educational Society, and establishment of a denominational school."
- To require of prospective students a certificate of character, and should they fail to live up to the standard, "they shall be promptly discharged."

Review and Herald, March 18, 1873, vol. 41, no. 14

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Three resolutions

- "To establish a school, guarded by sound **moral and religious influence**, where those who give themselves to the work of the Lord may **discipline their minds to study**, and at least qualify themselves to **read, speak, and write the English language correctly;**"

Review and Herald, March 18, 1873, vol. 41, no. 14

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Three resolutions


"where our people can **send their sons and daughters with comparative safety**; and where men and women may study those **languages especially now spoken** by the people of those nations from whom we hope to **gather a harvest of souls** to the Lord."

Review and Herald, March 18, 1873, vol. 41, no. 14

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John Nevins Andrews

"It is not enough that those who offer themselves to become laborers in the work of the ministry should be men of piety. This is indeed indispensable, but it is also necessary that **those who teach others should have knowledge to impart.**"



J. N. Andrews, "Our Proposed School," Review and Herald, vol. 41, no. 16, April 1, 1873, p. 124

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Funding

- In July 1873, James White launched a campaign to raise \$50,000
- By Fall 1873, more than \$50,000 had been pledged, with \$10,000 already in hand
- By December 31, a 12-acre plot of ground, the Hussey estate, situated across from the Health Institute, had been purchased for \$16,000 as the site of the new school

James White, "Permanency of the Cause," Review and Herald, vol. 42, no. 4, July 8, 1873, pp. 28-29

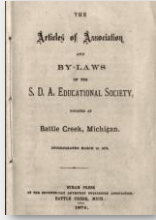
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Establishing the Education Society

55

March 11, 1874

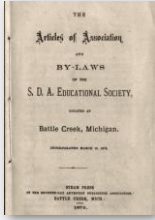
- Signatories to the Articles of Association
 - George I. Butler
 - Harmon Lindsay
 - Ira Abbey
 - Uriah Smith
 - E. B. Gaskill
 - Orrin B. Jones
 - Horatio Lindsay



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Articles of Association

“To establish and manage a college for the instruction of young people of both sexes in the **sciences, languages, and the Holy Scriptures.**”



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First Adventist College launched

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Launch: Incremental process

- **June 1872:** Denomination sponsored its first school: **Bell’s Select School**


“This may seem to some like a small beginning. But a beginning, however small, is something.... Friends of the cause, you have now another institution to remember in your prayers. Don’t forget the school.”

Uriah Smith, “The S. D. A. School,” *Review and Herald*, vol. 39, no. 26, June 11, 1872, p. 204

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Launch: Incremental process

- **July 1872:** Ademar Vuilleumier, a Swiss, enrolled as the **first overseas student**
- **September 1872:** 40 students enrolled and the school moved to the (third) church
- **December 1872:** Two more teachers hired




<https://battlereektabernaclemi.adventistchurch.org/aboutus/history-of-sda-churches-in-battle-creek>

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Launch: Incremental process

- **Fall 1873:** **Sidney Brownsberger** assigned management of the school
- **December 1873:** Enrollment 110 students; school moved to the new third building of the Review office; and **Bell rejoined** as head of the English Department



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Launch: Final stage

- With the purchase of land and with the formation of the Educational Society early in the year, **1874** saw the construction of a three-story **college building**, with capacity for 400 students
- James White was elected the institution’s first president, serving until 1880
- Brownsberger served as principal, with 7 full-time teachers

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Launch: Final stage

- Fall term commenced: August 24, 1874
- Programs of studies:
 - Five-year Classical Course (college program)
 - Three-year English Course (became the normal course, a teacher-training program)
 - Two-year Special Course (prepare gospel workers)
- By December, school transferred operations to the new building

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Launch: Final stage

- Building inaugurated: January 4, 1875
 - James White: Opening address
 - Science department in the basement, study and recitation rooms on the first and second floors, and a large chapel on the third floor




Uriah Smith, "The Opening of the School," *Review and Herald*, vol. 45, no. 3, January 8, 1875, p. 22.

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Launch: Final stage

- Review: "the school"
- *Daily Journal*: "college" (November 1873)
- Review: "college" (December 1874)
- Proposed: "James White College"
- Review: "Battle Creek College" (Feb 11, 1875)




Uriah Smith, "Battle Creek College," *Review and Herald*, vol. 45, no. 7, February 12, 1875, p. 54.

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Battle Creek College

- Emmanuel Missionary College in 1901
- Andrews University in 1960
 - Named after J. N. Andrews, first official Seventh-day Adventist missionary, sent in 1874
 - And who, at the 1873 General Conference session, had introduced the motion to establish the institution



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Analysis of Perceived Value

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Conclusions

1. While there were pockets of resistance to the concept of education, **early Adventist leaders quite frequently articulated the perceived value of Adventist education**
 - Whether this pertained to the scattered and short-lived early school initiatives
 - Or to the founding of the first Adventist college at Battle Creek

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Conclusions

2. In denominational literature examined from the 1850s through the mid-1870s, the value of Adventist education was **referenced at least 50 times**, most commonly in articles and announcements appearing in the *Review*
 - Spokespersons included **James White, George I. Butler, and Ellen G. White**, in addition to the members of the School Committee and of the Educational Society corporately
 - Others, such as **John Nevins Andrews and Uriah Smith**, also contributed

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Conclusions

3. Some of the **earliest expressions regarding perceived value** included:
 - Being taught by someone of the same faith
 - Being separated from immorality in the public schools
 - Receiving instruction in both matters of religion and "the common branches"

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Conclusions

Others would **nuance** these values as:

- Safeguarding the spiritual and moral interests of children
- Providing a safe haven from corrupting influences
- Associating with students of like faith
- Becoming more fully acquainted with the tenets of the Adventist faith

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Conclusions

4. While **Ellen White** concurred with these values, she especially highlighted the value of Adventist education in terms of:

- Character formation
- Development of persons who could think and act for themselves
- Redemptive purpose

Themes which were not significantly developed by other advocates

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Conclusions

Even in reference to the **college**, she would write:

“When I was shown by the angel of God that an institution should be established for the education of our youth, I saw that it would be **one of the greatest means ordained of God for the salvation of souls.**”

E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, Pacific Press, Mountain View, CA, 1876, p. 413

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Conclusions

5. Starting in **1872**, the **emphasis shifted**: While still occasional references to the earlier aspects, the focus turned strongly to the value of **preparing gospel workers**

- Thoroughly instructed in the common branches, including the sciences
- Obtaining a mastery of the English language, and of foreign languages for mission
- Receiving a solid grounding in biblical truth

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Synthesis

It is perhaps significant that the **development of the first Seventh-day Adventist college** paralleled this worker-training emphasis.

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Synthesis

It would **not be until the 1890s** that there would be a renewed focus on the **education of the children** in the Church, wherein the earlier expressions of value, particularly those by Ellen White, would again receive attention. At this time, Adventist education would enter a period of exponential and sustained growth.

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Multi-Faceted Mission

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@1

Where is **the flock that was given to you, your beautiful flock?**




Jeremiah 13:20

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@2

The harvest truly is plentiful, but the **laborers are few.**




Matthew 9:37

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@3

Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations.



Matthew 28:19

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Adventist education

- While this multifaceted rationale for Adventist education certainly presents the challenge to forge these goals into a **cohesive real-life approach**,

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Adventist education

- It provides Adventist education with the opportunity to create a distinctive **Christ-centered, Bible-based, mission-focused** educational system,

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Adventist education

- It provides Adventist education with the opportunity to create a distinctive **Christ-centered, Bible-based, mission-focused** educational system, **transforming lives now and for eternity**

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