

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

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The last day of the 180 Symposium, the participants were divided into three focus groups, and each group was asked to discuss and share ideas on a specific area related to Sabbath School: **a) Administration:** this group discussed recommendations for administrators at all levels of the Adventist church; **b) Resources:** this group explored recommendations regarding resources for Youth Sabbath School. **c) Leadership:** this group focused on how to identify and develop strong leaders for the local church.

In this section, we report the final recommendations made by these three focus groups. While not all recommendations apply to all readers equally—for example, some apply to administrators, while others apply to local church Sabbath School teachers—we do encourage each reader to prayerfully consider those recommendations that may be relevant and applicable to their context, and to wisely move from reflection to action, as we all strive for a better Youth Sabbath School.

Recommendations for Administration

The group began by reading some relevant sections of the church manual. Important questions arose: Who is going to own (administratively) Youth Sabbath School? Why would they own it? What administrative structure can best support the Youth Sabbath School? Here are some of the key recommendations made by the group for the various levels of our church:

Recommendations for the Local Church

- *Influence the influencers.* Start by influencing the Pastor and the leadership of the church, and help them understand the vital role of the Youth Sabbath School to disciple the youth.
- *Improve Communication.* Seek ways to improve communication between all levels of the denomination (Division, Union, Conference) and the local church.
- *Foster Mentorship.* Identify Elders who have a passion for Youth Sabbath School and pair them with a younger person so that they can work together in Youth Ministry.
- *Network.* Create a network for Sabbath School with other churches.
- *Involve Youth.* Meet with the youth and seek ways to involve them in Sabbath School.

Recommendations for the Conference Youth Department

- *Sabbath School Inclusion.* Make the Youth Sabbath School an integral part of your ministry. Include this in your job description.
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- *Develop Recruitment Resources.* Brochure, video, USB card, etc., explaining the need for and what is required of youth leader.
- *Celebrate Leaders.* Recognition of outstanding Youth and Sabbath School leaders at Camp Meeting.
- *Provide Training.* Organize training events specific for Youth Sabbath School leaders and teachers (facilitators) regularly.
- *Cast a Wider Vision.* Cast a vision for an integral Youth Sabbath School (one that includes discipleship, community, ministry and evangelism).

Recommendations for the Union Youth Department

- Support Conference Youth Directors in their Youth Sabbath School leadership training efforts
- Make Sabbath School a vital part of your ministry
- Promote Youth Sabbath School vision and ideas at Union Youth Advisories
- Intentionally work with the other levels of the denomination to develop relevant resources for Youth Sabbath School

Recommendations for the Division Youth Department

- Appoint someone at the Division level to be responsible specifically for the Youth Sabbath School ministry
- Give direction to Youth Sabbath School (vision, resources and materials for the local church)
- Facilitate networking with Unions and Conferences
- Develop resources

Recommendations for Leadership Development

The goal for this group was to think of concrete ideas to identify and develop Youth Sabbath School leaders and facilitators. Here is a summary of their recommendations.

- Move from program to people making discipleship the main focus.
 - Be sensitive to differences between youth and young adults
 - Involve the youth in the planning and executing
 - Be intentional on mentoring
 - Involve parents in leadership
 - Consider the following key factors for Leadership Development
 - Define the type of leadership you are looking for (Disciple-makers, mentors, facilitators, etc.)
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- Seek ways to identify the leaders (Gift-based, passion for Youth Ministry, etc.)
- Train how to lead
- Create effective leadership network
- Create a fresh Youth Sabbath School leadership manual (Different modules: earliteen/youth/young adults)

Recommendations for Youth Sabbath School Resources

This group worked on specific recommendations for the development of quality and relevant resources for Youth Sabbath School. They began by attempting to answer the question: What is the most pressing thing right now when it comes to Youth Sabbath School resources? Here are the main responses:

- Variety of teaching methods should be utilized
- Adventist curriculum that is multi-sensory, media-rich, easy to use, easy to train
- Training resources, not necessarily certification but with skills
- Resources that focus and give a higher priority on the group and creating conversations rather than on the curriculum as the primary thing
- We need access to a variety of resources
- Contextualized resources
- Provide resources in a digital format

The group then transitioned into considering some key notions on resource development. Three areas were identified: a) People as resource; b) Materials as resource; and c) Delivery systems. Here is a summary of their findings.

People as Resource

- People are the number one resource. Without people, there would be no ministry in the church.
 - Presently, there is no methodology to access the people who are involved in Youth Sabbath School; no way to connect resources to the leaders. There is no effective communication system between the Conference and the local church. Youth Director is key to this. We need new ways to connect with churches—church leaders, youth leaders and teachers.
 - Create a database of Youth Sabbath School leaders
 - Use the Adventist Learning Community (ALC) for resources. <https://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com>
 - The leader needs to have access to resources that take little time to use (Sabbath School in a box)
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- Provide a forum for youth leaders to communicate with each other. Facebook could easily be this spot.

Materials as Resource

- Contextualized materials. Cultural groups and ethnicities—what about Hispanic youth and others? Regional churches? There’s no way that one curriculum can meet every need. Also class sizes, geography, urban and rural; institutional vs. non-institutional. Can we customize? At what cost? With what effectiveness? Can there be some elements that can be customized and scaled based on size? Which items are universal and which items need to be individualized?
- Good resource to consider as basis to create resources: “Teaching that Makes a Difference”, by Dan Lambert.
- We need more illustration material in audio-visual format.
- Build on the iBelieve video clips.
- If a local church creates something, upload it to a place others can get it.
- Consider something like the Haystack website (thehaystack.org). It was launched in 2014, and it houses videos, podcasts, blogs that a good number of Adventists are doing. There is a screening group and then there is a library. In other words, develop a media hub for Adventist young adults.
- “Slack.com” is an example of collaborating. Global Adventist Network has joined Slack.
- We need a central spot for Adventist resources.
- AdventSource supports resources for NAD. For example, Pathfinder supplies. There are some resources, but not a lot for youth and young adult, and no curriculum. The target group is local church leaders. Email, Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo, etc., but many people still don’t know about it.
- We need a central, recognizable brand.

Delivery Systems

- Pacific Press, R&H, ABCs are the delivery system currently in place. Pacific Press is a wholesaler with ABCs and their website, magazines, Facebook and Twitter, limited on YouTube. A lot of resources for children and youth, but policy doesn’t allow them to compete with SDA curriculum from the GC.
 - Challenge: the youth are not the ones who purchase this; adults or other gatekeepers are the ones who make that decision. Who are the gatekeepers? Some of these adults want items that wouldn’t necessarily be what the youth need or identify with. Whatever resources are developed, adequate attention must be given to convince the actual potential buyers, to actually do so.
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- Online might be the place to put more current and potentially controversial items so they are “optional” rather than the standard fare.
 - Another challenge, we lack a mechanism to communicate directly to local churches and their leaders. The best way currently for PPPA to let people know about a new resource is to use snail mail to a generic: Youth Leader at the local church. We don’t know who to connect with.
 - We need a marketing strategy to reach different groups. The Haystack gatherings—with food and showing videos, etc.—is an example of something we simply haven’t tried.
 - It would be good to have some youth ministry kits identified. ABCs could do this better.
 - Would a simple SS app be THE answer to Youth SS? Not necessarily! It can certainly be useful. The main need, however, is to train people AND the creation of and access to materials.
 - Have an app for training.
 - There is still value in print material. We want to be media-rich, but don’t stop print, either.
 - For the North American Division: Fund, coordinate, create a strategy, and follow through.
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