

CONFERENCE

Connections

A Sacrifice Worth Making

Sacrifice. That is what I saw from my parents when we came to America. They both worked the day and night shifts. They didn't do it so we could have a fancy place to stay. We lived in a one-bedroom house. They sacrificed to ensure that my brother and I were able to enjoy an Adventist education.

My mother believed that if she'd had an Adventist education, she would have been more effective in soul winning. She had a burning desire to share Christ and to lead people to Him, but she only had an elementary education. Still, she took what she had and has led more people to Christ than most pastors I know.

Even though she didn't have the same opportunity, it was important to her to make sure her children had not only an education, but a Seventh-day Adventist education. And she was willing to make deep sacrifices to make sure we received it.

She didn't ask questions about our grades like the typical Korean mother. She wanted to know about Bible class and worship. She wanted to know about our spirituality and how we were growing in Christ.

My teachers partnered with my parents to help me grow spiritually. I went to San Gabriel Academy and later San Pasqual

Academy, and the impact those teachers had on me is still felt today. Thirty years later, I still remember teachers like Mrs. McChestney, Randy Wright, Carl Ashworth, Mike O'Neil, Coach Paul Chong, and others who impressed upon me to love Jesus and stay in the church, even in times of doubt.

I believe that the teachers in our schools have a calling. They could have easily gone to public schools and earned more money, but they answered the call to help shape our young people in the image of God. In their classrooms, they create an atmosphere for students to experience God. For their sacrifice, they deserve our support and respect.

At the core of Adventist education lies the desire to help our scholars grow wholistically: physically, intellectually, and spiritually. We endeavor to provide them with an opportunity to learn, understand, and rediscover practical present truths about who God is and who God has called us to be.

I know there are parents who desperately want to send their children to Adventist schools, but because of distance or finances they cannot. When parents are willing to sacrifice to allow their children to experience Adventist education, our schools and the conference are willing to do what we can to partner with them. We truly believe it is a sacrifice worth making.

By Jonathan Park



Jonathan Park
SECC President

Laguna Niguel Jr. Academy Begins Robotics Program

Laguna Niguel Jr. Academy (LNJA) has begun a new robotics program. Jacinda Gonzales, the sixth- to eighth-grade teacher, was excited to see her first robotics team rise to the challenge. After picking up the equipment, they learned the necessary

programming and programmed a robot to do various tasks in just two weeks. In addition to programming a robot, the students worked on a project for a robotics competition. They earned four awards despite having limited time to learn and execute everything.

Currently, Gonzales uses robotics as a whole class, in-classroom experience. "My aim is to give each student an opportunity to be part of the program," she explained. She introduced robotics, HTML, and python programming to her classes because she felt they were necessary skills for her students' future.

She began making connections with the Adventist Robotics League team and soon received the equipment necessary to start from a school in the Southern California Conference.

After seeing how impactful the robotics program was, Gonzales worked to recruit as many SECC schools as possible, introducing the program and its benefits to them.

Steven Tafur gathers pieces for the robot.

She also loaned the equipment to other schools when her students were not using it. She invited teachers from other schools to learn about the program and acquire the skill necessary to implement robotics in their schools.

Thus far, the program has been greatly successful among students. Parents are also grateful that their students have this opportunity. Within a year and a half, robotics in SECC grew from 12 students to 85; she hopes that number will continue to increase. "I hope to see all students in SECC and other conferences (K-12) have HTML and python as part of their daily activities, much like handwriting or mathematics," said Gonzales.

Congratulations to Jacinda Gonzales for her innovation and creativity in educating her students and preparing them for a bright future.

By Ezrica Bennett



The LNJA Robotics team is hard at work.





LEFT: Students try not to fall in an extra-large game of Twister. **BELOW:** Students enjoy a science experiment.



Three SECC Schools Unite to Promote Seventh-day Adventist Education

During the 2022-23 school year, Escondido Adventist Academy (EAA) hosted three events for eighth-grade students from Oceanside Adventist Elementary (OAE) and Murrieta Springs Adventist Christian Academy (MSACA) to encourage them to attend EAA in the new school year—since EAA is the only K-12 school of the three.

Over the last two years, the pandemic has limited any joint social activities. Recently, teachers at EAA, OAE, and MSACA were inspired to reconnect students from all three schools.

“Our small Christian schools feel like big families,” explained Brooke Lemmon, principal at OAE. “Planning events for all the schools was a great way to reconnect the students. And if they choose to attend EAA next year, it’s a chance to learn with friends in an environment where teachers exemplify Jesus’ love daily.”

Last November, the families of students enrolled at OAE and MSACA were invited to join the eighth-grade students at a campfire and worship experience on the EAA campus. This created both a community-building experience and an opportunity for parents from all three communities to interact with one another and fellowship.

“If our students attend EAA, they continue on their spiritual journey with support from dedicated Christian educators and staff,” said Lemmon. “They will be more equipped to lead in their home churches than if they attend a local public or charter school.”

At an Academy Day event hosted by EAA, teachers highlighted the school’s classroom activities and extracurricular activities to show prospective students a day in the life of a typical Escondido high school student.

Lemmon believes one of the advantages of attending a smaller high school like EAA is that students can get individualized attention in the classroom. Students aren’t just another face in the crowd; rather, they are well-known by teachers.

“The events our schools have co-hosted to encourage students to attend EAA are not only about recruitment,” explained Lemmon. “EAA is intentionally leading an effort to create an environment where eighth-grade students from neighboring Adventist schools can have fun, build friendships, and worship together.”

Gail Hall, International Program Coordinator, EAA, agrees with Lemmon. “Most importantly, friendships are forming that will last much longer than the end of the eighth-grade year,” said Hall.

Students shake hands and break the ice with potential future high school classmates.



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kids konnect



Anya's Sneakers

Everyone knew that if you wore Converse sneakers to school, you were cool. Anya didn't have Converse sneakers, but she wanted them desperately. She wanted to become her class representative for the student council, and she knew she wouldn't win if people didn't think she was cool. She needed to wear Converse when she made her campaign speech.

The problem was that her parents wouldn't buy them for her. She had to work hard and buy the shoes herself. Anya made sure to complete her chores every day to

earn her allowance. She asked her friends to help her draw posters that urged "Vote for Anya!" She and her

"Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly."

John 7:24, NLT

mom made cookies for the entire class that said "Vote for Anya!" too. But Anya was afraid that it wouldn't be enough.

Finally, Anya had enough money to buy Converse

sneakers. With the help of her dad on his computer, she chose the pair she wanted and bought them! She was relieved and excited. This would be the last piece in securing her win.

But when the shoes came, they were not what Anya had ordered. The company got her order wrong and sent her flip-flops! The vote for the class representative was in one day, and there was no hope.

The next day, Anya made her speech with as much enthusiasm as she could, but she felt defeated. She wasn't wearing Converse. The class wrote their votes on little pieces of paper and dropped them into the teacher's jar, and the teacher counted them out.

"Anya is our new class representative!" The teacher announced. The class cheered! Anya looked up in confusion. "I won?" she asked.

"Yes!" Her teacher smiled. "Your hard work and kindness to your classmates really paid off, Anya."

Anya grinned. She didn't need Converse to be cool after all.

By Megan Jacobs

School Word Search

Can you find the following words? Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other. Use the word bank below.

Word Bank

teacher student
school music
graduate reading
math study
art science
learn writing
classroom education

O	D	S	T	U	D	E	N	T	C	V	D	G	E	L
A	N	E	D	C	N	R	K	M	E	Y	F	C	D	T
M	R	R	U	R	E	L	O	G	C	B	J	I	U	E
S	A	T	B	A	F	O	R	U	N	Y	V	S	C	A
L	E	Y	D	Y	R	A	I	M	E	V	W	U	A	C
I	L	I	D	S	D	B	T	H	I	M	I	M	T	H
M	N	U	S	U	A	U	O	E	C	X	N	Z	I	E
G	T	A	A	M	P	L	V	L	S	D	G	E	O	R
S	L	T	S	C	H	O	O	L	H	T	A	M	N	F
C	E	R	F	J	U	H	G	N	I	T	I	R	W	A