

**C**ognitiveGenesis,<sup>1</sup> subtitled  
•Moving Hearts and Minds  
Upward,Ž an independent re-  
search study initiated by re-  
searchers at La Sierra University (River-  
side, California, U.S.A.) and Andrews  
University (Berrien Springs, Michigan,  
U.S.A.), was designed to provide an-  
swers to three vital questions:

- What is the academic achieve-

In 2014, the high school graduation rate in the United States was 82 percent.<sup>3</sup> In the same year, the high school graduation rate for Adventist academies in the United States was 98.4 percent.<sup>4</sup> That statistic alone speaks volumes for the quality of education in Adventist schools. However, *CognitiveGenesis* dug much deeper in its analysis and, by comparing test scores, revealed that students in Adventist schools in the United States consistently performed well above the national average. Regardless of subject, grade level, or school size, students in these schools came out ahead. Two significant factors need to be noted with these results. One, the Iowa Tests are achievement tests taken all over the United States by more than three million students annually.<sup>5</sup> This was not an Adventist test or a test created by the research team for *CognitiveGenesis*; it was a standardized, national test.

Second, it is worth a reminder that the Adventist educational system in the North American Division is an open admission system. Any child who wants to attend an Adventist school can, regardless of ability or previous test scores. Unlike other college preparatory schools, Adventist schools do not have high admissions criteria. They are open to everybody, resulting in a highly diverse community of learners.

- *Students in Adventist schools “overachieved” beyond what their ability predicted.*

In the best sense of the word, *CognitiveGenesis* found that students in U.S. Adventist schools were over-achievers. They scored above their predicted achievement or expected achievement in all subjects, in all grades, for all school sizes, regardless of ability level. Let’s take an example of a hypothetical student named Joe. Joe’s parents know that he is a bright child; they see it in his interactions, his conversations, and his curiosity. However, Joe’s teacher tells a different story. Joe is often disruptive in class,

he forgets to turn in his homework, and he has a hard time staying on task. Joe would most likely score lower on the achievement tests than his aptitude tests (which measure ability) would suggest. Sadly, this is the case for many students in schools around the world. For a myriad of reasons, including poor learning environments at home and school, disengaged parents and teachers, convoluted policies, students’ achievement scores often do not accurately reflect their ability. Therefore, a good situation would have students’ achievement scores being approximately equivalent

- *Students in U.S. Adventist schools increased in ability.*

Ellen G. White states: “It is the work of true education to train the youth to be thinkers and not mere reflectors of other people’s thoughts.”<sup>6</sup> In essence, one of the underlying goals of Adventist education is to increase students’ ability, not simply their test-taking skills. The results from *CognitiveGenesis* substantiated their success by giving evidence to increases not only in achievement scores, but also in ability scores.

- *The longer students were in Ad-*  
*of a 0TD[ (“over)1The 32 TD[ (the A)36(d).1 (v(v*

Few researchers have tackled the topic of religion and its correlation with academic achievement, but Marianne Gilbert, an Adventist doctoral student, did just that. She used *CognitiveGenesis* data for her dissertation, which was titled *An Analysis of Spiritual Factors and Academic Achievement in Seventh-day Adventist Schools*.<sup>7</sup>

By identifying several factors that involve spirituality, including religion or spirituality emphasized at school, teachers' spirituality, and mothers' spirituality, Gilbert divided students' academic gains into months and found small gains, moderate gains, and large gains in academic achievement. That means when all three factors are aligned, students were up to 8.5 months ahead of where standardized tests predicted they should be.

In his latest book,

parents can be confident that the mirror neurons in their children's brains are "ring likenesses of Jesus.

Do Adventist schools do a good job of educating our students academically? Absolutely! But they also do so, so much more than that. They educate children for eternity, developing characters "t for heaven.

Adaptation of oral presentation at the 2016 LEAD Conference held October 5-7, 2016, at Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

Elissa Kido, EdD, is the Director of the Center for Research on Adventist Education K-12 (CRAE) and also serves as a Professor of

Education at La Sierra University in Riverside, California, U.S.A. The CognitiveGenesis Project was launched during Dr. Kido's tenure as Dean of the School of Education at La Sierra University, and she served as the Project Director.

#### NOTE AND REFERENCES

1. For more about the CognitiveGenesis study, see [http://adventisteducation.org/assessment/cognitive\\_genesis/overview](http://adventisteducation.org/assessment/cognitive_genesis/overview); Martha Havens, Jerome Thayer, and Elissa Kido, "Small Schools: How Effective Are the Academics?" *The Journal of Adventist Education* 77:3 (February/March 2015): 15-19; Elissa E. Kido, Jerome D. Thayer, and Robert J. Cruise, "Assessing Adventist Academics," *A Mid-Point Update on CognitiveGenesis*, *ibid.* 71:2 (December 2008/January 2009): 5-10.

2. These key questions guided the 2006-2009 study which collected data on students' academic achievement in Adventist schools throughout the United States, Canada, and

of Adventist Education 71:2 (December 2008/January 2009): 5-10: <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae200871020506.pdf>.

3. U. S. Department of Education, "U.S. High School Graduation Rate Hits New Record High," <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-high-school-graduation-rate-hits-new-record-high-0>.

4. Data collected by the Center for Adventist Research: <https://crae.lasierra.edu/archives/quarterly-report-april-june-2012/>.

5. Iowa Now, "Did You Know?: Iowa Assessments Statistics," <https://now.uiowa.edu/2012/03/did-you-know-iowa-assessments-statistics>.

6. Ellen G. White, *True Education* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2000), 12.

7. Marianne C. Gilbert, *An Analysis of Spiritual Factors on Academic Achievement in Seventh-day Adventist Schools* (dissertation, La Sierra University, 2013): <http://gradworks.umi.com/35/72/3572668.html>.

8. Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 2008).

9. White, *True Education*, 21.

10. Luke 15:11-32, NIV. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

11. Barna Group, "Barna Survey Examines Changes in Worldview Among Christians Over the Past 13 Years," *Research Releases in Faith and Christianity* (March 9, 2009): <https://www.barna.com/research/barna-survey-examines-changes-in-worldview-among-christians-over-the-past-13-years/#>.

12. Three Valugenesis studies collected data on faith maturity, values, and commitment from Adventist students in Adventist and public schools in the North American Division. For more information, see *Valuegenesis Update: Research Information Summary 3* (January 2012): 4. Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry *Valuegenesis*³ (2012), La Sierra University, Riverside, California: <http://green23.adventistschoolconnect.org/site/1/docs/vg3-update-v03.pdf>.

13. Rick Weissbourd et al., "The Children We Mean to Raise: The Real Messages Adults Are Sending About Values," *Making Caring Common*, Harvard Graduate School of Education (2014): 12. A report based on a 10-year study, which surveyed 10,000 middle and high school students from a representative sample of 33 schools across the United States, in addition to observation and conversations with youth, parents, and teachers: [http://sites.gse.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/making-caring-common/files/mcc\\_report\\_7.2.14.pdf](http://sites.gse.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/making-caring-common/files/mcc_report_7.2.14.pdf).

14. Lea Winerman, "The Mind's Mirror," *American Psychology Association Monitor on Psychology* 36:9 (October 2005): 48.