

Eternal H&S Issues

Schools partner with parents by providing a safe environment for their children. To help keep children safe, adults working and volunteering with children comply with mandatory regulations and submit to police checks. This is an important step in maintaining an arena of safety in schools. Most schools also include in their curriculum a component that educates children in protective behaviours, designed to alert a child if an adult's behaviour crosses the boundary of safe relationships. These protective behaviours are taught in the context of all persons, whether they are known to the child or are strangers.

I remember when the phrase 'stranger danger' was popular in schools. A catchy phrase, it was designed to raise children's awareness to the danger of sharing information with unknown adults, taking gifts from them or accepting invitations to go with them. I also remember hearing an interesting story that related to 'stranger danger'. A Boy Scout troupe went camping in rugged bush and during the course of the weekend, one of the young boys somehow became separated from the group. Volunteer search and rescue teams were called in and they began the painstaking process of combing the rugged terrain in search of the small lad. Hour after hour they searched; up hills, down steep gullies and along creek beds, but to no avail. They retraced their steps, covering the same ground twice, but there was no sign of the child. Finally, in an area quite close to where the boy had last been seen, a volunteer noticed a patch of colour almost hidden by the undergrowth. Investigating, he discovered the lad safe and well, but reluctant to emerge from his hiding spot. For hours, while the volunteers had combed the bush, calling his name, the child had deliberately remained hidden. He had both seen and heard those who were searching for him but fear of what might happen to him if he went with a 'stranger' motivated him to stay concealed. While this story is an extreme example of 'stranger

danger' gone awry, it raises a salient point; children are influenced by the words of adults they know and trust.

One other way that children learn who can be trusted is to watch how people they already know and trust interact with others. Children will take their cues from the significant people in their lives. When we consider a goal of Christian Education is to help children have an encounter with Jesus Christ and build a relationship with Him, this point becomes significant. It raises the following questions:

- Is it possible for children to learn about Jesus without learning to know Him?
- Will children ever desire a relationship with Jesus if he remains a stranger to them?
- What role do teachers play in the discipling of their students?

Christian teachers have a significant role. They have the opportunity to introduce their students to Jesus, so that they want Him as a friend. One such way of doing this is by teaching about Jesus, but even more important is their modelling of a personal relationship with Jesus in the day to day events of school life. Teachers can share what a relationship with Jesus Christ means to them; they can model prayer, and share personal testimonies from everyday life. These ways all send a clear message to students that Jesus Christ is a friend who can be trusted.

Albert Einstein is given credit for the words, "The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing." Christian educators recognise that the world is a dangerous place, not just in the physical realm, but also in the spiritual realm. If teachers in Christian schools stand by and do nothing to intervene between their students and the spiritual dangers that abound, they are guilty as charged by Einstein. **TEACH**

EH&S issues is a joint initiative between the Adventist Schools Australia Curriculum Unit and Avondale College of Higher Education.