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about personnel—and be forewarned: what I must say has very little to do with teachers or school administrators.

“But how can that be?” you might ask. “Teachers and administrators are the ones primarily responsible for the dearth of students enrolling in Adventist schools, aren’t they?” This is a fascinating question, one that in my experience we often answer with a seemingly irrefutable “Yes!” After all, conventional wisdom says, there will be improved enrollment when teachers teach better and administrators (for instance) market and recruit better.

# The gatekeeper: What if pastors could reverse the decline in church school enrollment?

When I graduated with a theology degree in the 1980s, hand-wringing has been done, for instance, regarding the seemingly these concerns, for they are undeniably



are pastors able to strongly influence whether or not the children in their church choose to go to an Adventist school, they are also able to strongly influence whether or not those children's parents can actually afford to pay for such schooling. And again, in my experience, this influence precedes and even eclipses any that might come from an educational professional.

A fourth reason pastors are the gatekeepers of Adventist education: they have the pulpit. In terms of effectiveness and regularity, no other medium of communication in the local church comes close. Few people will discuss the school newsletter over Sabbath lunch. But the sermon (for good or for ill!) will almost certainly merit such attention. And if a pastor chooses to either denigrate (which is rare) or ignore (which, in my experience, is incredibly common) Adventist education in his or her sermons, chances are very low that families will choose to send their children to Adventist schools. Conversely, if the pastor chooses to actively highlight the supreme virtues of Adventist education during his or her sermons, and to do so on a regular basis, the chances are high that families will choose to send their children to Adventist schools. And, again, note: no teacher, no administrator, nor any other position in the Adventist Church has access to such an influential medium with such regularity.

Fifth, unlike any other leader employed by the Adventist Church, pastors usually have substantial influence in every leg of what has traditionally been called "The Three-legged Stool": that union between the church, the home, and the school. A principal, for instance, may have influence with church members who have students in his or her school. But the pastor will usually have influence not only with those families but also with the rest of the families in the church who do not have any family ties with the school. This phenomenon thus represents a locus of influence that no other leader

# 5 ways to encourage youth in Total Member Involvement

1. Encourage youth to develop