



**"I want my students to be secure enough with themselves to be goofy," says Holly, who is known for her eccentricities. "I must practise what I preach, or they will not believe that it is safe to be themselves." (Holly Kay and Grade 5 students.)**



**Holly and Brad Kay with their two children, Cassandra (6) and Hunter (5).**

## Year-end reflections of a MANS teacher

As June approaches, I look back over this school year and evaluate not only my students but also my actions. Have I made the difference that God needed me to make? At these times I find that the thoughts of my six-year-old usually provide the most insight.

At bedtime Cassi and I always spend a few moments talking about her day. That night the conversation went like this:

"Mommy, will Hunter [her little brother] be taller than me one day?"

I had seen the growth charts, so I responded, "Well, one day he'll be taller than you. You are supposed to be about as tall as mommy, but you'll probably be skinnier."

She looked at me as if I had come from Mars—and her response stopped me in my tracks.

"Mom, we all have the same skin."

Applying basic rules of English grammar, Cassi was right: "Skinnier" should mean someone with more skin. Regardless of her misinterpretation of

the word, it is obvious that to Cassi, skin is pretty irrelevant. She is living the many sermons we have all heard on the theme "The Lord looketh on the heart."

When do we lose that pure perspective? When do we cease seeing people as the same? Cassi does not see fat people, ugly people, nerds, or jocks. She sees classmates, people, and friends everywhere! At what point does that change, and how do I stop it from happening to her? How do I keep myself from doing that very thing?

As teachers, we see this evolution in our classrooms, and we fight against classification all day long. But am *I* doing it? Does the child who scowls at me get the same love as the sweet little thing that draws me pictures all day? Do they look the same in our eyes? It is one of the hardest things about being a teacher, I think.

And I know this plays out in our lives outside the classroom too. We all do it, whether we are teachers or not. We look at the single mom, the divorced couple,

the tattooed, the pierced, the coffee-drinker, the meat-eater, the conservative, the liberal, the you're-not-doing-it-my-way people, and we judge. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23)

If we have grown up in a Christian environment, we have heard the "Don't Judge" sermons all our lives. So when do we finally start making it real every day? I need to tap into my inner six-year-old and see each child as they are: a person with the "same skin" as mine.

"God, help me to see each child as someone who has the same skin as mine, and please help me to be more like you so I can love each and every one of them as you love them and see them the way you do."

Amen. ■

*Holly Kay teaches Grade 5 at Mamawi Atosketan Native School, Canada's only Seventh-day Adventist mission school.*