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# LEADING THE JOURNEY

An E-newsletter on EXCELLENCE in Leadership

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## Student Organizations

*Leadership, [NAD Principals' Handbook](#) (excerpt)*

In cooperation with the school board, faculty, and staff, the principal should seek to initiate, facilitate, and support a variety of student organizations on campus. The nature and number of organizations should be determined in light of the following considerations:

- Alignment with the school's mission, goals, and objectives
- Budget/financing
- Faculty and staff workloads
- Parent/community/constituent support
- School history and traditions
- Student needs and interests

**Principals' Handbook** <http://adventisteducation.org/principals-handbook/>

## Leadership Training for All Students

*Liesl Vistaunet, Communications/Public Relations  
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A clear connection exists between the curricular and co-curricular, between the activities student leaders are involved with and their classroom experiences. In academic classes students use leadership skills to work successfully in groups, manage schedules, make better decisions, and assess progress. At the same time, leadership experiences require students to draw on the knowledge and skills learned in class. Tasks and challenges that confront students as leaders will necessitate the application of a wide-array of learning and implementation strategies.

Portland Adventist Academy has extended leadership training to every student. At the beginning of each school year, Portland has developed class adventures, challenges, and retreats for all four classes—Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors. They use the experience to teach leadership, instill integrity and courage, extend curiosity and concern, and affirm faith and belief. The academy's motto is Christ-centered, character driven. These class-wide events help integrate this concept in all students' thinking. "Besides introducing our students to Jesus Christ, character development is one of our most important goals," says Monte Torkelsen. Leadership is built on sound characters.

Each class, as a group, leaves the city and all their electronic gadgets behind to retreat to the wilderness. Through mountaineering, ropes courses, rock climbing, and navigating carefully planned obstacle courses and mind-bending puzzles, students learn life skills and bond with each other. Courses are taught and led by Portland staff, upperclassman, adult mentors, and certified mountaineering guides.

Thoughtfully planned, every year's event builds upon the next. Freshmen spend a day learning about trust and courage through a ropes course. As sophomores, they explore the themes of

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## Lead Leadership Training with Christ

*Dennis Plubell, Vice-President for Education  
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Providing students with leadership opportunities on an academy campus is an essential part of the mission of Adventist education. While often classified as part of the informal curriculum, the program of activities that students lead develops maturity and leadership skills. To train young people to be perceptive and proactive in putting their time and talents to work as leaders of the student body, of their class, in spiritual activities or campus clubs provides them an experience that is foundational to leadership in their church and community.

John Winslow, Principal of Upper Columbia Academy in Spangle, Washington, reflects on the unique opportunities of boarding academies to build students' leadership capacity in the 24 hours, 7 days-a-week school schedule and school calendar. John says, "The appointment of student resident hall assistants is a traditional role that young people take seriously and is the closest thing to being staff members. We tell them that is their role. They work hard and in most cases are major players in setting the tone on campus. RAs learn the importance of exhibiting acceptance and love and being spiritual mentors first." Student RAs experience what good teachers know: students do not care to learn or follow until they know that you, their teacher or RA, have learned to care.

Effective student RAs do not just happen each year. Certainly, principals and deans must begin with careful recruitment of students who exhibit character and personality traits essential for leadership, such as integrity, initiative, patience, perseverance, empathy, and effective communication skills, to name a few. Orientation and leadership training is important and adopted by every boarding school. John reports, "Our RAs

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## Leadership Training for All Students

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teamwork, creativity, concern, solitude and reflection, and vision during a weekend in the mountains. By the time students are juniors at Portland, they are ready for a more mature look at courage, strategic planning, group leadership, "followership" and respect, creativity, and solitude and reflection.

Finally, PAA seniors are instructed in integrity, judgment, strategic goal-setting, and community. "These traits are about being who you are and who you really want to be, making the right choice at the right time, planning for the future, and connecting with God and each other," says Torkelsen.

"The junior challenge is the hard one," says Ty Johnson, Portland vice-principal. "For some of these kids, it is the hardest thing they've ever done. They quickly realized they could not complete a challenge on their own and how important it was to connect with each other to finish a task. Their dynamics were impressive to watch. These are life lessons that we can not teach as well in the classroom. You just can not put a price on that value."

Johnson loves seeing the sense of accomplishment and pride in the students when they complete their final challenge. "As you watch the kids climb that last mountain then look down into the valley, across the hills and river, and the cliffs they have climbed, it is awesome to see them take in all they have worked through," he says. It has been very evident to staff how these activities have created community on campus and identified leaders among peers that facilitate a great school year and great student activities. 🌟

## Lead Leadership Training with Christ

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and ASB leaders arrive a week early and spend time in team building activities. We would not want to start school any other way. Both groups spend time in worship, sharing personal spiritual journeys, goals for the new school year, and focusing on how they can minister to students for Christ. Both groups also have training through various workshops on topics like first aid, recognizing teen depression, dealing with substance abuse and other like items. The training helps make them who they need to be as leaders on campus."

John Winslow was asked what his "take away" would be that he would want every principal to know about when developing and working with student leaders. His response was, "Lead with Christ as your leader in every moment . . . EVERY MOMENT. Sometimes we forget to put God first, but this is the only way to success. Second, lead humbly because in this fashion our students will develop respect for us even when we make mistakes or do not lead perfectly. This is a great example for them to follow. Finally, be ready to guide with kindness and patience. Students want and need us to be mentors who give them tools and guidance for success. Yes, they need some room to make mistakes and learn from them. But, I would contend that it is not the best to set the students totally free to do whatever they want and learn leadership by their mistakes with little guidance." 🌟

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## The Principal's Role in Developing Student Leaders

*Dennis Plubell, Vice-President for Education, North Pacific Union Conference*

- Ensure alignment of all student-led activities with the school's mission
- Continually seek additional ways for students to lead in campus programs
- Create effective mentoring and training opportunities for all leadership roles
- Help student leaders understand the complex nature of leadership
- Provide resources, human and financial, to facilitate success for student leaders
- Demonstrate confidence in students' ability to successfully lead campus activities
- Encourage and praise student leaders to motivate and sustain their involvement
- Provide unequivocal public support of the value of learning through student leadership
- Attend to a safe, supportive campus climate that encourages students to lead
- Regularly assess the quantity and quality of student leadership roles on campus

**Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results.**

**-George S. Patton**

**The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it.**

**-Theodore Roosevelt**