



# LEADING THE JOURNEY

An E-newsletter on *EXCELLENCE* in Leadership

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## School Climate

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

The principal is primary in establishing the climate of the school. School climate is the school's collective personality or atmosphere. The school climate reflects the effectiveness of the spiritual and scholastic growth taking place in the school. The climate, good or bad, is determined by the school spirit demonstrated by the students, by *esprit de corps* on the part of the staff, and by the communication program between administration, staff, students, parents, and the local community.

Because school climate affects teacher productivity, the instructional quality received by students will generally be affected. Following are some of the effective principal's roles in fostering and

sustaining a positive school climate:

- Involving students, staff, parents, and the community to create and sustain a safe learning environment.
- Using knowledge of the social, cultural, leadership, and political dynamics of the school community to implement effective change.
- Modeling respect for students, staff, parents, and the community.
- Developing and implementing a plan that manages conflict and crisis situations in an effective and timely manner.
- Utilizing shared decision making.

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

## Spirituality and School Climate

*Dennis Marshall, Director of Education  
Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada*

The day began as a regular day with the sun unfolding its golden rays on buildings and verdant lawns that occupy the valley in which the school was situated. I had just entered the school building and was scanning the pictures and other displays in the hallway when two teen-aged girls opened the main door. I was the only one in the hallway at that time, and I was conspicuous; a stranger with eyes scanning pictures, drawings, artifacts and writings.

Without looking at the girls, I was conscious of their spontaneous dialogue at the entrance when they saw me. I did not know what to expect. Were they analyzing me? Were they afraid to enter the hallway because of this stranger? Did they forget something important and were contemplating retrieving it before proceeding to their class?

They paused but for a brief moment. Then, the girls approached me, and one said with a confident but inquiring voice, "Excuse me, Sir, are you visiting our school for the first time?"

My eyes met theirs as I turned, answering in the affirmative,

I explained that I was a member of a team who would be evaluating their school. The girls looked at each other momentarily, and the one who had been quiet spoke these memorable words: "We would like to pray for you. Do you mind?" Those words penetrated my mind and immediately transformed it.

In all my years of visiting schools and conducting school evaluations, I have never encountered such an experience. Pleasantly shocked, I willingly bowed my head as the teenager prayed for me and her school. From that encounter, I had a sense that the girls reflected the positive culture of the school, and I immediately felt connected to the school.

A school with a spiritual DNA provides the right conditions for students and teachers to work collaboratively for the success of every student—motivated, as well as reluctant learners. In such a positive school climate, students respect teachers and teachers treat students fairly. Teachers go out of their way to encourage students to excel, providing support for them to reach their God-given potential. In such a school, bullying and exclusion are not condoned; students with learning deficiencies are encouraged to be engaged in school

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## Sing the Song This Week!

Angela Bishop, Principal  
Parkview Adventist Academy

Our grade 11 students recently wrote words of encouragement on yellow sticky notes and pasted them on student lockers and teacher classroom doors. When I read my note of encouragement, my tears began to flow. It was such a simple act of kindness that brought such reassuring words of love.

As inhabitants of this sinful earth, we are often confronted with troubles and temptations. We are often burdened by the continuous ‘bad news’ around us. Or we often remain keenly aware of our disappointments, failures and hurts. But the compassionate acts of our Grade 11 students remind us that we have a choice each day in what we choose to focus on. Ellen White says, “My brethren and sisters, God is your strength, and He does not want you to go crippling along in this life! Keep your mind upon the better country, even the heavenly. Learn to sing the song here upon this earth. The best song you can learn is to speak kindly to one another, for in heaven the business of the inhabitants is to please one another.” (*Sermons and Talks, Volume I*, p. 43)

Thank you, Grade 11 students, for singing the song of heaven through your acts of kindness!! “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works!” (Hebrews 10:24)

May we take the example of our students to sing a similar song of heaven in our interactions with our children, friends, family, teachers, and even strangers! May God’s encouragement flood our week! ☕

## Spirituality and School Climate

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activities with more capable students.

Collaboration, transparency, choice, engagement, good relationships, and high academic achievements are all demonstrable characteristics of a positive school culture that is grounded in spirituality. Spirituality is transformative; it conditions the heart to do the right thing. Spirituality influences good decision-making, is generous and kind, and brings out the best in people. It is rooted in love. ☕

**The girls looked at each other momentarily, and the one who had been quiet spoke these memorable words: “We would like to pray for you. Do you mind?” Those words penetrated my mind and immediately transformed it.**

## Climate Change?

Berit von Pohle, Director of Education  
Pacific Union Conference

There is a lot of talk about school climate. Research is very clear that a school’s climate and culture—safety, interpersonal relationships, institutional environment, and learning practices—have a direct relationship to student achievement.

So what is the climate on your campus? Have you measured it recently? The mandatory parent and student survey completed during your most recent accreditation visit is not enough. Do you know what the strengths of your school climate are? Do you know what issues need to be subject to some climate change?

A component of any healthy school improvement process is asking for feedback from stakeholders to determine how your school is doing. Here are three school climate surveys which can be accessed by any school community:

- **NASSP (National Association for Secondary School Principals)** publishes the *Breaking Ranks Comprehensive Assessment of School Environment (CASE) Survey*. The survey is used to gather school culture satisfaction information from students, parents, and staff. The results identify school strengths and areas for improvement. <http://www.nassp.org/School-Improvement/Tools-for-School-Improvement/Breaking-Ranks-CASE-Survey.aspx>
- **The Alliance for the Study of School Climate** has developed a survey that provides data on various components of the school program, rating each as accidental, semi-intentional or intentional. Eight sub-factors of the school program are analyzed. <http://web.calstatela.edu/centers/schoolclimate/assessment/#3-levels>
- **The Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI)** is produced by the National School Climate Center. This instrument assesses student, parent, and school personnel perceptions, and then provides a profile of your school’s strengths and needs. <http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/practice.php>

Without a doubt, measuring the climate of your school community will cost you some money. But can you afford not to be part of school climate change? School climate will change your students – positively or negatively! ☕