



# LEADING THE JOURNEY

An E-newsletter on *EXCELLENCE* in Leadership

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## Spiritual Curriculum

*Leadership, NAD Principals' Handbook (excerpt)*

A primary focus of an Adventist school should be an intentional plan for nurturing students' spiritual development. This spiritual curriculum should be integral to all that happens on campus, both inside and outside the classroom. Beyond offering a Bible class in each grade, a school must create activities that will help students develop a deep relationship with Jesus Christ. These activities are most effective when age-appropriate student input and leadership are included. Some

types of activities that might be included are:

- Bible-study groups and baptismal classes
- Chapel programs
- Special church services on and off campus
- Class worships
- Community service projects
- Mission trips
- Vespers
- Weeks of Prayer

## Four-legged Table

*Chris Juhl, Principal, Forest Lake Education Center*

I once owned a sturdy, attractive table that sat in my dining room. There was just one problem. One of the legs was shorter than the rest. No matter how I tried to adjust the table, it was never even or balanced. I have often thought of Adventist education as a four-legged table.

The foremost objective of a Christian education is to point students to Jesus Christ. Ideally, the objective permeates all aspects of our school. The book *Education* states that true education "is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers (13)." Let us add to that the development of a student's social skills. We educate our students in these four areas on a daily basis—physical, mental (academic), spiritual, and social. I have observed that students tend to gravitate to the physical and the social. They are naturally social beings and often love school because of the friends. They often gravitate toward the physical as well. Physical education, recess, and athletic teams are a few of the activities that most students enjoy.

The challenge for many schools today is to find the balance in promoting the spiritual and the academic. Unfortunately, schools that promote academics leave the impression that the spiritual takes a back seat. In contrast, principals that tout the spiritual leave some observers believing that the academics suffer.

Our goal as educators is to create a four-legged table. When we

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## The Power of Relationships

*David Denton, Principal, Forest Lake Academy*

The foundation for student spiritual development is relational. Leadership at Forest Lake Academy believes the friendships with students are essential to spiritual growth.

We also believe that students are more likely to adopt Christian values when they are in positive and meaningful relationships with each other and with faculty.

A recent graduate from Forest Lake Academy illustrated this beautifully when he attributed his decision to accept Christ and pursue a ministerial career to the impact his teachers (he named specific people) had on him during his high school experience.

For this reason, our spiritual programming is built around the simple concept of building meaningful relationships with students in a variety of settings and roles. Our campus ministries team, which consists of our chaplain and the teachers in the Bible department, lead out in a variety of initiatives, including:

- A unique and creative Bible curriculum that is student-focused and attentive to the diverse learning styles of our students.
- A Servant Leadership program designed to develop leadership skills and interest in our Juniors and Seniors.
- A vibrant chapel program, which incorporates both corporate worship and small group community development to facilitate belonging, both to our school

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## Four-legged Table

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elevate our school's academic performance, we elevate our school's spiritual atmosphere. A student who is actively engaged in the classroom by a teacher who is creative, dynamic, and engaging connects to the concept that the teacher is presenting. While that teacher has the student actively engaged, the teacher has the opportunity to touch that life spiritually.

Most of the great teaching opportunities during the life of Jesus happened in the moment. When we purposefully create a strong four-legged school—one that lifts up the four elements of a Christian education—each leg of the table supports the others. By creating a powerful academic, social, and physical program, we give the teacher the opportunity to touch a life spiritually and thus for eternity. My prayer is that school administrators make this the primary goal in Adventist education. ☩

## The Power of Relationships

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community and the larger church community.

- Extensive opportunities for students to lead out in chapels through speaking, drama, music, and worship leading.
- A focused commitment to introducing students to Jesus and intentional efforts to invite them to commit their lives to Him as Savior and Lord. This focus has resulted in well over fifty student baptisms in the last few weeks of last year and the first two weeks of this new school year.

Opportunities to minister to the less fortunate through well-planned mission trips are presented with renewed emphasis. This year, two mission trips are being planned with a desire to develop relationships (there's that word again) that go beyond a single mission trip or even a single year. We are planning trips this year to both the Philippines and Nicaragua, where partnerships are being pursued that will span several years—partnerships with local villages and schools that will allow students to see the results of their efforts grow over the course of several trips.

Finally, the focus of school discipline is to be redemptive. The point is not to punish as an end in itself, but to help the student grow beyond the bad decisions they make and move into a life habit of making good choices that will further the goals of Christian service and Christ-like living.

All of these goals require intentional effort and a commitment to developing relationships. These relationships begin with more mutual respect between students and staff. And the students realize they are valued for who they are and will, in turn, extend that value to others. ☩

## Spiritual Focus

*Murray Cooper, Associate Superintendent, Florida Conference*

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

Confession time. I cut my administrative teeth in Alberta back in the early 1990's. High school seniors had their final grade in core content classes determined by a 50/50 split between the final class grade and their score on the provincial final exam. If the difference between those two components was more than 8%, I would get a call from the provincial education department to see what was happening. This was high stakes testing. Because the school had just added 12th grade, as well as me being a brand new principal, my focus was on academics so that we could maintain accreditation. I assumed that because we had Seventh-day Adventist teachers everything was good in the spiritual life of the school, thus the heavy emphasis on academics.

It took a challenging conversation with a pastoral friend a few years ago to force me to carefully examine how I chose to determine the "harmonious development of the physical, mental, and spiritual powers" of the children and teachers I worked with.

By reflecting on my administrative journey, I concluded that because I worked with professional Seventh-day Adventist educators in Adventist schools, daily Bible classes, morning worships, and weeks of prayer, and perhaps even a mission trip, the spiritual component was taken care of, therefore it didn't warrant a lot of additional time and energy. As a result, the evidence indicated that I had placed far more intentional emphasis and focus was on academic and other program development.

As you review the spiritual development section of the *Principals' Handbook*, please do not assume that if you put all those things into place at the start of the year that you've taken care of business. Worships, weeks of prayer, Bible class, service learning, and the like are all tools to use. As a faculty and staff, you must continually and intentionally focus on what is happening spiritually throughout the year in your faculty meetings, staff worships, and other planning sessions. Challenge yourself and your staff to renew and invigorate personal spiritual journeys. Do you make spiritual life focus, discussion, and evaluation number one on your faculty meeting agenda? Is spiritual life a major item during pre and post week faculty meetings and planning? Is it the first topic of conversation when talking with a teacher about what is happening in the classroom? Is it top of the list when sharing what is happening with your school board and church community? If you answered "yes" to these questions, then you are headed in the right direction.

By intentionally seeking God's Kingdom first in all we do with our students, faculty, staff, parents, board, and church, our priorities will be in the right order, which will result in all these things (academics, athletics, music, etc.) being successful and beneficial to our overall school program. ☩