



LEADING THE JOURNEY

An E-newsletter on *EXCELLENCE* in Leadership

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Why Are We Doing This?

Leadership, *NAD Principals' Handbook* (excerpt)

The principal should remember that the school program exists to serve the needs of students. In planning the program, the following considerations are to have high priority:

- Create and maintain a school climate that is conducive to student learning.
- Lead in the formulation, implementation, and enforcement of school rules and regulations that foster student learning.
- Model consistent fairness in dealing with parents, staff, and students which supports student learning.
- Provide leadership in the

development, coordination, and implementation of a balanced curricular program to ensure student learning for all.

- Recognize that:
 - ⇒ If it is good for students, then it is probably good for the school.
 - ⇒ If there is no fun in it, there is not going to be any long-term learning.
 - ⇒ Students are more important than teachers.
 - ⇒ Teachers are more important than principals.
 - ⇒ Principals are important only when they are helping students and teachers.

<http://adventisteducation.org/principals-handbook/>

Why I Am in Education

*Robert Smith, Associate Superintendent
Southeastern California Conference*

The question word I most fear is “why.” I can handle “who, what, where, when” fairly easily; even “how” which might take a few more sentences does not elicit anxiety. But, for some reason, “why” questions force deeper thought, uncomfortable introspection and delayed responses. Yet, it is these very reactions of mine that ensure that the answers to “why” questions are perhaps the most meaningful.

As I ponder this prompt, I am struck by how my response has evolved over the course of my career, even my life for that matter. My initial answer to this question was very simple, as one might expect. My mother reminds me that when I was in elementary school, I returned home after my primary grade Christmas party and declared that I wanted to be a teacher, as “he receives the most gifts of anyone.”

Years later when I moved in to my first high school classroom, I would have answered this question with a more mature response, if not decidedly academic content focus. I was a teacher in order to instill a knowledge of history—to help students love the social studies as much as I did. This was certainly a noble motivation. However, I did not even make it to the holidays that first year before my response morphed again. I was not in education just to help students

analyze primary source documents or memorize names and dates. I was also in education to change lives, to guide a new generation. The course content was my entry point to enable me to accomplish so much more than a mere awareness of historical epochs. In addition, and most importantly, as an Adventist educator, I came to recognize that my highest calling was to help students come to appreciate the benefits of a relationship with Jesus and to seek to know Him better.

I think that the last evolution in my thinking as to “why I am an educator” has continued to resonant with me today. I have come to see my role as an Adventist educator as really my engaging in ministry. It began in the classroom, as I attempted to minister to a group of teenagers taking high school history classes. I sought after ways to assist them academically, spiritually and socially. And, it continues now as an administrator, as I look for opportunities to minister to teachers and principals, to clear obstacles from their paths so they can reach their fullest potential as educators and colleagues.

The irony of this “why” question may just be that my initial fascination with the gifts the teacher received was not so far off the mark. **As I see those I work with expand their skills and reach their fullest potential, it is truly like receiving a gift—the gift of fulfillment, of a calling worth embracing, which is so much more valuable than gifts that arrive in wrapping paper.** 🌟

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Called to Lead

Rob Parker, Principal, Cariboo Adventist Academy

The job of being an academy principal is not an easy one. The hours are long, and often unrecognized. You do not go into this job because of fame, adoration, money, power or prestige. If you do, you will soon be dissuaded. People will misunderstand what you are doing. I have been recently told that each administrator faces challenges where the best you can do is to choose how you will lose. At times the job is hard.

So why do it? When I started my education career more than 22 years ago, I never aspired to principalship. About ten years in, I started working toward a master's degree, initially in Curriculum and Instruction. As I started taking classes, God started working on my heart. When it came time for me to declare my master's program, I remember writing the words administration and leadership. I stood back and looked at it, wondering who had written that down. Then I heard God speak to me and say, "Son, you do not understand, but this is My path for you." In stunned silence I

took my application home to pray some more about it. The answer came back to a resounding, "Yes, this is the right path." So here I am, with a master's in Administration and Leadership, leading out at Cariboo Adventist Academy in Williams Lake, British Columbia.

I have realized that my position gives me the unique perspective of influencing a whole school, not just a classroom. In some ways I have become a teacher of teachers. I do not always enjoy the hard conversations I have with parents, students, or staff, but I do recognize that they are necessary. I find myself doing odd jobs I never knew I would, like attempting to fix the automatic flush on a toilet. Being principal is never boring, there is always a new challenge, a new deadline to reach. I get to see the joy on people's faces as teachers and students work together toward the common goal of educating for a future life here on earth and in heaven above. It is amazing to be doing a job you have been called to do. I know that I am in this place at this time doing the job God has prepared me for. There is no better feeling than knowing this. 🌟

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Before that moment the task seemed impossible. Suddenly, you see a way to accomplish "the impossible."

When the Breakthrough Happens

Jeff Deming, Principal, Monterey Bay Academy

Last November, Monterey Bay Academy Impressions (drama department) performed the classic story of Anne Sullivan and Helen Keller in *The Miracle Worker*. As a teacher, Anne Sullivan was not satisfied to leave Helen Keller trapped in darkness and ignorance.

The last scene of the play brings the teacher to the brink of seeing all she has done come to little resolve in the life of Helen...when the breakthrough happens. What seemed impossible for Helen to grasp now dawns with comprehension. All the barriers drop as Helen places her hands, with trust and hope, into the hands of one who will open up a whole new life experience – her teacher.

People often wonder why those in educational leadership do what they do. I believe this is the defining moment. **When the breakthrough finally happens and understanding flows with eager and overwhelming desire on the part of the student to know more.** It is why we get up early in the morning and stay late, write the note cards of appreciation, and take a moment to talk in the hallway to a student even when an important phone call waits. It is the reason we send an article or two to our teachers who might glean some useful resources from its pages or step into sub classes for a sick colleague. It is that moment when someone understands that you care, you are willing to be hands and feet of support, and despite the long journeys and few rewards, you are committed to being there.

The legendary basketball coach, John Wooden said, "Seek

opportunities to show you care. The smallest gestures often make the biggest difference."

That is what Jesus demonstrated to us through His life as an educator. The moment that a breakthrough happens it changes everything; knowledge, understanding, and desire wash together a fabric of truth that opens up a new world. He sought to reach out and give, through the hands of love and care, opportunities for those in need to have a breakthrough, to see life through eyes of possibilities and brightness. When that moment happens, one cannot help but to respond, to open up, to seek more.

Like the one at the well who wanted the streams of living water, or the man who recognized his need of a teacher and desired to have the Teacher help his unbelief, and the woman who washed her Teacher's feet with perfume and tears just to show how the way Jesus reached out to her broke through the painful reminders of life before His loving interaction.

Just this morning one of my teachers came into my office. She told me about one of her students, who just the day before in moments of conversation decided after months of listening and learning to go past the books and take a chance on trusting the teacher with her brokenness. **Through care, this teacher was able to show God's love and desire to heal His children, and this young lady gave her heart to Jesus – a breakthrough!** These experiences are not always in our timing or in moments of convenience, but they come. As I was listening to this story, chills ran through my arms and legs. I knew this is the reason I do what I do each day. 🌟

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