



LEADING *the* JOURNEY

AN E-NEWSLETTER ON EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP

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Creating a Spiritual Framework

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ELEMENTARY CHAPLAIN, LOMA LINDA ACADEMY

As a Seventh-day Adventist institution, living and loving like Jesus ought to be our most defining characteristic. However, putting this into practice can be difficult. Academy students are often over-scheduled; their time is split between school, extra-curricular such as sports and music, church, and balancing relationships. It can be quite the challenge to motivate students to value their spiritual growth. The work must be on us, as spiritual leaders, to create a value system that prioritizes a relationship with God as the way to live fruitfully. This calls leaders to develop programs that go beyond the required Bible class, beyond worksheets and memory verses. A strong spiritual framework incorporates social emotional learning programs, servant leadership opportunities, and meaningful connections and partnerships. This article will address ways that Loma Linda Academy has worked and is still working towards incorporating all three facets of a thriving spiritual framework.

A strong spiritual life program views the development of the student in a holistic way. Social emotional learning must take place if we are to meet the spiritual needs of our students. If

we do not teach students socially what the fruits of the Spirit look like in their relationships, we should not expect students to put these character principles into practice.

It started as a conversation between Mr. Koh (vice-principal at LLE) and me. We addressed the need to develop a program that not only teaches kids about who Jesus is, but also about how Jesus interacted with others. We recognized that we were not making connections between what was taught and how to apply it. We developed a program called Grounded Kids that focused on teaching four core values: emotional intelligence, respect, integrity and grit. These core values are rooted in the kingdom blueprint that Jesus offers us in the gospels. This language is incorporated in student dis-

cipline, in the classroom, and during our assemblies. We have seen a shift in the way students interact with one another, as well as received feedback from parents about how their child is putting the social skills into practice at home.

Furthermore, spiritual life programs are organized and facilitated through student involvement. At the high school, student chaplains and ministry directors work hard to create ministry opportunities for the student body, within campuses and across campuses. The different ministries focus on organizing and executing programs that serve the needs of the students. One example of this is the leadership of the high school ministry directors on the elementary campus.

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Spiritual Curriculum 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

Adventist Education: A Spiritual Master Plan

Mark Witas

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When I accepted a call to become principal I did so with the expectation that Adventist schools are a part of the Adventist movement and as such are not just educational institutions, but are our strongest evangelistic entities in the North American Division. Maybe the world.

When I stepped into my office, I noticed some things missing. I noticed that we had a curriculum plan. Check. A financial plan/budget. Check. The two things I could not find anywhere in my files were a marketing plan or a spiritual master plan. As I called my conference and union, I came to find that they did not have one either. So, I gathered my team and we developed both a marketing and spiritual master plan that fit our school. This article is about developing a spiritual master plan for your school.

The first question my task force asked was, "How are we going to win the souls of our students for Jesus and how are we going to teach them to win souls for Jesus?" As we started planning the next school year, these questions had to be answered before we could open the doors for the school the following fall. Attached is a template we filled out to aid our task. I hope it can help you too.

Here are some of the conclusions we came to and practices we developed.

1) Have the aesthetics of our school reflect our spiritual mission and goals. What

catches the eye as you walk through your school to remind you of your primary mission, to lead people to Jesus? In our elementary section we painted a ribbon of words down the hallway in different colors. The words reminded everyone who walked down that hall of what kind of character a follower of Jesus would strive for. In our high school, we had at least one room themed after the mission trip we were to take that year. Also, at almost every corner was our mission statement, reminding us all of our primary task, to reflect Jesus in all that we do.

2) Have teachers be mindful of incorporating kingdom principles into their curriculum.

All disciplines of study reflect God's power and creativity in some way or fashion. It is the teacher's task to notice this and help her/his students to notice it too. I did teacher evaluations twice a year. Included in my interviews with each teacher was the question, "How did you incorporate principles of the Kingdom of God into your curriculum?" There had best be an answer to that question.

3) Design parent/teacher conferences to make our spiritual mission evident. Each teacher is instructed to have a prayer of blessing over each student and family they meet with during parent/teacher conferences. I had one teacher anoint each family with oil (a little dab on the palms of their hands) and read an ancient blessing over them.

4) Start the morning right. Each morning started with staff worship. This was NOT someone reading out of a boring devotional and having a quick prayer. We decided that we would sing one song together as a staff and then join together,

holding hands in a circle to pray. Often we would have a student's name before us. Sometimes, if a faculty member was going through a rough patch they would be in the center of the circle and we would lay hands on them. As soon as we were done, we would split up into the three hallways that separated our grades. In each hallway (elementary, middle school and high school), we'd have the students in the hallway around someone with a guitar, we'd sing a song, and then a couple students would pray for the day. We would all do a school cheer and then break for classes. It was a great way to start the day off with Jesus.

These are just a few of the things we did to point ourselves and our students to Jesus. At the web addresses below are two helps. One is a blank document my team would fill out each year to help plan for our next year. The other is an example of what we came up with for one year after planning together. ☺

<http://www.leadingthejourney.com/assets/soul-winning-plan---october.doc>

<http://www.leadingthejourney.com/assets/soul-winning-plan-template---october.doc>

The Value of Exposure

Gabriel Madrid

PRINCIPAL, OAKWOOD ADVENTIST ACADEMY

T rue education means more than the perusal of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.”

This statement by Ellen G. White encapsulates the mission of Adventist Education. It is our duty as school leaders to ensure the harmonious development of mind, body, and spirit. This development occurs within the classroom but also outside of the classroom. For example, we teach US History, Physics, and Algebra II but we also have extracurricular activities that develop the mind such as debate teams, robotic teams, and literacy guilds. We offer Physical Education and Health courses but also have events and activities that promote physical growth and development outside of the classroom. Sometimes, finding similar ways for spiritual growth outside the traditional avenues, i.e. Bible class, chapel and weeks of prayer, can become difficult. Are these formal or short term activities enough to promote spiritual conversion and development? How do we build a culture conducive to spiritual growth? What are some activities or events that can round out our schools' spiritual curriculum?

Bible class, chapel, and weeks of prayer are the backbone of our spiritual curriculum but do not provide enough exposure to Christ and spiritual growth by themselves. Spiritual growth is a daily journey that needs to be addressed through a myriad of experiences. Bible class and chapel provide some of these experiences but there is a need to develop encounters with Christ outside of the classroom setting. Weeks of Prayer possess powerful impact on students' lives but are planned two or three times a year. There is a need for supplemental activities that will provide a more consistent exposure to Christ and spiritual growth. Consistent exposure creates more opportunities for conversion. People can form a preference towards things because of their familiarity with it. This is why marketing experts find ways to keep their products in front of you. The more exposure to the product, the more positive our feelings towards that product. By beholding we become changed.

How do we create a culture that provides opportunities for students to behold and thus become changed? By providing a culture based on the two greatest laws—love your God with all your heart, mind, and soul and love your neighbor as you love yourself. School leaders have to find ways to keep God and His character in front of the students to create more exposure to His love; in return, the young people become changed.

One way Oakwood Adventist Academy tries to do this is during our Morning Village. Morning Village takes place during student drop-off from 7:45–8:00 am. As students enter the gym-

nasium, there are teachers greeting them at the door. We have a formal handshake door and an informal “High-5” door, students walk through both doors. There is a prayer request table, where students write down their prayer requests. There is also a prayer booth where students can pray with a teacher. During Morning Village, students sing a couple of songs, recite the pledge to the Bible, the motto and aim. Each village ends with a short inspirational talk based on Biblical principles and a quick motivational video.

Another initiative started recently is the Family System. This is a high school specific initiative in which our student body is placed in a family or house. Students remain in the same family throughout their high school career and new students are evenly placed in each family upon arrival. These families plan group vespers, potlucks, and group chapels. Each family is sponsored by a teacher. Group chapels occur once a quarter.

Getting pastors to be involved in the school day is also extremely important. Establishing a “Lunch with the Pastor” is one way to get pastors to interact with students outside of church. Having these events occur once a week or once a month has major impact on the relationships between our pastors and the student body, allowing them the opportunity to see the students in their own element. Recently, I was visiting another campus and saw 4–5 youth pastors from various churches making cheese quesadillas for the student body. It was amazing! The interaction between student and pastor was wonderful and you could see this was not an infrequent occurrence.

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Creating a Spiritual Framework

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The ministry directors run programs such as: Reality Check Elementary (a drama team), The Dig (fourth grade character class), and the elementary chapel team. Creating opportunities for students to serve empowers them to recognize their own spiritual gifts. The hope is that student leaders will learn the value of service, and will be intentional about making service a part of their way of life.

Lastly, spiritual life programs must be centered around relationships. At Loma Linda Academy, the first step in the spiritual life master plan is to become a committed friend. By graduation, the vision for students is that they will see themselves as a committed servant. The only way to achieve this is by facilitating meaningful connections for students with one another, with campus leaders, and with their Creator. At the core of our spiritual life programs is the desire to make these connections tangible. All three campuses have weekly chapels to create space for these connections. Another way that LLA has done this well is through opportunities given at lunch time. At the high school, Lighthouse is a ministry that creates time for local

youth pastors to connect with students. Pastors come during lunch and interact with students through games, panel discussions, or weekly check-ins. Furthermore at the elementary, connections are facilitated through Kindness Ambassadors. Kindness Ambassadors is a lunchtime program that gives student leaders an opportunity to meet with the vice-principal and chaplain. Kindness Ambassadors offers a time for students to reflect on their experiences and relationships. Having meaningful connections on campus is a big indicator of student success and students' perception of safety. Having a strong sense of belonging is also a key indicator in church membership. Experiencing the love of God is made tangible through a sense of belonging in community. This is where transformative work takes place.

With ministry, campus leaders must be open to new ideas. We must not be afraid to fail, because failure is often our best teacher. We must value our spiritual life programming in such a way that we would be willing to sacrifice more time and energy towards it. In doing so, we will create healthier students, stronger families, and a peace-making community. May the Spirit inspire us with new ideas,

strengthen us with vigor; and move us with boldness. ☺

The Value of Exposure

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There is also a need for students to experience giving to others. There are several activities and events beyond the traditional mission trip. For example, Oakwood Adventist Academy has a K-12 Community Service Day the week before the end of second quarter. Students participate in local outreach programs including nursing home visits, painting projects, voter registration drives, and soup kitchens. When the students return, debriefing sessions encourage them to discuss the projects and the enrichment gained through service. There are so many ways to connect with our local communities.

In the end, providing many opportunities, no matter how big or small, creates a culture allowing the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of our students. Daily exposure to spiritual concepts, much like daily sunlight, will allow our students to grow tall in the love of the Lord. It is most important that school leaders seek out opportunities for our students to witness God moving in their lives and other's lives in various ways. ☺



MISSION: STRENGTHENING ADVENTIST EDUCATION ONE LEADER AT A TIME

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