

Educational Excellence: For Time and Eternity*

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Excellence and quality are subjects of much debate in the educational world today. The constituencies that schools and school systems serve are increasing their demands for excellence. Parents' expectations of teachers, principals, and superintendents seem to be at their highest level. What does excellence represent in Adventist Christian education and how is it achieved?



Excellence in Adventist Christian education represents more than having educational institutions with good reputations, adequate resources, quality graduates, competitive programs, and sound financial operations. It promotes the harmonious development of physical, mental, and spiritual powers, the training of youth to be thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men's thought, and the preparation to be effective citizens on this earth and for rewarding citizenship in the new earth. It also endeavors to restore in man the "image" of God - his Creator (Gen. 1:27), the source of all knowledge and wisdom. Godliness "godlikeness" - is the goal to be reached. (E.G. White, *Education*, 1952, pp.13-19)

Similar at least in part to the Adventist Christian approach to excellence in education, the United States National Commission on Excellence in Education issued the following statement: "Our goal must be to develop the talents of all to their fullest. Attaining that goal requires that we expect and assist all students to work to the limits of their capabilities. We should expect schools to have genuinely high standards rather than minimum ones, and parents to support and encourage their children to make the most of their talents and abilities." (*A Nation at Risk*, 1983, p.13)

One cannot preach excellence while modeling mediocrity. Adventist teachers are not only competent in their particular disciplines, but are also committed to Christian values. There are very fine Christian teachers in the public system. But for Adventist educators, commitment to Christ is an essential ingredient. Student/teacher interaction is part of the fabric of our institutions. Our teachers are here not simply to do a job, but to help their students succeed.

While at Kingsway several years ago, my son shared with me what his chemistry teacher told the class: "If you don't understand something or need additional help, do not hesitate to call me at home any time. I want you to succeed and will do anything to help you." This is not an isolated example. Our teachers find their own personal fulfillment in the fulfillment of their students. They help their students prepare for time and eternity.

When Rick Bacchus, former president of the Ontario Conference, was asked why he believed in Christian education, he said: "I attest to the fact that the lessons one learns, and the character one forms within the

atmosphere of a Bible-based curriculum, are more precious than gold. ...Not only does Christian education and the work of redemption go hand in hand, Christian education is the work of redemption. In the support of our schools, we are engaged in missionary work of the highest order. The salvation of our boys and girls are at stake. We can't afford not to become active participants in this vital work. The business of Christian education is God's business."

While carrying out God's business, Adventist education administrators continue to welcome the input and feedback of each and every one of you. We want to listen to each other as we pursue excellence in Adventist Christian education. We endeavor to be quality driven, customer conscious, and continuously seeking to improve. Will you share with us your dreams and expectations of the educational system of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada? We are here to serve you.

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