

Adventist School or Not

Murray McLeod, Principal, Chinook Winds Adventist Academy, Calgary, AB

As an academy school Principal, I have encountered many Adventists who wonder about having their son or daughter in an Adventist School. Recently, there has been some controversy at our school about the quality of the program being offered; specifically in Music and P.E. Some parents have stated that unless the school has a Music expert and/or a P.E. expert teaching those subjects, they will not continue to send their students to the school. I sympathize with their desire to have experts in these fields, but I also recognize that it is not always possible to provide this in the smaller school setting. The main issue I want to address in this article concerns the motivation and criteria for putting children in an Adventist school.



I have encountered many parents who do not hesitate to enroll their son or daughter in an Adventist school. They actually plan moves and changes in their lives based on the availability of Adventist education. I have had parents come to my office and plan where they will live based on the bus routes that service the school. They demonstrate a commitment to Adventist education that ignores comparison to what is offered in public schools. They want their children in an Adventist school, simply because it is an Adventist School.

Why this commitment to something that is more expensive than public school, and may not offer the expertise available elsewhere? Obviously, they want something more than what the public school offers. They want some connection between their child's education and the religious beliefs they hold. They want to impress their child with the importance of what they believe. They want their child to recognize that their belief system is more than just something they do on Sabbath, but infuses their entire life and is worth investing in.

I know that my children went to Adventist schools' because I believed in the principles and ideas of Adventism. There were times I felt that the little one room school house they went to was lacking certain amenities they could enjoy in public school. Later on, they went to a large Adventist school that required a bus ride in excess of one and one half hours. Sending my children to Adventist schools' required a commitment to Adventist education that went beyond the mere academics of what was being offered there.

I sometimes wonder what message the young people get when they hear their parents complaining about the quality of Adventist education—when we are unable to provide a P.E. or Music expert. If the institutions of the church are denigrated because of these inadequacies, is it possible that the importance of Adventism as a whole is lowered in the eyes of the young people? Could young people possibly interpret a lack of commitment to Adventist institutions as a lack of commitment to the overall value of the church itself?

Jesus continued to attend the synagogues and participate in the temple services even though he obviously had some reservations about what was going on there. He chose to continue to support the institutions and work from within to improve what was being presented there. He did not abandon the services, but continued to participate in them. His commitment was so strong that he even gave his life to support them.

I believe that supporting the church and all of its institutions makes a statement to your children. When you are willing to support them with not only your presence but your money, you are sending a message to your sons and daughters. This does not mean you sit back and ignore deficiencies, but you do not automatically abandon those institutions when they seem deficient. You support them and seek to improve them. It just may be that you are not only sending a message to your children, but also to yourself.