

“DISTRIBUTED LEARNING. . .a Viable Alternative”

*Clarissa Long, Vice Principal-Elementary, West Coast Adventist Christian School,
Williams Lake, BC*

“True education is well defined as the harmonious development of all the faculties—a full and adequate preparation for this life and the future eternal life. It is the early years in the home and in the future schoolwork that the mind develops, a pattern of living is established, and character is formed.” E.G. White, *Education*, p. 7

Recently, Distributed Learning schools have come into their own due to specific needs within the education systems. While DL schools meet a specific need, they are not necessarily for everyone. This is the fourth year that I have worked in a DL school. I have both taught and served as a school administrator. I have come to the conclusion that DL schooling is perfect for some students but not for others. West Coast Adventist School (my school) fills a need for parents who do not have an Adventist school readily available and want an Adventist education for their children. A DL school is superior to home schooling in that there is an approved curriculum that meets the Provincial Learning Outcomes, there is a teacher assigned to each student to teach specific subjects and to assist the student and parent to accomplish their educational goals. Another advantage of the DL school is that the required classes to integrate back into a normal school system are met and the students can take the time they need and grow, educationally, at their own rate. Also, parents have the opportunity to teach their values and morals to their children, as part of the educational process.

However, a DL school is not for everyone. This is the reason that we DO NOT RECRUIT students to our DL school from our sister schools. As a matter of course, during our interviewing process, we ask why a parent wants to enroll his child in our school. When we determine that our school is the best option for the student’s needs, we plan a curriculum for the student. Sometimes a fellow teacher, from a sister school, will call us with a specific student’s need. We may offer some suggestions for helping the student’s problems. Sometimes, with the teacher’s recommendation, the student may actually enroll in our DL school.

I have found that sometimes the need for our school is a spiritual need that the parent feels is missing in their current school environment. When their student is enrolled in our DL school, the student’s spiritual experience is controlled by the parent and re-enforced by the DL teachers regularly.

I stated earlier that we do not recruit students from other SDA schools nor are we a bastion for chronically problem or under achieving students. The primary reason for our students coming to us is the unavailability of an Adventist school. However, we do offer certain advantages for students having problems in their education. I have found that students who take advantage of the opportunities offered by West Coast Adventist School’s programs do very well when they go further in their education. The choice is theirs to make, as with all education.

A distributed learning school has many advantages to parents seeking a specific system (such as an Adventist education) as well as serving the outlying rural areas of our country where K-12 schools may not exist.

DL schools fill a specific need in today’s educational system and will continue to do so into the foreseeable future. Distance Learning Schools exist for those who need a way to receive an education regardless of what the specific need they have is. They are a viable alternative for those who are in need of a structured, provincially-approved program.