

## Values and Choices

*Mike Lekic, Director of Education, Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada, Oshawa, ON*

Our values establish how we relate with our family, the time we give to work, family and recreation, how we spend our leisure, where we vacation (if we take vacation), the sports events in which we participate, and what we consider enjoyable, wholesome recreation. They determine the choice of clothes we buy, the shoes we wear, the food we eat, the kind of neighbourhood in which we live, the type of house we select for our home, the college we attend (if we elect to pursue higher education), the church we attend, and the schools we select for our children to attend. Choosing is a fact of life that we cannot escape. The right to choose is both a burden and a privilege. Even in not choosing we are making a choice.



Children learn how to value primarily at home and in school. As Roger Dudley pointed out, “Parents and religious leaders are rightly concerned that the youthful generation will come to cherish the values that they themselves have found so important, and will eventually make these values their own.”<sup>1</sup> While difficult to pass one’s values to another, teachers can aid their students in acquiring the tools and skills that will make it possible for them to develop their own value system.

Keeping this in mind, we asked Adventist and non-Adventist parents with children in our schools why they chose an Adventist school. Church members who did not send their children to the local Adventist school were asked why they didn’t. We investigated the respective perceptions and attitudes toward Adventist schools in Canada—in particular, about their attitudes toward spiritual focus, academic excellence, school accessibility, administrators and teachers, interpersonal relationships and student personal development, and safe learning environment. Of over 3,000 surveys sent across Canada, 1,533 returned. We are grateful for the response.

In general, non-Adventist parents, especially mothers, had more positive attitudes toward Adventist schools than both Adventist parents with or without children in Adventist schools. Adventist parents with children in Adventist schools were more positive toward our schools than the Adventist parents without children in Adventist schools.

The main reason for our schools’ existence is noted by *The North American Division of the General Conference Working Policy* which states: “The primary aim of the Seventh-day Adventist education is to provide opportunity for students to accept Christ as their Saviour, to allow the Holy Spirit to transform their lives, and to fulfill the commission of the gospel to all the world.”<sup>2</sup> Our survey showed that Spiritual Focus was the greatest motivator in parents for choosing our schools. Thankfully, according to the survey, the parents also perceived our schools as having a strong spiritual focus.

In addition, our schools are seen as places where interpersonal relationships and student personal development are fostered, as safe learning environments, and where school

administrators and teachers are fair and committed to the principles of Adventist education. Although both academic excellence as well as school accessibility rated well above average, these are the areas where more improvement will be necessary in order to satisfy Adventist parents without children in our schools.

Knowing that “in the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one,”<sup>3</sup> let us all pray for and support those responsible for the education and training of the young people of our church. When the church members, the parents, and educators join their efforts together, with God’s blessing, Adventist education in Canada will be the very best it can be, meeting the needs of our young people, the church, and the surrounding community.

For a copy of major findings of *Adventist Education in Canada Parents’ Attitude Survey*, please call 905/433-0011, ext.103 or e-mail [bperkins@sdacc.org](mailto:bperkins@sdacc.org). These findings will also be posted in the resources section of our web site <http://catnet.sdacc.org>.

#### Resources:

- <sup>1</sup> Dudley, R. L. *Passing on the torch: How to convey religious values to young people* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986), 7.
- <sup>2</sup> *North American Division of the General Conference Working Policy* (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2001-2002), 234.
- <sup>3</sup> White, E. G. *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1952), 30.

*\*This article was published in the Canadian Adventist Messenger, April 2004*