

## Achieving Excellence in Adventist Schools in Canada

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

Aristotle once said, “Excellence is not an act, it’s a habit”; it is a “continuous progressive movement into the future.” Excellence is about dedicating oneself to a life of continuous improvement. It is about being happy with what one has accomplished, but always recognizing that there is more to be done. Brantley proposed “A Continuous Cycle of Excellence Model” which begins with a definition of the school’s purpose or reasons for existence; followed by plans/resources—curriculum, educational practices/realities; and products/results—the educational effect on the minds and hearts of students; with continual evaluation and improvement at each level.<sup>1</sup>



Our study<sup>2</sup> found that parents see Adventist schools in Canada as places where spiritual focus is strong; where interpersonal relationships and student personal development are fostered; where safe learning environments exist; and where school administrators and teachers are fair and committed to the principles of Adventist education. However, for a good number of Adventist parents, affordability was a challenge; bullying was a serious issue; extracurricular activities were lacking; facilities were perceived as not always adequate for high-quality education; students did not always have access to a variety of resources; and little or no provisions were available for special education students.

Adventist educational administrators in Canada have reviewed these findings and developed a document entitled “Achieving Excellence in Adventist Schools in Canada.” Action plans to implement the following goals at the union, conference, and school levels are part of it:

- Launch a vigorous and sustained educational marketing campaign, capitalizing on strengths of Adventist education in Canada.
- Reestablish and nurture in church employees, alumni, and constituents the loyalty and passion towards promoting and supporting Adventist education.
- Consider means and ways to address the need in many Adventist schools for a variety of learning resources, improvement in the adequacy of school facilities for high quality education, and provision of a variety of extracurricular activities.
- Improve affordability for Adventist schools in Canada.
- Formulate and implement a “respectful and safe school” policy.
- Formulate and implement a policy for dealing with “special needs” students in the regular classroom.
- Encourage all conferences/schools to review the finding of the *Adventist Education in Canada Parents’ Attitude Survey* and to address the realistic needs for school improvement.
- Based on *Adventist Education in Canada Parents’ Attitude Survey* findings, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada, conferences, and schools will determine areas of educational practices where the objective would be to excel (have an agreement of a mean at or above 4.00 on the continuum between strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)).

Equipped with insights from this study, Adventist educational administrators in Canada are building upon a position of excellence and quality expressed in the new North American Division education logo, “Adventist Education, a Journey to Excellence.” Ellen White encouraged excellence in Adventist schools by stating, “Something better is the watchword of education, the law of all true living.”<sup>3</sup> The Bible also encourages the quest for excellence. It says that whatever we do, we do it with all our might (Eccl 9:10), and to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). The end product of marketing the strengths of Adventist education in Canada, changing some of the negative perceptions of and attitudes toward Adventist schools in Canada, and addressing needs for improvement, with God’s help and blessing, should result in stronger Adventist schools, serving their constituencies and the surrounding community to their fullest potential.

Resources:

- <sup>1</sup> Brantley, P. (1999, Summer). Can education be Adventist and excellent, too? *Journal of Adventist Education*, pp.4-8.
- <sup>2</sup> Mike Lekic, *Perceptions and attitudes of selected Adventist and non-Adventist parents of school age children toward Adventist schools in Canada* (Doctoral Dissertation, Andrews University, 2005) The summary of survey findings and the document *Achieving Excellence in Adventist Schools in Canada* are available in the resources section of our website <http://catnet.sdacc.org>.
- <sup>3</sup> Ellen White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing, 1952), p.296.

*\*This article was published in the Canadian Adventist Messenger, July 2005.*