

Seventh-day Adventist Education: A Unique Experience

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One afternoon I found myself walking down the long hallway of the school where I was principal, escorting a teacher from the local public high school to one of our classrooms where he would be conducting a seminar. As we were making our way to the room, we were making small talk to pass the time. Suddenly, he looked at me and asked an extremely pointed question: "Why do you, as a private school, believe that you do a better job educating students than we do in the public system?"



His question rather caught me off guard. I had become used to speaking to people about our private school, and I was very familiar with the perception amongst the public school's teacher ranks that we set ourselves up as the "better" alternative to public education. This, as you may assume, rankles these teachers, and I could almost feel the animosity, although the question had been posed in a very friendly manner. I took another couple of steps as I asked God to help me compose an answer, which would be representative of what I saw as the purpose of our school.

I smiled at him as I replied, "It's not that we feel we do a **better** job, it's that we do a **different** job." I then had the opportunity to share with him the philosophy of Seventh-day Adventist Christian Education, and point out to him how it is different from the philosophy of the public school system. It is this difference, which makes it necessary for us to have Seventh-day Adventist Schools in which to educate our Seventh-day Adventist children.

I do not believe that Seventh-day Adventist schools do a better job of educating students. I believe that the public school system does a good job of educating children; after all, I am a product of that system, and feel that I was adequately prepared to continue with my pursuits in higher education. But, I do not believe that the public school system is where our children should be.

If we want our children to have a good education, and that is all that we are concerned with, then the public school system will do that for us. If we want our children to have general moral principles taught to them from a Biblical base, then any Christian school in our community will do, and they will fulfill that need. However, if we want our children to receive an education based on the philosophy, values and beliefs, which we have as Seventh-day Adventists, then there is only one place where that is going to happen. It will not happen in the public school system, it will not happen in a Christian school setting, it only takes place in a Seventh-day Adventist school, with Seventh-day Adventist teachers.

Education within our denomination has accepted certain core values which each of our schools promote. These values set us apart from any other school, and it is not because we believe we are doing a better job, it's because we have been called to do a different job, therefore our schools are different.

These are the 10 core values of Adventist Education, which set us apart:

Christ-centered - Adventist schools demonstrate that the influence of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ permeates every aspect of the school program.

Character - Adventist educators and students reflect a Christ-like character including: love, self-sacrifice, compassion, grace, honesty, and integrity.

Commitment - The school community fosters an acceptance and demonstration of personal commitment to Jesus Christ, the church, and fellow human beings.

Excellence - Adventist education is characterized by a commitment to achieving the highest levels of quality in every aspect of the school's program.

Knowledge - Adventist educators are committed to infusing spiritual development with knowledge in an academic environment that allows students to reach their maximum potential.

Accessibility - Seventh-day Adventist Christian education is accessible and affordable for all who are willing to make Christian education a sacrificial priority.

Diversity - Adventist schools promote respect for the diversity found in God's creation including differences in economic status, capabilities, social backgrounds, ethnicity, physical attributes, gender, and religion.

Relationships - Adventist educators are committed to developing positive relationships with all members of God's family by living a caring, loving lifestyle.

Service - Following Christ's example, administrators, teachers, students, and the larger school family model a pattern of lifelong service to God and to humanity.

Holistic - Adventist schools provide an education that emphasizes developing the physical, mental, social, and spiritual abilities as a preparation for living a positive, happy life on this earth as well as throughout eternity.

As Seventh-day Adventists we have a unique message to give to the world, and it is because of that uniqueness we feel it necessary to establish centers of learning where it is "O.K." to be a Seventh-day Adventist young person; places where our children will not be ridiculed for believing there is a God, for developing a personal relationship with Him, where the outside influences of the world can, to a certain extent, be held at bay.

But most importantly, we do not just educate our children for the here and now. We educate for eternity. That's the difference.