

## Evangelism Training in our Schools

*Paul Llewellyn, Superintendent, Maritime Conference, Moncton, NB*

I have had the privilege of not only teaching in our schools but also pastoring four churches and I have noticed one startling dilemma—personal evangelism is greatly lacking for us here in North America. So few of us actually share our faith outside of our churches and schools, and our proof is in the statistics. Our growth here in North America is not outstanding, except for the ongoing growth in our Spanish churches. So how can our schools help stem the tide of this Adventist cultural predicament?



I have been listening to the president of the the Southern African/Indian Ocean Division, pastor Paul Ratsara, who is helping transform the Adventist culture of pew warming in his division. Through studying the book of Acts and reading the Testimonies, he came up with a simple solution to overcoming this trend. Before an individual can be baptised, s/he must be actively sharing his/her faith with someone else and leading them to take a stand through baptism. So before they are ever baptised they are actively engaging in witnessing and Bible studies. Members in this division are also being taught that the pastor's role is not to preach and do the work of ministry—it is to train the church to do this work. They are experiencing phenomenal growth in this division through this paradigm shift!

How can we adapt this practice in our schools, so that we are training our children for evangelism and to be active church members and not just pew warmers? What I am about to say from here on out is a testimony of our plans for Sandy Lake Academy. At one time, we had 14 schools in the Maritimes Conference and today we are left with one. Until recently, it looked like Sandy Lake Academy (SLA) was heading toward the same fate as all our other schools. Our visioning principal, Chris Dupuis, took it upon himself to bring active prayer into the classrooms and school. The school began to aggressively pray for more students—and God has been answering their prayers.

The next step was to teach our students the need to be reading and journaling through the Bible. A generous donation from a non-member has made it possible that by next year, every student will be journaling through their Bibles. Now where do we go from here?

We need to have a training ground so that our students have an opportunity to be trained in active church participation and leadership. So through the leadership of our principal, we are starting to lay the groundwork for a church plant right on our own doorstep. We are reading [Rekindling A Lost Passion](#) by Russel Rurrill to help us learn how to plant our church the right way. We want to start a church plant that will not only train our students for leadership, but also train them in reaching out to our immediate community. This will be a pastor-less church plant. In other words, the members will be doing the work of ministry and not our pastor.

We are hoping and praying that our youth will be so well trained that they will continue this practice of church planting even while attending their University. And when they finish and are finding a place to settle down to work, they will also be actively engaged in Church leadership and in church planting. Even if they settle down where there is no current SDA Church, one will spring up as they put their training to good use.

Our schools are faced with the great responsibility of growing our children into useful, active church members. The role of the family in disciplining children has greatly decreased and our students spend only a small portion of their week in our churches. So where else besides our schools are our kids to be trained for service?

If it is true that only 25% of our youth in Canada attend our schools, we are faced with an alarming challenge. Where do our public school kids get this training? Though it may be true that those who attend public institutions have a greater opportunity to share their faith, we are also noticing that they have a greater opportunity and distraction to leave our faith.

This is the time to take the 25% that do attend our schools to actively train them for ministry—through prayer and Bible study and with the opportunity to live out their faith in reaching the communities of our local schools through church planting.

One final word on church planting. This endeavor will also provide an opportunity for us to reach out to our public school youth. What better way to incorporate them into the body of Christ than to have them work side by side in the work of the harvest? I will guarantee one result—we will begin to see these kids come back to our schools as students.

We just finished a youth prayer rally at Sandy Lake Academy. Many of the kids who came to better understand prayer and to engage in Bible study and outreach voiced a strong interest to come to our school next year and to be part of all that is going on. Some of the kids that came have never entered into one of our churches and yet they want to come and be a part of our school next year because they want what we have—a vibrant walk with Jesus and a willingness to share Him.

"With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world!"  
*Education*, p. 271.