

Mediocre, Pretty Good or Excellent?

Jackie Kemperle, Teacher, Parkview Adventist Academy, Lacombe, AB

In a world where moral ethics seem to be falling by the wayside, Seventh-day Adventist educators demand a standard of excellence in moral conduct as well as excellence in their students' physical, social, mental and spiritual areas of life. If such an expectation is to be upheld, cooperation is necessary between parents and students, as well as educators. In fact, according to Ellen G. White, "It should be the efforts of parents and teachers to cooperate in all that concerns the well-being of the child" (*True Education*, 176). An elevated standard needs to be outlined and maintained by our institutions with respect to dress, language, behaviour and academics, so that students will aspire to do and be their very best.

Although the purpose of education is often seen as the pursuit of a course of study, Seventh-day Adventist educators endeavour to develop not only their students' mental ability, but also the physical, social and spiritual aspects of their lives as well. This entails teaching students to reach goals higher than they themselves may set, in order to develop within their characters a desire to strive for the best. However, the students must be willing to put effort into their development and parents must support the school not only financially, but in their prayers as well. It is also necessary for the parents to refrain from "criticism and censure of the school management [which] encourages insubordination in the children and confirms them in wrong habits" (*True Education*, 177). It is very difficult for students to believe they can attain a high level of success if parents continually berate their school.

If the standard of excellence is to be maintained, then we must not be satisfied with mediocre or "pretty good". Educators, parents and students must keep their sights high. Again Ellen White counsels, "Be not satisfied with reaching a low standard. We are not what we might be, or what it is God's will that we should be. God has given us reasoning powers . . . that they may be developed to the utmost, refined, sanctified, ennobled. . . ." (*Messages to Young People*, 192).

Charles Osgoode has written a powerful poem about "a pretty good student" that has been printed and reprinted by Ann Landers.

There once was a pretty good student,
Who sat in a pretty good class
And was taught by a pretty good teacher,
Who always let pretty good pass.
He wasn't terrific at reading,
He wasn't a whiz-bang at math,
But for him, education was leading
Straight down a pretty good path.
He didn't find school too exciting,
But he wanted to do pretty well,
And he did have some trouble with writing,
And nobody had taught him to spell.
When doing arithmetic problems,
Pretty good was regarded as fine,
Five plus five didn't always add up to ten,

A pretty good answer was nine.
The pretty good class that he sat in
Was part of a pretty good school,
And the student was not the exception,
On the contrary, he was the rule.
The pretty good school that he went to
Was there in a pretty good town.
And nobody there seemed to notice
He couldn't tell a verb from a noun.
The pretty good student in fact was
Part of a pretty good mob.
And the first time he knew what he lacked was
When he looked for a pretty good job.
It was then, when he sought a position,
He discovered that life could be tough.
And he soon had a sneaky suspicion
Pretty good might not be good enough.
The pretty good town in our story
Was part of a pretty good state,
Which had pretty good aspirations,
And prayed for a pretty good fate.
There once was a pretty good nation,
Pretty proud of the greatness it had,
Which learned much too late,
If you want to be great,
Pretty good is, in fact, pretty bad.

Resources:

- White, Ellen G. *Messages to Young People*. Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1930.
- White, Ellen G. *True Education*. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2000.
- "The Osgood File," 1986, CBS Inc.