

THE ADVENTIST SCHOOL: A Community of Faith and Learning

EXPLORING THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF ADVENTIST SCHOOLS



While every Adventist school is unique by virtue of its location and circumstances, all authentic Adventist schools share certain distinctive qualities. The atmosphere and ethos that is created can be experienced and observed at both the tangible and intangible levels. The term, 'special character' is used to describe that distinctiveness.

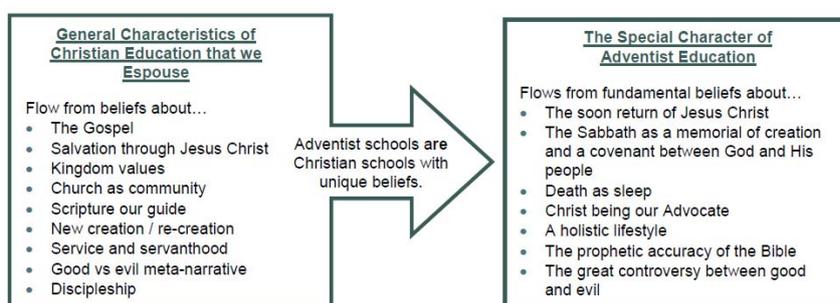
The heart and soul of Adventist education stems from a worldview regarding the origin, meaning, purpose, and destiny of human life. These beliefs and assumptions are drawn from the Bible and are reflected in the logo which is central to this model. The writings of Ellen G White are also acknowledged as an inspired commentary and guide in applying these understandings in the context of the school. The outcome of this effort is a "special character" that reflects the reasons, the vision, the aspirations and the values that are important to Adventist educators.

Each school is seen as a total learning environment, with careful attention to a balance between study, worship, labour and recreation. It is a community in which spirituality, industry, a spirit of cooperation, a sense of safety and security, and respect for the diversity of individuals and cultures are valued and nurtured. As cultural beings, teachers, students and others will participate in seeking, communicating and expressing the essence of that culture in language, story, symbolism, worship and acceptable standards of behaviour and lifestyle consistent with Adventist worldview.

The culture and ethos of the school consistently reflect the practical endorsement of a biblical worldview and its implicit values. This culture seeks to be Christian generally, and Seventh-day Adventist in particular (See Appendix 1). Each school community will function in a complementary relationship with the family, the Church, and other schools in the system.

ELEMENTS OF SPECIAL CHARACTER

- **Education's Ultimate Purpose:** 'The restoration of human beings to the image of their Maker through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, and the balanced development of the whole person'.
- **Students:** Students are viewed as multifaceted beings uniquely created in God's image, but marred by sin. They are seen with need to develop comprehensive wholeness and integrity, to reach their highest potential in all human faculties, and to fulfil God's purpose for their lives.
- **The Role of the Teacher:** The teacher-minister's role is of central importance in the life of the Adventist school. Teacher-ministers are expected to be exemplary models of Seventh-day Adventist culture and Christian graces, and to demonstrate professional competence in teaching, pastoral nurture and ministry.
- **The Curriculum:** All learning areas are approached from the perspective of the biblical worldview within the context of the Cosmic Conflict theme. As a 'balanced curriculum that promotes an integrated perspective of faith and learning, it addresses the major developmental needs in the spiritual, intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and vocational realms. It also reflects appreciation for Christian heritage, community building and citizenship, concern for social justice, and stewardship of the environment.
- **Teaching and Learning:** An appropriate emphasis is placed on all forms of true knowledge. There is sensitivity to the culture, typical methods and skills of the respective subject fields and their place within the scheme of learning from a Christian perspective. Teaching methods are sensitive to the diversity of the gifts and needs of all students and seek to actively engage them personally and collaboratively, and give opportunity to put into practice what has been learned. Excellence is encouraged and facilitated in all areas.



BELONGING

1.1 ADVENTIST SCHOOLS PROMOTE BELONGING TO GOD'S FAMILY AND FOSTER ADVENTIST IDENTITY

BELONGING is a basic human need. As such, it is an essential element in the life of every individual. Adventist schools act as places of belonging for students, parents, caregivers, family and staff.

Adventist schools foster a sense of belonging to *the family of God* and foster Adventist Identity through building accepting and inclusive *relationships*. In Adventist schools, people embrace biblical principles. They love, accept, honour, encourage, serve and support one another. This is evident in how they provide:

- Christian-based student welfare policies ;
- education, training and support for school staff, students and parents in building safe relationships;
- open communication with parents and caregivers;
- structures to manage allegations of abuse and/or victimisation fairly and sensitively;
- chaplains to support staff, students and their families;
- a Christian peer group for students; and
- a sense of belonging through active, trusting relationships between all members of the school community.

1.2 ADVENTIST SCHOOLS PROVIDE SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING ENVIRONMENTS

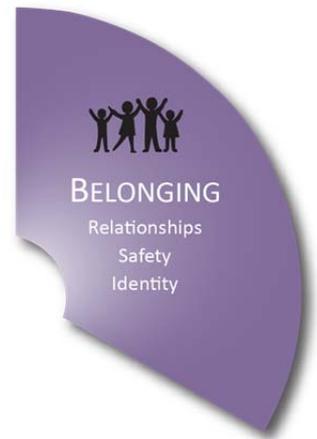
Adventist schools foster a sense of belonging to a *safe and attractive learning community*, where individuals are empowered to do their best. Adventist schools believe that individuals work and learn best in environments where there is an arena of *safety*. This is evident in how they provide:

- student centred learning that promotes a sense of autonomy;
- a learning climate where it is safe to make mistakes;
- inclusive curriculum where social, cultural and economic diversity are acknowledged and celebrated;
- for a variety of learning styles and abilities;
- opportunities for parent participation in learning and other events;
- school programs that support families; and
- purposefully constructed learning activities to enhance a sense of belonging.

Adventist schools also provide learning and play spaces that are *attractive* and *safe*. They take pride in maintaining buildings, classrooms and grounds to a high standard.

1.3. ADVENTIST SCHOOLS HELP BUILD INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY BASED ON BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

Adventist schools foster *individual and community identity* based on biblical principles through participation in whole school, class-based and small group activities. Adventist schools help build positive self-image, resilience and a secure sense of *identity* in all school members. Strong partnerships with local Seventh-day Adventist church communities allow families to worship together and find support in both the school and church context.



BELIEVING



2.1 ADVENTIST SCHOOLS TEACH THE GOSPEL FROM A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

BELIEVING is a personal and intellectual choice that provides a starting point for action. Belief cannot be forced. In recognition of this, Adventist schools provide an environment where individuals can test and develop their beliefs about God, learning and community involvement.

Adventist schools encourage belief in *Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Lord* by fostering an atmosphere of *grace* in all school activities. Adventist schools teach the gospel from a Seventh-day Adventist Christian worldview. This is achieved through:

- the example of godly teachers;
- participation in worship and chapels;
- integration of faith and values into the curriculum; and
- teaching Biblical Studies with an emphasis on building a relationship with Jesus Christ. The ENCOUNTER Adventist curriculum is used to teach Biblical Studies, which is a core learning area in Adventist schools.

2.2 ADVENTIST SCHOOLS FOLLOW AN EDUCATIONALLY SOUND CURRICULUM THAT INTEGRATES CHRISTIAN FAITH WITH LEARNING AND PROMOTES A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Adventist schools encourage belief in *the importance of learning and making positive lifestyle choices* by providing excellent *learning* resources and nurturing a healthy, balanced lifestyle. Adventist schools follow an educationally sound curriculum that integrates Christian faith with learning.

Adventist schools demonstrate the importance of learning by:

- staffing schools with committed, qualified teachers who engage their students;
- making use of technology to assist learning;
- offering well designed teaching programs; and
- modelling life-long learning to students.

Seventh-day Adventists have long believed in a body/mind/spirit connection. As a result of this belief, they are leaders in promoting a healthy lifestyle. This emphasis stems from a belief in the sanctity of life and acceptance that a person's worldview impacts on how they live their life. Adventist schools foster a belief in the importance of positive lifestyle choices for achieving potential as learners and living happy and successful lives.

2.3 ADVENTIST SCHOOLS PROMOTE COLLABORATION IN LEARNING

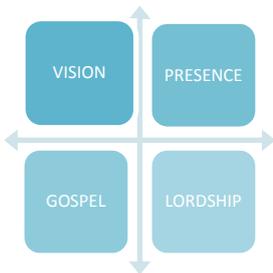
Adventist schools encourage belief in *the value of interdependence and collaboration in building harmonious communities*. We live in a highly competitive world, yet at the same time, employers are calling out for team players who can work collaboratively. Schools are communities with high levels of interdependency between the members. In keeping with their philosophy, Adventist schools maintain a balance between competition and collaboration and seek ways to help individuals build strong and mutually beneficial partnerships within and outside of the school community.

BECOMING

3.1 ADVENTIST SCHOOLS ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO BECOME ACTIVE IN DISCIPLESHIP, WORSHIP AND SERVICE

BECOMING recognises that all individuals grow and develop throughout life.

Adventist schools challenge individuals to become *active in discipleship, worship and service for God*. Adventist education desires that students and staff experience *discipleship* that is life-changing, *worship* that is authentic, inclusive and energising; and *service* projects that provide opportunities for individuals to express their faith in practical ways. Individuals in Adventist schools are challenged to become *disciples* of Jesus Christ through: catching a *vision* of God, discovering the *gospel*, accepting Jesus as *Lord* and living in the *presence* of God daily.



Adventist Education challenges individuals to be active in *worship* of God, both in organized school worship events and in how they live their lives in their homes, school and community.

Service to others is an important component of learning to live in the presence of God. Adventist schools encourage service to others through classroom and whole school projects where students use their time and talents for the benefit of their peers and their community.

3.2 ADVENTIST SCHOOLS TEACH 21ST CENTURY SKILLS AND CHRISTIAN VALUES IN THEIR LEARNING AND TEACHING PROGRAMS

Adventist schools also help individuals to develop important 21st Century *life skills and Christian values*. *Life skills* that are needed for 21st Century learning include creativity, critical thinking and problem solving, adaptability, initiative, and effective oral and written communication. Values for Adventist schools reflect a loving God, and are taken from 1 Corinthians 13 (see Appendix 2). These values are motivated by the overarching value of love and are evident in acts of service.

L O V E	EXCELLENCE	S E R V I C E
	COMPASSION	
	HUMILITY	
	RESPECT	
	INTEGRITY	
	JUSTICE	
	DISCERNMENT	
	RESPONSIBILITY	
HOPE		

3.3 ADVENTIST SCHOOLS DEVELOP INFORMED, RESPONSIBLE AND COMPASSIONATE CITIZENS

Adventist schools challenge individuals to become *informed, responsible and compassionate citizens*. As such, they call for students and staff to search out information, use critical thinking to make fair and logical assumptions, care for the environment, perform one's civic duty with pride and exhibit a strong sense of social justice. Adventist schools adopt a redemptive approach to discipline that nurtures the development of self-government.