

Seven Reasons I Must Send My Child to an Adventist School

BY GEORGE H. AKERS

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The teachers will LOVE my child.

Christian teachers don't go into education to make money. They enter the profession because they have a passion for children and youth. They want to bond with them and help them become all they can be. They cherish their roles as surrogate parents and revel in every opportunity to lovingly guide their students' character development. But more than this, Christian teachers send out the unmistakable message, "I try to love you the same way God does." So I am comforted by the thought that my child will be under the moment-by-moment influence

of dedicated servants of the Lord who see each child as a candidate for immortal honors. Children catch that signal quickly, and respond positively to it. This brand of accepting and nurturing love will liberate my child to learn and grow. It is the very essence of a Christian school. I want my child to be in the center of such a love arena!

Bible is taught there.

Every year, students take religion classes taught by teachers who are committed to biblical principles, using a well-conceived religion curriculum that embraces the totality of human history and the plan of salvation. The Word of God is a superb educational resource because the Holy Spirit works through every page of it. This is a "divine-human encounter" my child must experience. Christian schools not only cultivate the mind, but also the soul. Faith has to be nurtured.

In their Bible classes, my children will get a glimpse of the true character of God—and most important of all, meet Jesus, be drawn to Him, and desire to commit their young lives to their Forever Friend. Only through God's Word can they rightly comprehend the long-standing cosmic conflict between good and evil—and intelligently decide which side they are on. The biblical account of Creation, harmonized with true science, will root my children in truth and see them through many a trial and delusion. At all costs, my child must acquire this biblical grounding!

Students are inducted into the family of God there.

Only in a Christian school will students comprehend that they are members of three families—their own clan, their church family, and the emerging family of God on earth who will eventually live together in heaven. Learning to respect and cherish each of these families is an important part of their Christian education. Students learn that they are privileged to carry the good news of Christ's gospel and thus help God extend His spiritual kingdom on earth.

I want my children to know that the love and fellowship they have experienced in the Christian school extends outward to include their local church family—a host of adults who will always "be there" for them. Young people need that back-up. Indeed, I want them to want to join that important family when they reach the age of decision, so we can all rejoice together in their baptism and welcome them into their extended spiritual family. Local church outreach and service programs often include children and youth, and thus become co-curricular activities of that congregation's school. What a natural and practical way to teach leadership, witnessing, and service—by actually doing! As adults and youth work side by side, the so-called "generation gap" is erased. The maturing effect on the young is incalculable.

Of great importance is the home-school-church partnership, which keeps my children in "one world." Many psychologists are concerned that so many Christian children and youth are living in three incongruent worlds—home, school, and congregation—each with its own values, lifestyle, and demands. This often causes confusion, depression, and loss of personal focus. So to simplify their lives, young people jettison the home and the church, and the media-saturated peer group reigns. But as the church's Valuegenesis study showed, a home-school-congregation partnership powerfully insulates youth against peer pressure and the degenerate culture around them, so they opt for God.

We can't exactly call that apostasy insurance, but as a parent, I'm greatly impressed with the odds, and am willing to sacrifice to see that my children stay in "the fold." I believe that's precisely what the prophet foresaw when he declared, "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13, KJV).

Inspiration is the driving force there.

"Something better" is the watchword of true Christian education, and it is achieved through the combination of inspiration and information. In my children's Christian school, I know that I can count on a prevailing "updraft"—the idealization of life's ennobling and uplifting values. What is truly important in education is more often caught than taught. Some call it "the hidden curriculum." Every aspect of the Christian school's program is calculated to make life's highest ideals irresistible, to build Christian character. The classes, the assemblies, and the co-curricular activities—all will likely inspire children to aim high. Here's where a Christian teacher is an incalculable treasure, for in this critical hero-worshiping developmental stage, children look for someone to help them form their value system and goals. It is often a favorite teacher who inspires them.

My child will have competent teachers and get a good, sound education there.

Adventist teachers have to meet rigorous preparatory standards in subject matter and pedagogy. They also receive instruction in child/youth evangelism. In recognition of this unique role, the Seventh-day Adventist Church commissions its teachers as "Ministers of Education." They are taught to be keenly sensitive to the psychological climate of learning in the classroom, and to help each child learn in his or her own way and pace. Students are gently nudged ahead, building upon their successes while achieving high standards. This is "quality education" in every sense of the term.

The Adventist K-12 curriculum has been carefully engineered by the church's professionals to ensure that it meets or exceeds secular guidelines. And it incorporates the distinctive goals of Adventist education, foremost among which is preparing young people to perform selfless service for humanity. Today, many secular educators consider the Adventist curriculum a model of wholism and enrichment, and I feel privileged to have my children immersed in it.

Adventist K-12 teachers participate regularly in professional upgrading through denominationally sponsored workshops and in-service educa-

tion. It's comforting to know that my children's teacher is not preparing them for tomorrow with yesterday's tools!

My child will be disciplined redemptively there.

It is extremely important to me as a parent to know that when my child slips up (as will happen occasionally), a loving Christian teacher will treat him or her redemptively, not punitively. The teacher will endeavor to get my son or daughter to ponder the questions, "Why did I choose

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Students at Island Pacific Adventist School in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

wrongly here? How should I deal with such a situation the next time around? What does this tell me about myself? What principles from God's book will help me profit from this mistake?" That's redemptive discipline. It's God's way, built on *agape* love.

The Christian teacher turns a discipline mishap into a growth experience, a stepping stone to better self-understanding and self-management. Nothing says more about the basic Christianity of a school than the way it treats students who run afoul of its rules. For this is a modeling of the character of God—a blending of justice and mercy. *Discipline* really means "making disciples," and I want my child to attend a school that is doing just that!

The campus culture is wholesome.

Let's talk about the popular culture. The influence of media, MTV music, sex, grunge fashion, violent video games, and the drinking, drugging, partying teen culture are swamping schools—from junior high through university level. Conservative Christian parents are desperately looking for a safe, non-toxic place for their children—where innocence and wholesomeness

are prized and order prevails. And let's talk about peer pressure. Most concerned parents instinctively understand that students probably learn more from one another about values and lifestyle than from their teachers, and that student leaders have an enormous influence. Granted, not every student in a Christian school is a modern Daniel or an Esther, but the preponderance of young people assembled there are treading the upward path. Among them are conscientious older students who influence and inspire the younger ones. What a priceless asset they are! Yes, campus culture is definitely a significant dimension of curriculum. It really affects young people, so I'm thankful that our schools seek to make it contribute to Christian character development.

When it's all said and done, Adventist schools are all about *wisdom* (God's wisdom), as opposed to the acquisition of mere human knowledge. That's what I want my children to take away with them. It's what our church family and God want for them, also. The wise man said it well, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7, KJV). That's the bottom line for Adventist education. It's worth fighting to keep, and worth sacrificing for. It's a gift from heaven that each of our children deserves. ✍