Ingredients of an Effective Seventh-day Adventist School

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Background:

As part of the "Beyond the Bottom Line" seminar organized by Norm Klam held in Loma Linda on March 11-12, 2002, Dick Duerksen and Dick Osborn were asked to present a breakout session on "Successful Schools Can Happen." As part of their research, Osborn polled the union education directors and three North American Division Office of Education leaders asking a simple question: "Identify the most successful elementary school, day academy, and boarding academy in your union or division." The definition of success was left up to each individual but they were asked to name schools which maintained stability and strength over the last five years. They were then asked to identify five traits of these successful schools.

The principal and business manager of each nominated school was then sent an e-mail with four questions. They were not asked to give a comprehensive response but to provide their quick impressions.

The results were published in Richard Osborn, "Ingredients of the Most Successful Schools in the North American Division," *The Journal of Adventist Education* (October/November 2005), pp. 4-9.

Results:

1. What five ingredients have most contributed to the success of your school?

Top Thirteen Ingredients
(in order of priority)

1. Strong Christ-centered spiritual emphasis with God at the heart of the school
2. Service/caring orientation
3. Stability and reputation of faculty/staff
4. Strong financial planning/management
5. Constituency that values Christian education
6. High scholastic excellence/expectations
7. Stability and strength of administration
8. Shared mission/vision
9. Supportive school board
10. Conference support
11. Cohesive administration and staff
12. Pastors who actively promote Adventist education
13. Strong extracurricular programs in music, art, and sports

*2. **What financial characteristics most contribute to your school's success?***

1. Creating and sticking to a balanced budget
2. Consistent collection procedures
3. Strong church subsidies
4. Supportive conference
5. Generous worthy student fund
6. Profit-making school industries/work program
7. A full-time development director
8. Alumni
9. Hiring dedicated and competent financial personnel
10. Ability to say "no"
11. Union support
12. Strong enrollment
13. Donors

*3. **What relationships make your school successful?***

1. School/Parents
2. Faculty/staff with students
3. Alumni
4. School relationship with local pastors
5. Local church/constituency
6. Adjacent higher education and/or hospital connection
7. Conference
8. Happy students as best recruiters for school
9. A united administration/faculty
10. Community
11. Faculty/student/parent

Correlates of Effective Schools

From research by Ronald Edmonds, Lawrence W. Lezotte *et al*

"We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far." -- Edmonds

*1. **A safe and orderly environment***
*2. **Climate of high expectations for success***
*3. **Strong instructional leadership and emphasis***
*4. **Clear and focused mission***
*5. **Opportunity to learn and student time on task***
*6. **Frequent monitoring of student progress***
*7. **Constructive home and school relations***

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Beliefs about Learning from Effective Schools Movement

1. *All children can learn and come to school motivated to do so;*
2. *Schools control enough of the variables to assure that virtually all students do learn;*
3. *Schools should be held accountable for measured student achievement;*
4. *Schools should disaggregate measured student achievement in order to be certain that students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status are successfully learning the intended school curriculum;*
5. *The internal and external stakeholders of the individual school are the most qualified are capable people to plan and implement the changes necessary to fulfill the learning for all mission.*

From "Revolutionary and Evolutionary: The Effective Schools Movement," Effective Schools Products, Ltd., 2001.

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Characteristics of Effective Schools

Thomas J. Sergiovanni in *The Principalship. A Reflective Practice Perspective* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2001) summarizes research by Hill and Celio (1998) in which they "identify characteristics of effective schools that are widely accepted—even by reformers who disagree on the means to make schools effective. . . . *Effectiveness* was defined as high rates of student learning."

- *Small schools allow faculty to know one another personally and to collaborate outside the big-school compartments of grade level and academic discipline.*
- *Personalization, sometimes a consequence of small size, means that adults pay attention to the needs and development of every student and prevent emotional crises and learning plateaus from becoming serious problems.*
- *High expectations for all students lead faculty to regard a student's learning difficulties as a problem to be solved, not evidence of a permanent incapacity.*
- *Teacher collaboration implies that teachers coordinate their instruction so that students accumulate knowledge and understanding from course to course, and that teachers share responsibility for students' overall development.*
- *Aggressive school leadership focuses adult attention on the school's overall goals and fosters constant self-criticism, so that teachers do not assume that routines that worked for students in the past will also work today.*
- *Simple curricula focus the faculty's attention on a relatively small number of subjects, drawing all students toward learning a common core of challenging subjects.*

- *Consistent high standards for student behavior both inside and outside the school signal the school's commitment to learning and protects students from disruption by (and the temptation to disrupt) their peers. Such standards also eliminate corrosive doubts about the school's fairness toward students from different social classes and ethnic groups.*
- *Family support for the school ensures that parents will provide opportunities for homework and reinforce the school's demands on student time and attention.*
- *Supportive peer groups, which schools can foster at least in part by providing extracurricular opportunities and maintaining high standards for student behavior, weaken anti-school forces in the cool youth culture.*

Standards of the Heart

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has developed "Standards of the Heart" as part of their school improvement model which also focuses on vision, leadership, high academic standards, family school and community partnerships, professional development, and evidence of success. Although this is a public school model, these ideas might stimulate thoughts for an Adventist school. The following can be found at http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/sit/cssintro.html as revised on September 6, 2001.

What would an Adventist philosophy revolving around the concept of "Standards of the Heart" be like?

"Standards of the heart" are defined as helping "children become caring, contributing, productive, and responsible members of society" which includes:

- *Advocating for equity, diversity, fairness, inclusiveness, and justice*
- *Making responsible decisions*
- *Caring about others*
- *Being a contributing member of the community and the broader society*
- *Developing personal and interpersonal skills*
- *Developing and adhering to a core set of values.*

The following traits describe such successful schools:

- *Help students learn and model a core set of values such as respect, honesty, courage, responsibility.*
- *Create a positive school climate free of stereotyping, harassment, hatge, and violence and filled with a concern for justice and fairness.*
- *Honor the traditions of all family and community members in the learning community.*
- *Encourage youth and adults to use their talents to positively address societal issues as part of democratic citizenship.*
- *Promote healthy and positive relationships among students and between students and adults.*
- *Provide a variety of relevant, multicultural curricular and co-curricular programs to engage all students in the schooling experience.*
- *Establish high expectations for student and staff behavior in the classroom, at school-sponsored events, and across the community.*