Making Seventh-day Adventist Schools Distinctive

A Special Character programme
For Pacific Seventh-day Adventist Educators

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Introduction

This programme has been developed in response to a perception of a need to ensure that our Seventh-day Adventist schools are in fact truly Seventh-day Adventist. This has come out of a number of incidents from around the world.

In 1993 when the New Zealand schools became Integrated Schools of Special Character with the new Zealand Government, principals, teachers and their School Boards discovered that where they thought they were truly Seventh-day Adventist they had real difficulty in showing and outlining both in documentation and practising how that actually took place. That has all changed for the better today.

In the USA over the last 150 years, there are many famous Universities that were begun as Church connected and operated Universities. Notable names such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Michigan, and John Hopkins are just a few. Today these universities are no longer connected to their founding churches.

The question arises as to whether our school system can head in the same direction. The answer of course is an emphatic YES!

This programme, then, is simply an attempt to halt this trend. The programme itself cannot stop any journey away from the central and underlying truths upon which our education system was established. That can only happen as each educator recommit their own lives again to Christ and the preservation of what he has given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church to achieve through education. And that is, ultimately, the salvation of each child that attends our schools.

I have appreciated the work of Dr Don Roy in this area as well. His work in “Towards Wholeness” has formed the basis of this programme.

It is my desire that each educator who participates in this programme will be richly blessed as they discover again the foundations of Seventh-day Adventist education.
Module 1

The ‘Ideal SDA School’

When we talk about an ‘ideal’ Seventh-day Adventist school, what are we really talking about? Whatever it is we say, will come first from our own perceptions. These perceptions will reflect our reading, our own thinking on the subject, our own experiences of schooling.

Activities

1. As you record some of your thoughts try to think of other areas as well, such as:-
   What does an ‘ideal SDA School’ look like?
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   ____________________________________________
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   ____________________________________________

   sound like?
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   feel like?
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   What would it be like for a student?
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What would it be like for adults?

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What would it be like for teachers?

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What would it be like for the community?

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2 At the end of your writing try to work out where your ideas began or came from. Are they the result of your feelings or experiences or reading or careful thinking?

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3 Now form into groups of 3 or 4 and share your ideas. Look especially for common ideas that keep coming through. List the ideas under headings of

Student

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Parent

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At the end of this task try to write a one sentence summary for each of student, parent, teacher using this beginning:

The ideal SDA school for a student/parent/teacher is…or has…or would…etc

Finally, try to describe how the ideal SDA School is different to a Government school or other denominational school. Also try to describe how the two schools are similar.
Module 2

Exploring the Biblical Framework

When we establish a Christian education programme that is distinct or different or unique to other educational programs there are a number of important questions that need to be answered. The answers to these questions will help establish the foundation for what we believe and subsequently how we operate. These questions are:

Who is God?
Who is man?
What happened to man after creation?
What has God done to rectify this situation?
What is the part of the teacher in this process?
How is everything going to end up?

Activity 1

Move into groups of 2 or 3. After a time of prayer together asking for wisdom and understanding read each of the Bible references. Now discuss each reference and list the ideas that you have gained out of them.

Who is God?
Ps 135:5 – 13

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Ps 139:1-12

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Isa 40:18 – 31

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Gen 1:1

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Jn 1:1,2

Gen 1 and 2

Who is Man?
Gen 1:26,27

Gen 2:7, 15, 21 – 25

Ps 8

Ps 139:15,16

What happened to man after creation?
Gen 3

Rom 3:23
What has God done to rectify this situation?
Gen3:15

1 Cor 3:18 – 20

1 Cor 1:18 – 25

Jn 3:16

Rev 21:1, 3, 4, 27

Rev 22:3, 4

What is the part of the teacher in this process?
2 Cor 3:18

2 Cor 5:17
Rom 10:17

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1 Thess 5:16 -18

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Ja 5:16

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Ps 119:105

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Matt 28:18,19

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How is everything going to end up?
Acts 1:9 -11

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Rev 21:1 – 4

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Activity 2
Keeping to the headings that have been used, what single sentence statements could you write for each heading, to be displayed for the students in your class.

**Who is God?**

**Who is Man?**

**What happened to man after creation?**

**What has God done to rectify the situation?**

**What is the part of the teacher in this process?**

**How is everything going to end up?**
Module 3

What is Seventh-day Adventist Education Really Trying to Achieve?

Every education system has an underlying goal. Adventist education is no different. Until we come to know and experience that goal for ourselves, then the impact of our teaching will always fall short of the high ideals set before us.

By the end of this module, teachers will have a clearer understanding of what it means to be an Adventist teacher and what the ultimate goal of Seventh-day Adventist education is.

Activity 1

The first 4 chapters of the book Education by EG White contain a wealth of information and insight into the foundation for SDA education.

Divided into groups of 4 and each read just one chapter. From the chapter that you have read, look for answers to the following questions and be prepared to share with the rest of your group your findings. Share also other insights that you believe are valuable to your understanding of the core purpose of SDA Education.

1 What is the ultimate goal of Christian education?

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2 How is this best achieved?

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3 What will this look like in the life of the child?

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4 Where does an interaction with Christ and the child, and Christ and the teacher fit in all of this?

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5 Who are the major participants in achieving this goal?

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6 What are some of the barriers to achieving this goal?

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How can these barriers be overcome?

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Activity 2

Choose just one sentence from your reading that you consider to speak most powerfully to you. Write this down and memorise it.
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Module 4

The Contribution of School Life Towards Wholeness

The operating of a school is very complex. There are many elements working together that make a school run well. In this module teachers explore what some of these functions are and how they can contribute to the life of the school so that they all work harmoniously towards wholeness.

Activity 1

Break into groups of 5 or 6. Make a list of all the elements that operate within a school. You need not be thinking of an Adventist school at this stage.

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Activity 2

Share your group list with the rest and make one list. Display this where everyone can have ready reference to it.

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Activity 3

As a whole group compare the list with the summary that follows. Where areas do you notice were not included? Why was this? Are there areas that you have listed that are not in the summary following? Why should they be included?

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Summary of Elements for School Operation

Knowledge
- Supernatural
- Natural
God as the source of all wisdom and virtue
More than facts, but involves thinking, experience, emotions, relationships, insights, and the spiritual.
True knowledge leads to wisdom, integrity, and right action.

Students
Complex beings created in God’s image.
Because of the fall need to develop God wholeness.
This development will lead to living at their full potential and fulfilling God’s purpose for their lives.

Teachers
Models of God’s grace.
Models of SDA culture and Christian grace.
Professionally competent in teaching, nurturing and ministry.

Curriculum
Study is approached from a Biblical world view.
Undertaken within the context of the Great controversy.
Address the student needs in the spiritual, intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and vocational realms.
It appreciates and respects Christian heritage, community building, citizenship, concern for others and care for the environment.
The Different Functions that Make a School Whole

The Ultimate Purpose of Education
To restore in each pupil the image of their Creator. This is achieved by leading the child to Christ and providing a balanced development of the whole person.

Knowledge
God is placed at the very centre of all knowledge and is its Source. This is more than knowing facts and things. Instead it includes experiences, emotions, relationships, intuition and spiritual understanding. These are all working together and are part of true knowledge.

The Students
Students are seen as God's creation. Though they are sinners, they are seen with a need to develop their wholeness and integrity so that they can become all that God wants them to be.

The Teacher
Teachers are central to the life of the school. They need to recognise the importance of being excellent role models for their students, academically, spiritually, and socially. They must of course demonstrate a professional ability in teaching, nurturing and ministry.

The Curriculum
All areas of study are approached from the Biblical world view. That is, all learning is in the context of creation carried out by a loving God, that this creation has sinned and now is involved in a war between God and Satan of universal proportions. The curriculum is balanced which means it addresses the needs of the students in the spiritual, intellectual, social, spiritual, physical, emotional and vocational areas. It is comprehensive in that it appreciates the place of Christian heritage, community building, social justice and care for the environment.

Learning and Teaching
This is undertaken with appreciation to the culture of the students. It recognises the variety of learning styles of each student and is sensitive to the gifts that each has. It provides students with opportunities to learn individually and co-operatively and to put into practice that they have learned through service to their community. Excellence is encouraged in all endeavours.

Total Environment
The school provides a balance of study, worship, labour and recreation. It is a community where love and warmth, respect and safety are continually present. Discipline is intent on redemption and promoting self control. It works in closely with the parents, the wider school community and the Church.
Module 5

The Role of the Teacher

Within the life of the school, this single area is perhaps the most important. It is in this area that Adventist schools are most different to other schools whether they are government schools or other religious/private schools. This module will look at relationships and moral choices – two key areas in which we are most like God.

At the end of this module each teacher will have a sharper focus and better understanding on what it means for them to be Christian educators.

Activity 1

For into groups of 5 or 6 and discuss the following questions.

1. How will a child know that you are a Christian teacher? What actions/behaviour would they witness that confirms this?

2. Make a list of small but specific actions that you can adapt to reinforce to a student that you are a Christian teacher.

3. Repeat numbers 1 & 2 for parents and again for staff members.

Parents
4  What do we mean when we use the term learning community?  Who are the participants?

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5  In the context of an Adventist school community what would a “community of grace” look like

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6  How do we go about creating a “community of grace”?

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7  What is the difference between discipline and punishment?

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Which is easier to administer and why?
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Which do you expect to have the greatest long term impact and why?
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8  Make up the discipline cube. *(See yellow sheet at back of book).* Highlight 2 points that you wish to adopt into your teaching style. What impact do you expect these 2 actions to have on the class?
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Module 6

Academics – the Place of Subjects

Learning takes place in a variety of contexts for a variety of reasons. Learning within the context of a school environment is very structured and formalised. Within an Adventist school context each curriculum area provides a “window” to view God in the context of the Great Controversy as well as an opportunity to respond positively to Him.

Activity 1

Form into groups of 5 or 6 and be prepared to discuss the following questions.

1 As Adventist teachers what should be the underlying reason for teaching the assigned curriculum to our students?

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2 Take each curriculum area in your school and open a ‘God window’ on it. What do you see about God in that curriculum area?

Maths

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Reading

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Writing

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Science

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Social Studies

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Health

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P.E./Sports

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3 How would you best teach some of these ideas to the children?
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4 Should these windows be opened in a planned way or spontaneously?
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Activity 2

Report back to the rest of the group on your findings.

Activity 3

In small groups again discuss the following concepts.

1  Each child is created different and unique. How varied should our teaching be in recognition of this belief?

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2  How would multiple intelligences assist us in meeting some of the diverse learning needs of our students?

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3  Demonstrate how multiple intelligences can be used to teach a single piece of learning.

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Activity 4

Share your findings with the rest of the class.
Module 7

Administration, Buildings and Presentation

Can a school building also point to and uplift the idea that it is an Adventist place of learning? And what is school culture anyway? These concepts will be explored in this module.

At the end of this module teachers will understand the dynamics of how even buildings and administration can reflect the character of God.

Activity 1
In small groups discuss the following questions and ideas.

1. What do you understand by the term ‘school culture’?

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2. How do we go about establishing a strong school culture? Who is primarily responsibly for the school culture?

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3. How do we go about establishing a strong Adventist school culture?

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What will it look like,

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__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
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__________________________________________________________________

sound like,

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__________________________________________________________________

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4 Share your findings with the rest of the group.

**Activity 2**

Staying in your small groups, take the sheet ‘The Adventist School’ *(see the back of the book)* and conduct an audit/assessment on this school and report back to the rest of the group on how it represents Adventist education.
Activity 3

Using copies of *Steps to Christ* and *Desire of Ages*, select up to ten 1 or 2 sentence quotes that uplift the mind to God and His goodness to us. Share these with the rest of the group.

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How can these quotes be displayed attractively for students to ponder thoughtfully during a quiet time in class?
Module 8

Bringing It All Together

We have spent some time now looking at a variety of issues relative to how we operate Seventh-day Adventist schools. These have included:

- The ‘ideal’ SDA school
- Exploring the Biblical framework
- What is Christian Education really trying to achieve?
- The contribution of school life towards wholeness
- The role of the teacher
- The place of subjects
- Administration, buildings and presentation.

Now we bring it all together into a whole. Having learnt much about what wholeness is within an Adventist school, we now have to work out how we make it all happen.

What we are talking about now is culture. School culture.

At the end of this module teachers will understand that Christian education is made up of all facets of a school’s operation. It is not just an add on but is the outcome of total commitment by each teacher to Christ and His kingdom.

Activities

1. Take time to identify an important part of your own culture (ethnic). Share this aspect with the group at large.

2. Describe a local community that you are familiar with. How is it organised and how does it operate?
Now draw a large diagram that could outline how all the parts of what we have been discussing fits together and can work as a whole community.
4 Dividing into groups of 5 or 6 create a 1 sentence statement at defines the Seventh-day Adventist School.

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5 List 3 things that you can do that will help promote your Seventh-day Adventist school to be everything it could be for Christ.

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How do we make a school Seventh-day Adventist, spiritual, a place of faith?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Needs Urgent Work</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
<th>Good Work</th>
<th>Very Good Work</th>
<th>Plan</th>
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<td><strong>SCHOOL CAMPUS:</strong></td>
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<td>School sign</td>
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<td>Seventh-day Adventist printed clearly somewhere</td>
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<td>Signs of where to go (Office, Principal, Classrooms)</td>
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<td><strong>Buildings</strong></td>
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<td>Well laid out.</td>
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<td><strong>Classrooms</strong></td>
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<td>Clean</td>
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<td>Tidy</td>
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<td>Children's work displayed</td>
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<td>Clear Christian messages (God is Like This statements)</td>
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<td>Furniture suitable</td>
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<td>Resources</td>
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<td><strong>PRINCIPAL:</strong></td>
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<td>Daily connection with God</td>
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<td>Concerned with the salvation of the children</td>
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<td>Motivates children to be all that God wants them to be</td>
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<td><strong>Curriculum Leader</strong></td>
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<td>Directs curriculum delivery for whole school</td>
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<td>Ensures high standard of teaching and learning</td>
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<td><strong>STAFF:</strong></td>
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<td>Spiritual leaders of children</td>
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<td>Concerned for their salvation</td>
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<td>Models Christianity</td>
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<td>Analyses incidents in light of great controversy</td>
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<td>Establishes values eg honesty, respect, understanding, compassion</td>
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<td>Encourages personal relationship with God – experimental relationship</td>
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<td>Works through big questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?</td>
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<td>Practices cooperative learning (Isa 41:6 Everyone helped his neighbour)</td>
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<td>We who are strong bear infirmities (Rom 15:1)</td>
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<td>Carry each other’s burdens (Gal 6:2)</td>
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<td>Reduces rivalry</td>
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<td>Leads in service activities</td>
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<td>Declares the truth in love</td>
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<td>Uses a variety of media – mime, songs, art etc.</td>
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