

Reinforcing Family Values

Education is much more than learning to read, write and operate a computer. In today's world, more and more of the roles that used to be the responsibility of the family are being thrust onto the school. This makes it even more important that the school delivers on values and either reinforces the family values or builds the bridge to cover the gap in values transmission for our students.

When I began teaching over 30 years ago, the typical family had both a mum and a dad and they were concerned that they did their part in the transmission of values and character building. Unfortunately today, single-parent families are common, and, in many cases are confused about the transmission of values. They are often not sure how or why to set standards.

I recently spoke with a family who were hoping to transfer their son from a large state school to our small Adventist school. I pointed out this Christian school did not have the subject choice or resources that were available at the much larger school. Both mum and dad however were adamant that what they wanted was a school that reinforced their Christian family values. In fact when I asked their son why he wanted to come to our school, he promptly replied, "Because it is a Christian school and I won't be made fun of here because I am a Christian too."

Adventist education deliberately seeks to inculcate Christian values. Values transmission is part of our core business, and is a non-negotiable. In fact, Adventist schools will be so concerned at values delivery that if students do not want to support the same values, we will probably question their retention at the school.

I remember talking to a single mum about our concerns over her daughter who had newly enrolled at our school. The mum broke down in tears as she reflected on how hard it was to inculcate values when her daughter's previous peers had so much more influence. She was hoping that we could perhaps do what she had failed to do. Sadly we never really had the chance as her daughter was not interested in changing values and made some choices that meant we had to part company.

That is also part of the values transmission dilemma. In an Adventist school, we have to weigh up the opportunity to make positive changes in value systems with the tension of the negative impact that this same student may be making on his or her peers. While we believe firmly in the God of the second chance and forgiveness, we are very conscious of maintaining the integrity of a strong and viable Christian values system as a crucible to transmit the best values possible.

Another issue that we face today is that many of the values of our students come from multimedia, computer games, X-boxes and DVDs and not from their families. Thus not only are we having to bridge the gap that the family is not covering, we have to combat the negative values that much of their interactive environment promotes. Thus Adventist education is trying to provide stability and respect in a world where this is a not a given for many adolescents.

Jill came from a dysfunctional home. Mum was a prostitute. Over 15 months we saw a dramatic transformation in this young high school student. Time was spent with the chaplain. She changed her friends because she wanted something better. She took control of her own actions. But most of all she wanted God in her life as she saw that was what made the difference. Ultimately it was God's values that made the difference – we were simply His hands and feet to convey the Good News.

KEY CONCEPTS

Commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:6-9

In the formation of character, no other influences count so much as the influence of the home. The teacher's work should supplement that of the parents, but is not to take its place. In all that concerns the well-being of the child, it should be the effort of parents and teachers to co-operate.

E White, *Education*, p.284

The principles of heaven are to be brought into the government of the home. Every child is to be taught to be polite, compassionate, loving, pitiful, courteous, and tenderhearted.

E White, *Child Guidance*, p.143

LEARN MORE

REBIRTH Chart of Virtues - Christ-Centered Values Education
ssd.org/edu/resources/rebirth/RESOURCES/HomeREBIRTH.htm

Getting Students to Think: Using Questions Effectively.

L Burton and D Habenicht
circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae200366012006.pdf

Adventist Parenting
adventistparenting.org



This newsletter was created by CIRCLE, a service linking Seventh-day Adventist educators and resources globally.