

SCHOOL BOARD CHAIRPERSON

A MINISTRY DESCRIPTION FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS

Introduction

It has always been God's purpose to educate His children in a climate consistent with His will. He designed that we should be educated in a setting that would bring about a harmonious development of the physical, mental, and spiritual powers. Early in the Old Testament He gives instruction that His followers are to be taught in all significant areas of life; healthful living, civic order, justice, purposeful work and the deeper meaning of His divine character and law (Deut. 6:1-25). This is the continuing mission of the Seventh-day Adventist school system.

Adventist churches operate schools to bring about the salvation of children and youth through acceptance of and faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, and following that, to help them achieve growth in character so that they will become God-fearing, honest, stable, and productive members of society. The curricula in Adventist schools are designed to instruct students in a biblical view of the origin of life, of human duty and destiny.

Paul compares the church to a body in which all of the parts "should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (I Cor. 12:25-27). The church school represents some of the most important parts of the church body. The school board chairperson has the vital job of helping the entire congregation minister more effectively through the church school.

Jesus says in Mark 10:42-43 that the "rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them . . . Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your servant . . ." A Christian leader must learn how to build a strong ministry through servant leadership.

The Bible highlights why servant leadership is so important for a church school board chairperson. "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14). Following this Bible principle, as school board chairperson, you will work diligently with all the members of your school constituency to help make it more effective through broad counsel and "ownership."

Duties of the School Board Chairperson

The ministry to which a person is called when he or she becomes a church school board chairperson can best be described in the following ways:

1. *Chair meetings.* The chairperson presides over the meetings of the board, encouraging and facilitating discussion and making sure that each member has opportunity to express his or her viewpoint in an appropriate manner. As chairperson, you are also responsible for scheduling and calling the meetings, and for overseeing the preparation of the agenda by the secretary of the board, who is usually the principal or head teacher of the school.
2. *A source of information.* It is essential that the chairperson become acquainted with and follow denominational policies and guidelines related to church schools, as well as parliamentary procedure as it applies to board meetings and the decision-making process. You will be expected to keep yourself informed, read the relevant policy books and the updated documents as they come out from the education department at the local and union conferences and the North American Division.
3. *Administrative advisor.* The support and awareness of the chairperson is needed by the principal or head teacher. You should become acquainted with the school program and confer with the principal on the daily operation of the school, but respect the role of the principal as manager or administrator. There will be times when individuals will attempt to "go over the head" of the principal and appeal directly to you to make administrative decisions. You should feel free to share your honest opinion with the

principal, but outside of those private conversations you owe him or her your undivided support. If the principal seems disorganized in school administration duties, you may want to privately suggest in-service education or other help, but you must always remember that management is not your task. The best leadership in the strongest schools is found when the board chairperson and the principal have honest and wide-ranging private conversations every week, but stay out of each other's responsibilities and stand together in public. You should maintain close contact with the conference superintendent of schools who has overall responsibility for operating conference schools.

4. *Communication.* As chairperson you are the primary liaison between the school and the church or churches that form the constituency. Be careful to keep the channels of communication open and report regularly to the pastors, treasurers and other key people in each congregation. Listen for the attitudes and feelings being expressed by constituents. The chairperson should work with the church board and congregation to generate strong support for the school in terms of funding, enrollment of every school-age child in church families, finding student aid for families in need, organizing a welcome for new faculty, and orienting new board members to the ministry of the church school board.
5. *Public relations.* The board chairperson is the primary public relations representative of the school. You should take every opportunity to communicate the purpose, activities and achievements of the school in both community and church media and events.

Resource Materials

The following resources are recommended for your ministry. You can purchase these by calling *AdventSource* (800-328-0525), the Adventist Book Center (800-765-6955) or your local Christian bookstore.

Education, by Ellen G. White.

How to Help Your Child Really Love Jesus, by Donna Habenicht. A child development specialist explains how children develop spiritually and offers practical suggestions on how you can help children establish a lasting friendship with God.

Journal of Adventist Education, a quarterly publication of the General Conference Education Department. To subscribe call 301-680-5069 or visit www.education.gc.adventist.org/jae.org.

The Power of Vision, by George Barna. Discover how developing a shared vision can ignite your board, teachers, parents and students.

A school board manual which provides background on being a more effective board member is available from your union or local conference. You should also become familiar with the union conference education code and your local conference education policies.

Visit *AdventSource* On-Line at www.adventsource.org for a complete list of the latest resources available for local church leaders. You can place an order or request a catalog by calling 1-800-328-0525.

For information about additional resources and answers to your questions call the Adventist Plusline at 1-800-732-7587 or visit them on-line at www.plusline.org.