



## Our Business Is Pleasing Students & Parents

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Adapted from an article written by Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's



Our students and parents pay our wages. Let's treat them right and keep them as part of our school community. Students like to attend a school where they are treated right. When they're neglected, or when they perceive they got a raw deal, they will go somewhere else. They also spread the word among their friends. Great principals and teachers are very valuable to their organization. Their good work helps protect everybody's paycheck. Some principals and teachers never go out of their way to embrace students, or go the "extra" mile to help students succeed. Some of them lose sight of the students and parents completely. The only important things in their lives are their own classrooms, and their own particular agendas, and they put their own interests ahead of students and parents. They forget that students, in the final analysis, pay the bill for everyone in their school. Each employee, by doing his or her job well, has an opportunity to give students and parents good value. If principals and teachers put forth just a minimum effort and do not feel it is their responsibility to guide and coach students to their potential, do not *passionately* share with conviction the school wide goal, "All students *can* learn. All students *ought* to learn. All students *will* learn," then the students get poor value. Poor student performance impacts negatively on their morale and poor achieving students will not speak positively about their learning experiences at your school. Teachers who go the "second mile" to help students are a real asset to their school.

Some teachers may forget that you don't have to meet face-to face to please or displease students and parents. A poorly typed letter with spelling and grammatical mistakes, not returning telephone calls from a parent, student assignments that were not corrected in a timely manner, not turning in grades on time, not being prepared to teach, etc., all impact on whether or not a student or parent perceives a teacher to be competent and professional.

Students' bring us their needs and wants. Our job is to fill them appropriately and to reach out to them with kindness, care and concern. Students' perceptions of us and how well we do our work is important. Do they perceive us as just trying to get by or are teachers energized everyday to motivate students to the highest standard of excellence? A teacher's response to these questions makes a big difference in our ability to effectively market our school program.

Students' good opinions of our school and of us as educators and the belief that we are doing all we can to demonstrate the highest professional standards are our most valuable assets. Anything we can do to improve our students' perception of how we are conducting our business of educating students is important. Remember that it must be our goal to make each student's perception a positive experience. This will increase the likelihood that they will feel good about our school system. It cannot be emphasized enough: *students and parents expect value for the money they spend*. If principals and teachers don't give students good value for their money, they'll go elsewhere to get it. Students are the "bosses" behind each school. If we serve students well, parents will be glad to pay us (well, maybe not gladly, but at least they will pay!). If we don't, nobody's paycheck is safe.

A customer-conscious teacher is always a better employee. He or she is driven by excellence and recognizes that the primary mission of Seventh-day Adventist Christian education is for each student to develop a personal relationship with Jesus, combined with academic excellence. An effective teacher will **intentionally** strive toward excellence in meeting both of these objectives—**every day and in every way**. It states in Philippians 4:13 (NIV), "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

In colonial times Andrew Bradford had the contract for all the public printing in Pennsylvania. One day the governor made an important address, and Bradford printed it in his usual, careless manner. Another young printer realized this was the opportunity he'd been waiting for. He reprinted the speech in elegant form, then mailed a copy with his compliments to the governor and each member of the assembly. The next year Benjamin Franklin, the young printer who showed concern for his customers, received the contract for all of Pennsylvania's public printing. The lesson to be learned from this illustration is you can't take your job or students for granted.

Henry Ford once said, "It is not the employer who pays wages, he only handles the money. It is the customer who pays the wages." There really is no such thing as *permanent* student loyalty. If you want to operate a successful school where you have a loyal following of students who keep coming back year-in and year-out, you must maintain the highest professional standards, get kids excited about learning, and make a compelling argument that there is no other school that they would rather be in than yours. One student who attends a school identified by **U.S. News & World Report** as one of America's best schools said this: "I'm a kid and I think this school is awesome. At my old school I didn't like to learn. At this school learning is fun. Choose this school, it's awesome." I pray that all of our students will have this same level of enthusiasm when they talk about our schools.

Finally, remember Jesus is in your classroom. Make Him your best Friend. Principals and teachers who are part of the Adventist system of education are committed to **excellence** in education. *Anything less isn't good enough*. Praise God for Seventh-day Adventist Christian education.