

# Dakota Messenger

DAKOTA CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

## *Higher Ed*

Mark R. Weir, President



It almost goes without saying that all families want the best for their children - and nowhere is this more important than when it comes to education. During all my years as a pastor, a teacher, and most recently as an administrator, this still continues to hold true. Still, I must admit that I am often puzzled with current educational priorities among our members.

I have known families that thought an Ivy League degree was crucial and all efforts and resources were directed to that end. Other families prioritized musical or athletic opportunities. However, many seem to overlook the eternal importance of Christian values and a saving relationship with Jesus Christ as the most important component of their children's education. I can state with great certainty the difference this emphasis has made in my own life, and in the lives of my children.

As I look back, I am so appreciative of the people in my life who were incredible influencers - the 7th/8th grade teacher at my church school I did not want to attend (who became the best man in my wedding), the band director in Academy (who I still am in contact with) - the list goes on. Yet I am even more thankful for the positive voices that spoke into my children's lives during crucial moments in their formative years. Those voices reinforced what we as parents were saying when our children were not listening as well as we might have wished. I am convicted that school is about more than just academics - it is also about eternity!

Service, mission, community, involvement, values, morality, ethics, honesty, compassion, industry, creativity, integrity, faithfulness, perseverance, graciousness - these are more than words. They are the cornerstone of society and are best expressed when based upon a Biblical worldview. As a parent, that is what I wanted to pass to my children and I was very thankful for those Christian teachers who reinforced the same values.

One day, I will stand before my Maker. I want to hear those wonderful words, "Well done! Enter into the joy of the Lord!" This is the Higher Ed I desire for myself, and for all of our students across our conference.



# Brentwood Adventist Christian

Bismarck, North Dakota

When you walk into the classroom of Brentwood Adventist Christian School you may notice a prayer request on the board for the soon return of Jesus. This request was made by a fourth grader a few months ago and others agreed with him.

The students at Brentwood look forward to the soon return of their Savior and want to invite as many with them to heaven as they can; for God said in Matthew 9:37 that "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." The students want to be workers and are learning to be disciples and to share their love of God.

Due to Covid, this year our trips to Heavens Helpers Soup Café and other places were cancelled. The students always enjoyed going to the café to help prepare and serve food to the community. This year we were still able to have our food drive in our school neighborhood. The students collected food and also brought items from home. The gentleman who helped unload the food items at the Welcome House in Bismarck could not believe how much we brought.

This year the students chose a senior church member to write to. We have heard how much the members enjoy their letters and some have written back. One student asked me yesterday if they could write their person from home too.

Our future leaders at Brentwood are ready to help with the harvest. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20).



When I first came to this school I had a bad attitude and was not use to Christian schools. I also had a hard time getting along with others and making friends. I did not like handwriting. Over the years my attitude has gotten better and better. Now I'm getting along with others and I'm making more and more friends. God has changed me ever since I came to Brentwood.

Tristan, grade 8

I enjoy my friendships at Brentwood because they have helped me be a better person. I am less grumpy and I get less stressed. My best friend is God. I learn about him everyday at school. Every one of my friends make me happy. All of the student are my friends.

Benjamin, grade 4



**Debra Eszler, head teacher**

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# Dakota Adventist Academy

WWW.MYDAA.ORG

PREVIEW  
DAYS

APRIL 22ND  
through  
APRIL 25TH

Come join us for a weekend exploring Academy life.

- Find out about class options.
- Make new friends!
- Let God form you.



**Theme:**  
**"God, the master potter."**  
**Isaiah 64:8**

Register today

online - [www.mydaa.org](http://www.mydaa.org)

call - Tracy Jo - 605.228.9896 cell or 701.258.9000





# Hillcrest Adventist Elementary

Jamestown, North Dakota

Hillcrest is a beautiful elementary school in Jamestown, ND. The "Hillcrest Family" enjoys a rich history of support from the local churches, alumni, and community. Though the current school year has not been free of challenges, Hillcrest has enjoyed a year marked by resilience, growth, and countless blessings. Opportunities to share God's love and lead students to a closer relationship with Him seem to have been more plentiful in this uncertain school year than ever before. We consider it an honor and a privilege to work with God's kids here at Hillcrest.

The education provided at Hillcrest strives to create a positive and a Christ-like atmosphere for its students. This year all the upper graders chose to take baptismal class - they are learning more about who Jesus is and preparing their hearts and minds in choosing to serve the Lord. From the first day of school the upper grades have kept a constant reminder that even as a student, we reflect the image of God in all we do. Students are aware that they could be the first and only time someone may get to meet Jesus and that the image of Christ we reflect is based on our relationship with Him.

Coming to Hillcrest has helped me learn more at school. Now my friends at school feel like family. I'm glad my friend came to Hillcrest too, and I love this school!

Jacinta, grade 1



I Love my school because I get to learn about Jesus and God. Because my class is small and we spend lots of time together, we feel like family. Since I came to this school I have been learning more in my school work. In math I am learning about fractions. I'm glad that I came to Hillcrest and I think other kids would like it too.

Matia, grade 3

I love Hillcrest because it teaches me about God. Hillcrest makes learning very fun. God wants to be with us. He loves us alot! I also get to see my 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade friends. I also enjoy recess and lunch because I can visit with my friends. That's why Hillcrest is a great place to go to school.

Annabelle, grade 4

**Tabitha Coto, head teacher**  
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**Hillcrest Preview Day** will be held on Monday, April 5, 2021, from 8:00am to 3:15pm. All elementary age students are invited to join us for the entire school day to get a sneak peek into what it is like to be a Hillcrest student.



# Invitation Hill Adventist Elementary

Dickinson, North Dakota

I believe that the most important function of Adventist schools is to lead children to Christ. We have had the privilege and blessing of watching a miracle unfold in the lives of the family of one of our students.

Mosheh Crist, an eighth grader this year, has been at Invitation Hill Adventist School since fourth grade. His mom, Danell, is a postal carrier and in the summer of 2016 was delivering mail in the school neighborhood (then in the basement of the church). She noticed a banner on the fence of the church/school yard stating that applications for registration were being accepted. Not having met the teacher or knowing much about Adventism, Danell went into the building and enrolled Mosheh on the spot. He was having a bad experience in public school, and she felt this would be a good place for him.

Mosheh has a curious mind, and shortly after beginning school noticed some interesting magazines in the foyer that talked about the mark of the beast and other topics that piqued his interest. He began attending church with the teacher and her husband each week. His mom worked most Saturdays but came when she could. Over the years, Mosheh's little brother and sister began attending church weekly as well. Last summer, Danell began asking questions about the Bible and expressing more interest in things of a spiritual nature. The teacher and her husband studied with the family a few times in their home, and last fall when the church hosted an online evangelistic series, Danell attended almost every meeting. By the end of the series, she had developed a growing desire to commit her life more fully to Christ and was convicted that she should not work on the Sabbath anymore. She spoke to her supervisor, and while he sympathized, he said he couldn't allow her to have Saturdays off. She worked one more Sabbath, and then said, "I can't work another Sabbath." And she hasn't. Our class and our church began lifting this matter up in prayer daily. She has expected her employment to end, but even though she has been written up a few times for calling in on Sabbaths, her employment continues. It has presented hardships as many weeks she has a paycheck that reflects only four days of work. As a single mom, this takes a lot of faith. She is inspiring many in our church family, our students, and a wider circle as her story is being shared, and people from many states are praying for her. Her living testimony is shining a light and creating a legacy that will have ripples into eternity.

To all those who support Adventist Christian education with your prayers and pocketbooks: thank you so much. You are making a difference for eternity—not just in the lives of the students, but in their families' lives as well. Please continue to pray for the teachers as leaders of this evangelistic effort, and for the Holy Spirit to touch the hearts of our students to make a decision for Christ while they are young.



Mosheh and Danell

*I really enjoy IHAS because there's nice friendly people. The teachers are very well caring about their students, and they teach me about God. IHAS is helping me to understand my work and who I am. Lastly, IHAS has taught me to love others, read, and see the world in a new perspective.*  
Ebney, grade 5



**Janna Wright, head teacher**

**Betty Hay, teacher**

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**Visitation Day** will be held on Monday, April 5, 2021, from 9:00 to 11:00am. The students are taking invitations to give to their friends and neighbors. We are also putting announcements on Facebook and a radio station regarding the visitation day and to let the community know that we are now open for enrollment for the fall.



# Prairie Voyager Adventist Elementary

Grand Forks, North Dakota

Recently, the Grade 1-4 Social Studies class began a unit study about the cultures of North America. Students read informational texts and completed worksheets about Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Caribbean. Part of the information gathered concerned the native and popular cuisines of each country and how those foods have contributed to their respective cultures. To finish the unit, all five students came to Mrs. Erickson's home to make and taste some of those North American cultural cuisines.

Our culinary travels began in the United States, featuring it as a melting pot of different cultures. Basic ingredients were combined to make dough for Native American fry bread, which was later fried in oil to produce its puffed-up finished form. Spaghetti is a popular food in America and students were coached in making homemade noodles by mixing eggs into a well of flour on a flat countertop. After the dough had rested, students ran it through a pasta sheeter and a spaghetti cutter, followed by the cooking of the noodles. Some short cuts were taken, and not all food was prepared by the students.

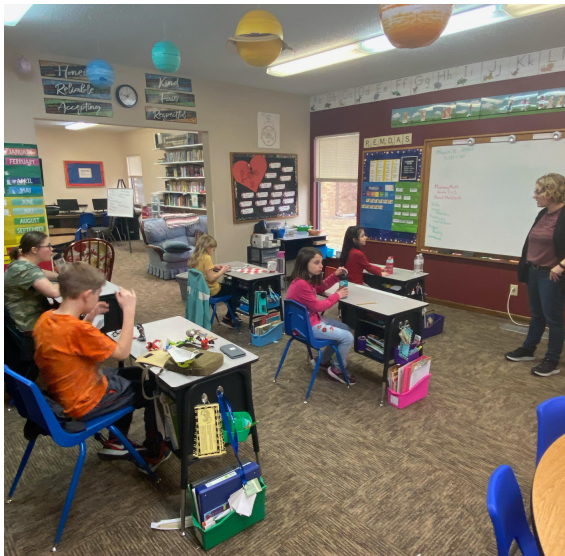
Canada is Mrs. Erickson's birth country and it was easy for her to choose which foods would be featured to represent the culture. Her favorite food, poutine (French-fried potatoes smothered in gravy and cheese curds) was an obvious choice for inclusion despite its heart-attack-inducing appearances. For dessert, the class enjoyed Nanaimo bars. This confection includes layers of coconut, graham crackers, cocoa, and creamy custard, topped off with chocolate.

The culinary adventure into Mexico was presented by Ricky Melendez, Conference Youth Director. Ricky was able to share his cultural heritage, including music, language, holidays, and cuisine. At our cultural celebration, students prepared homemade tortillas which included mixing the dough, flattening the balls in a tortilla press, and cooking them on a griddle. Three Mexican beverages were also enjoyed: hibiscus juice, tamarind soda, and a mandarin soda. Some of the students were brave enough to try a Mexican mango sucker that is coated in tamarind and chili powder.

For our final destination of the Caribbean, students helped prepare Puerto Rican tostones, which are slices of fried plantain that have marinated in a salt water- lime - garlic solution. Cuban black beans and rice were also part of the meal.

To finish our celebration, we ventured out into the backyard of Mrs. Erickson's home, where a Mexican Piñata was hanging from a tree branch. Students enjoyed hitting the piñata until the explosion of candy rained down on them!

Part of Mrs. Erickson's personal philosophy of teaching is to "go beyond the books". Not all lessons can be turned into an experience; but, when possible, she believes a higher level of learning is obtained when lessons bring in multiple facets of information. While not all of the foods presented were enjoyed by the students, the experience was fun and educational.



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# Rapid City Adventist Elementary

Rapid City, South Dakota

The Rapid City Seventh-day Adventist Elementary School was privileged to participate in Operation Christmas Child this year. We received a donation that allowed us to purchase merchandise from the dollar store to fill boxes for children in Third World Countries. One afternoon we took students to the dollar store and allowed them to purchase their gifts. When we returned from our shopping trip, students and parents assembled boxes and packed them. Students were asked to pray for the child that would receive their box, and that that child would learn about Jesus and perhaps be in Heaven as the result of their box. We also had a special prayer over the boxes before they were delivered to the collection center. After dropping them off at a collection center, these boxes were shipped somewhere in the world and given to children and then those children were presented with the opportunity to learn about Jesus. This was an exciting project, and we hope to participate again next year.



I love my seventh day adventist church school and attending it. I have a interest in this school and he is god. Before I came to this school I was the biggest theaf in my house. But one month here and the little theaf I once was is no more. There is so many fun things to do when and only when you get all your work done. And there are many fun field trips, mostly one a month. And every other wensday we have a hot lunch day. I personally think this school is the best one I've been to.

CJ, grade 6



**Jennifer DeFluiter, head teacher**

**Jamie Howell, teacher**

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# Sioux Falls Adventist Elementary

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

The Sioux Falls Adventist Elementary School exists as a place of education and to further the work of God's kingdom. I have had the privilege of teaching there for the past seven years. God has shown His mighty power and love in many ways throughout the past years, and I could share many of those experiences. However, I'd like to share the thoughts of our 8th grader, Nathan Profir, and the ways school has impacted his life.

"Seven years at the Sioux Falls Adventist School has been quite a ride for sure. The school went through a lot of small and big changes, like the different teacher's aides, new students, a newly redone gym, and a new playground. God definitely impacted me with the new students that came to the school. They were all so different and so fun to get to know. They really helped me grow as a person. We are also always reading the Bible and memorizing verses. Overall, my time at school was great, and I sincerely enjoyed it."

As we continue to grow our school as a place for Christ-focused education, we pray that God will continue to impact the lives of our students, staff, and anyone with whom we come in contact.

Article by: Elisa Shumaker & Nathan Profir

Sioux Falls Adventist school is a fun and safe environment for me and all my fellow Peers. My name is Josué Menezes and I am in 6th grade. God has impacted my life through the school when we were giving things to the kids with disabilities. I enjoyed making the blankets and buying gifts for the kids. Some of the things that were fun at school was the last day of school, like going to the Omaha Zoo and the school picnic. Then Mrs. Shumaker has been the only teacher I ever have had and she is amazing. These are some of the things that I like at school.

Josué, grade 6



I love the Sioux Falls Adventist School because they teach what the Bible says is true. We have an amazing teacher who works so hard to educate us. My favorite subject is math. One reason for that is I want to be a doctor. This school is a school that teaches what is right. I am happy that we can have lunch and recess too.

Jazmin, grade 4



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# "Learn Higher" in the Dakotas with Adventist Education



I like my school because everyone talks about God. I am more friendly, kind and more responsible since I've come here. Everyone is very kind when I broke my arm everyone was supportive.

Kaya, grade 4



I like going to Brentwood. One reason I like it is it helps me grow spiritually with God. It has also helped my behavior because of the people around me. There are times in Bible that spark my interest and make the day feel easier on me. People are also kinder here. I like when Pastor Jim comes and teaches us about the Israelites and Judges. He also teaches us many more things. I like Brentwood.

Harper, grade 5





# Charting a Higher Course

Mark W. Piotrowski, Education Superintendent & VP of Admin.



*"Teach a child to choose the right path, and when he is older, he will remain upon it,"*  
(Proverbs 22:6, TLB).

The dream to envision a world-wide education system based on the principles of the Scriptures started in 1853 when Martha Byington opened the first known church school for Sabbatarian Adventists in Buck's Bridge, New York. She wanted to offer a higher standard of education to scholars. This God-inspired vision took off and has grown exponentially.

Today you will find Adventist schools in nearly 150 countries, 85,000 teachers, 1.5 million students, 7,500 schools – the Adventist school system is one of the largest Christian educational systems in the world.

Adventist Education is more relevant today than ever before. Our schools are shining beacons in their communities and serve as instrumentalities of God's blessings through the lives of students everywhere. God's end-time people are aware of the importance of having our children established in principles of the scriptures, giving them the basis for making healthy choices in the midst of a growing tide of evil in the world around us. Our schools are also centers which provide an environment for youth to be transformed into fully devoted disciples of Jesus Christ. Yet, here are seven more reasons for you to consider Adventist Education for your child:

1. **TAILORED LEARNING** - The longer a scholar is enrolled in one of our schools, the better he or she will do academically because knowledge builds on each developmental step. We strive to provide a low student-teacher ratio to allow for individualized attention and instruction.
2. **LIFETIME FRIENDSHIPS** - Friendships for a lifetime are being formed through daily shared experiences. Students develop friendships with peers who have similar values. Our students are equipped with life skills and mentoring opportunities to be productive citizens of the world.
3. **CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT** - Our society needs godly leaders and this developmental training experience for young people is a joint effort between home, school, and church. Adventist Education prepares scholars with life training and character development. It is the best way to educate citizen scholars who demonstrate respect, integrity, truthfulness, perseverance, responsibility, caring, courage and problem solving.
4. **ENGAGED SERVICE** - We value God's creation, so we find ways to give back to the earth and humankind for sustainability, health and wellness. Students learn science from a Creation viewpoint, eat on vegetarian campuses, and discover how to become good stewards. Community service allows our scholars to think beyond themselves to make the world a little brighter and a little better.
5. **IMPACTFUL TEACHERS** - Our educators are highly qualified with dual certification for public and private education. Educators regularly participate in professional development and continuing education to keep their skills on the cutting edge. Our team of educators go beyond teaching content to nurture, care and pray for students in their whole person growth journey.



# Charting a Higher Course

Continued...

6. **FAMILY ATMOSPHERE** - Education is a partnership between students, parents, teachers, and God. Working together provides a vibrant learning community with strong relationships, similar goals, and a shared journey. Schools are intentionally structured small to foster a sense of family and belonging. Families are encouraged to be part of the learning atmosphere with parental involvement in the classroom, on the school board, at school social activities, and in the homework process.

7. **WHOLE PERSON GROWTH** - Whole person growth in education offers students ample opportunities to encounter Christ, explore the big questions of life, and develop a biblical foundation for making every day choices that will impact eternity. Ultimately, Adventist Education is redemptive, taking every stage of a young person's mind, body, and spirit development into consideration in learning, interaction, and discipline. We want our children to thrive in the kingdom of God! (1)

Adventist Education is an eternal investment that pays dividends far in the future. In 2013, in a survey of church members worldwide researchers asked currently active Seventh-day Adventists about levels of Adventist Education they had experienced. (2) The study found that those who have attended our schools on the primary and secondary levels tend to stay connected to the Church during their lives. This insight reiterates the importance of Adventist Education. Not only does it develop students holistically, but it also works to keep students in tune with their Creator and His Bride, throughout their lives. We thank the Lord for the schools throughout the Dakota Conference. May the Lord lead you as you consider your child's future.

1. See [7advantages.org](http://7advantages.org)

2. Read the full report "Leaving the Church (Retention Survey, 2013)" on Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research website: [AdventistResearch.org](http://AdventistResearch.org)

Dakota Adventist Education

# Learn higher.



This is a special edition of the Dakota Messenger with the purpose to highlight Christian Education in the Dakota Conference. As you read, please consider enrolling your student in a local church school in the 2021-2022 school year.



# Dakota Conference

OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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www.dakotaadventist.org



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## CALENDAR

### April

- 10 Education Sabbath
- 12-22 MAPS Spring Testing
- 23-25 DAA Academy Days



### May

- 2 K-12 Board of Education - Conference Office
- 3-7 Teacher Appreciation Week
- 21-23 Dakota Adventist Academy Graduation Weekend
- 22 Prairie Voyager 8th Grade Graduation (11am)
- 26 Hillcrest 8th Grade Graduation (7pm)
- 26 Invitation Hill 8th Grade Graduation (6:30pm)
- 27 Rapid City 8th Grade Graduation (6pm)
- 29 Sioux Falls 8th Grade Graduation (11am)

## EDUCATION TEAM

### Dakota Conference Office

Mark R. Weir, president  
Mark W. Piotrowski, education superintendent  
Jodi Dossenکو, education assistant

### Brentwood Adventist Christian Elementary

Debra Eszler, head teacher  
Ronnie Reese, teacher's aide

### Hillcrest Adventist Elementary

Tabitha Coto, head teacher  
Victor Villareal, teacher

### Invitation Hill Adventist Elementary

Betty Hay, teacher  
Janna Wright, head teacher

### Prairie Voyager Adventist Elementary

Leanne Erickson, head teacher

### Rapid City Adventist Elementary

Jennifer DeFluiter, head teacher  
Jamie Howell, teacher

### Sioux Falls Adventist Elementary

Elisa Shumaker, head teacher

### SonShine Adventist Elementary

Tami Todd, head teacher

### Dakota Adventist Academy

David Ballesteros, music  
Shannon Brown, spanish & psychology  
Rob Carlson, chaplain  
David Chapman, vp of finance  
Pam Fenton, science & health  
Eric Garrett, plant services  
Jared Gibson, history  
Lana Gibson, food services  
Madison Hudema, assistant girls' dean  
Peter Hutauruk, math & physics  
Lynette Miller, development  
Anthony Oucharek, principal & phys. ed  
Doreen Oucharek, office & café assistant  
Ryan Peterson, vocational  
Tracy Peterson, recruiter & barn manager  
Jovannah Poor Bear-Adams, english & art  
Gregory Ratter, assistant boys' dean  
Stephen Staff, boys' dean & athletic director  
Christine Taylor, girls' dean