Eternal H&S Issues

There is an item that appears on the agenda at every staff meeting in our department. Indicated merely by the acronym WH&S, it is a reminder to each of us that Workplace Health and Safety is a top priority. Although each meeting varies in what is discussed for this agenda item and how long the discussion lasts, the appearance of this agenda item ensures that ample opportunity is given for discussion on Workplace Health & Safety issues. This is also an opportunity for staff to raise potential safety issues they have observed and a time for open discussion. Some workplaces make this item number one on the agenda while others relegate it to the end, but wherever it appears, it serves as a reminder of the importance of safety in the workplace.

This brings us to a number of questions. Where does Eternal Health and Safety appear on our regular staff or department meeting agendas? Does it appear on the agenda at every meeting, or does it get lost in the day to day running of the school? Is it overlooked in favour of those agenda items that must be dealt with immediately? Do we find ourselves sacrificing the important for the urgent?

If your school suffers from this crisis management syndrome, one suggestion could be to make the first item on every staff/department meeting agenda kingdom focused. It could provide an opportunity for staff to explore the reasons for the school's existence; to affirm their own commitment as individuals to the mission and vision of the school or to engage in some possibility thinking surrounding the core business of the school. Whatever the topic raised; sufficient time for substantive communication should be allotted to allow time for the exchange of ideas, reflection and development of an action plan, if appropriate.

The agenda item topics could range from very simple through to more complex topics. An example of something quite simple yet meaningful could be an opportunity to share some precious prayer moments from individuals' classrooms or ways of keeping school prayer time meaningful. Short staff testimonies of how God has led in the past week would also be uplifting and keep the focus where it belongs. Some more lengthy discussion could revolve around ways to foster a sense of belonging to God's family, how to disciple students, or ways to encourage members of the school community to become active in worship. There could be discussion about school partnerships with the local church or reports from the school chaplain or school service events. Staff meeting may also be a forum for reflecting on how well a school's current behaviour management plan reflects God's redemptive plan for His children. Staff members could also raise issues they perceive to be important to the eternal health and safety of their students.

It is easy to have prayer and read a quick devotion at the commencement of a meeting. It is more challenging to devote time to spiritual concerns in a school and allow for meaningful conversation when the list of 'to-do' items is growing longer by the day. Curriculum needs to be developed, policies discussed, routines adapted and directions set for the future. The challenge is to keep our teaching ministry at the forefront rather than let it slip down the agenda until it slides off altogether.

Why not start adding the acronym EH&S alongside WH&S on your staff meeting agendas. Let's do all we can to keep the focus of Christian education where it should be. TEACH

EH&S issues is a joint initiative between the Adventist Schools Australia Curriculum Unit and Avondale College of Higher Education.