

Quality and Commitment of Adventist Educators

The Latest North American Division Profile Survey Results

Around the world, schools and school systems seem to galvanize the populations they serve. People tend to align with one of two camps: supporters and critics. Some proclaim the achievements of the schools, others lament their shortcomings. The same is true for Adventist institutions. In such an environment, it is important for school systems to assure their constituents that they maintain reasonable standards that support excellence in education.

One generally accepted standard for teacher quality in the United States and Canada is the completion of a formal teacher-education program, which qualifies the candidate for a teaching certificate. For example, research indicates that graduates from programs accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) score better on measures of teacher content knowledge than do graduates of unaccredited programs.¹ Perhaps more importantly, the students of teachers who have completed a formal teacher-certification program tend to outperform the students of instructors who are not certified, even when those uncertified teachers come from “selective” universities. Only after completing a certification program do these teachers from “selective” universities begin to have the same impact on student learning as do already certified teachers.² Research also shows that qualification levels affect teacher commitment to the profession. Teachers who have not completed teacher-education programs are much more likely to leave the

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profession than those who have done so.³

As with all professions, teaching requires continual upgrading through continuing education, graduate study, and other forms of professional development. When a teacher enters the profession, he or she is awarded a “probationary” certificate, generally valid for three years, during which time the teacher must have completed additional education and satisfactorily completed a trial period in a K-12 classroom. Thus, research on teachers’ educational levels and their teaching certificates can provide a view of the quality of the teachers in an educational system.

A second generally accepted school quality indicator is the relative stability of its faculty. Teachers do not want to remain in schools that are in trouble or failing. Conversely, educators are more committed to schools that are successful. Some public school teachers even take pay cuts to work at a school that is functioning well and achieving its mission. What about Seventh-day Adventist teachers in the North American Division (U.S., Canada, and Bermuda)? What do the indicators tell us about their quality and commitment to the system?

The Study

In an effort to answer these questions, the North American Division Curriculum Committee (NADCC) commissioned a research team coordinated by the Andrews International Center for Educational Research (AICER) to conduct the most recent of the Profile studies. Profile 2007 surveyed teachers at every level of the K-12 education system in NAD (elementary, junior academy, and academy), conference-level administrators, and teacher educators in NAD colleges and universities. The study pooled information on three measures of teacher quality and four indicators of commitment. Quality in-

dicators included the teachers’ highest earned degree, current certification(s), and continuing education. Commitment indicators included the number of years he or she had taught in the Seventh-day Adventist school system and at the current school, the teacher’s likelihood of continuing to work at his or her present school, and of continuing to work in the Adventist system.

A Profile of the Respondents

Of the Profile 2007’s 945 respondents, 547 provided adequate demographic information to facilitate organizing them into job categories. Of these, 320 were elementary or junior academy teachers, 152 were academy teachers, 44 were administrators, and 31 were teacher educators. Approximately one-third of all respondents reported that they had worked in the Adventist system for 10 years or less, while just over one-fourth had worked in the system for more than 25 years (see Table 1). Almost one-fifth of the respondents had worked in the system for five years or less (n=111, 19.6 percent).

Educator Quality

Degrees Held

Data analysis revealed a relationship between degrees held and the respondents’ job type. More than half of the junior academy, academy

Table 1 Respondents by Years in Adventist System

	Frequency 2007 n=566	Percent 2007	Frequency 2004 n=535	Percent 2004
1-5 years	111	19.6	88	16.4
6-10 years	83	14.7	102	19.1
11-15 years	95	16.8	73	13.6
16-20 years	61	10.8	74	13.8
21-25 years	62	11.0	80	15.0
26-30 years	76	13.4	54	10.1
31-35 years	48	8.5	35	6.5
36-40 years	22	3.9	24	4.5
41-45 years	5	0.9	4	0.7
46 or more	3	0.5	1	0.2

Table 2 Highest Degree Earned by Job Type: n (%)

Degree Type	Elementary n=240	Junior Academy n=80	Academy n=152	Admin- istrator n=32	Teacher Educator n=25
High School	3 (1.3)	2 (2.5)	1 (0.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Associate’s	1 (0.4)	1 (1.3)	2 (1.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Bachelor’s	113 (47.1)	34 (42.5)	63 (41.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Master’s	110 (45.8)	41 (51.3)	79 (52.0)	23 (71.9)	3 (12.0)
Specialist	7 (2.9)	1 (1.3)	1 (0.7)	5 (15.6)	0 (0.0)
Doctoral	2 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	4 (2.6)	4 (12.5)	22 (88.0)
Other	4 (1.7)	1 (1.3)	2 (1.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

teachers, and conference administrators indicated their highest degree held was at the Master's level (see Table 2 on page 31). Slightly more elementary teachers held Bachelor's degrees than Master's degrees (45.8 percent). Conference-level administrators and principals were much more likely to hold specialist or Doctoral degrees than K-12 teachers, and almost all teacher educators held Doctoral degrees. Thus, the level of education tended to rise as the job description moved from teaching younger children to instructing adolescents and adults, or into full-time administration.

Teacher Certification

North American Division issues four levels of certification to its teachers: Basic, Conditional, Standard, and Professional. The Basic certificate is issued to teachers who completed their Bachelor's degree but lack the required teacher-training components. The Conditional certificate is issued to new/first-time teachers who have completed an approved teacher-training program and are in the first three years of their teaching career. The Standard certificate is issued to teachers who have satisfactorily completed three years in the classroom and additional certification components. The Professional certificate is the highest level of certification given to NAD teachers, and is reserved for teachers who have attained advanced degrees and documented success in the classroom. Approximately 50 percent of the respondents in the K-12 schools indicated they held Professional certificates (see Table 3). All conference administrators and teacher educators who responded to the Profile study, 100 percent and 80 percent, respectively, held Professional certificates. While very few survey participants said they held no type of denominational certification, this response was more likely at the academy level. Perhaps this is due to schools hiring persons with subject-specific training, who have not completed teacher-certification requirements.

In addition to denominational certificates, some states and provinces require private school teachers to hold government-issued teaching certificates. Profile 2007 researchers discovered that 43.4 percent of the respondents did *not* hold state certification (see Table 4). Teacher educators were the group most likely to hold state/provincial teaching certificates (80 percent). More than half of the responding K-12 teachers held state or provincial teaching certificates. Conference administrators were less likely to hold state or provincial certificates: more than half surveyed (53.1 percent) lacked any type of government-issued certificate. As some states or provinces in the United States and Canada do not require teachers in private school systems to

meet state certification requirement, this pattern of responses was not surprising.

Continuing Education

The final measure of teacher quality in Profile 2007 was continuing education. Analysis of the data revealed that approximately 80 percent of K-12 teachers surveyed were pursuing continuing education and professional development to either gain or renew their denominational teaching certificate (see

Table 3 Adventist Certifications Held by Job Type: n (%)

Certificate Type	Elementary n=240	Junior Academy n=80	Academy n=152	Admin- istrator n=32	Teacher Educator n=25
None	7 (2.9)	1 (1.3)	12 (7.9)	1 (3.1)	5 (20.0)
Conditional	20 (8.3)	9 (11.3)	11 (7.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Basic	14 (5.8)	5 (6.3)	13 (8.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Standard	72 (30.0)	24 (30.0)	36 (23.7)	31 (96.9)	0 (0.0)
Professional	127 (52.9)	41 (51.3)	80 (52.6)	0 (0.0)	20 (80.0)

Table 4 State/Provincial Certifications Held by Job Type: n (%)

Certificate Type	Elementary n=240	Junior Academy n=80	Academy n=152	Admin- istrator n=32	Teacher Educator n=25
None	102 (42.5)	33 (41.3)	72 (47.4)	17 (53.1)	5 (20.0)
Conditional	4 (1.7)	4 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Basic	23 (9.6)	7 (8.8)	13 (8.6)	0 (0.0)	2 (8.0)
Standard	53 (22.1)	12 (15.0)	27 (17.8)	4 (12.5)	4 (16.0)
Professional	58 (24.2)	24 (30.0)	40 (26.3)	11 (34.4)	14 (56.0)

Table 5). Half of all K-12 teachers who responded to the survey indicated they were working on obtaining, renewing, or upgrading to a higher level of state or provincial certification. Conference-level administrators and teacher educators were the least likely of all educators surveyed to be receiving professional development. This could be due to a combination of several factors. First, administrators and teacher educators often fill roles as providers of training and professional development to teachers. Second, administrators and teacher educators are more likely to possess tertiary degrees, and thus be less inclined to engage in further education. Third, since administrators and teacher educators tend to be older than the general classroom teacher, their current certificates may not expire before they re-

Table 5 *Level of Denominational Certification Working Toward [n (%)]*

Certificate Type	Elementary n=240	Junior Academy n=80	Academy n=152	Admin- istrator n=32	Teacher Educator n=25
None	46 (19.2)	16 (20.0)	34 (22.4)	10 (31.3)	15 (60.0)
Conditional	1 (0.4)	1 (1.3)	2 (1.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Basic	9 (3.8)	2 (2.5)	6 (3.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Standard	27 (11.3)	7 (8.8)	8 (5.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (4.0)
Professional	55 (22.9)	14 (17.5)	35 (23.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (4.0)
Cert Renewal	102 (42.5)	40 (50.0)	67 (44.1)	22 (68.8)	8 (32.0)

Table 6 *K-12 Teachers' Likelihood of Remaining in Their Current School for Three More Years (%)*

	Not likely	Less likely	Quite likely	Very likely
Elementary	16.3	10.0	25.4	48.3
Junior Academy	12.5	10.0	17.5	60.0
Academy	13.8	8.6	22.4	55.3
Administrators (current position)	18.8	3.1	24.0	64.0

Table 7 *Educators' Likelihood of Remaining in the Adventist System for Three More Years (%)*

	Not likely	Less likely	Quite likely	Very likely
Elementary	5.4	5.8	15.8	72.9
Junior Academy	7.5	5.0	8.8	78.8
Academy	7.9	7.2	15.8	69.1
Administrators	11.4	27.2	9.1	52.3

tire. Finally, there are no requirements for certification of teacher educators, and therefore no external motivation for them to engage in professional development.

Teacher Commitment

Survey respondents' commitment to the Adventist educational system was measured by the following questions: (1) How many years have you worked at your current school? (2)

How likely are you to remain working at your current school for the next three years? (3) How many years have you worked in the Adventist system? (4) How likely are you to remain in the Adventist system for the next three years?

In 2007, the average elementary teacher said he or she had worked 16.34 years in the denominational schools, slightly up from 15.25 years reported in the Profile study in 2004. Academy teachers had worked an average of 17.24 years, also slightly up from 16.74 years in 2004.⁴ The standard deviations for these figures were around 10 to 11 years, which indicates a fairly balanced distribution of both less-experienced and more-experienced teachers working in the system (see Table 1). The median for the reported years working in the Adventist system was 15 for elementary and academy teachers, and 13 for junior academy teachers. Most of the teachers had been working in the Adventist system between 3 and 25 years. The similarity in the data for 2007 and 2004 suggest that staffing in the Adventist school system is stable, and that these educators are committed to working for the denomination.

When asked about the likelihood of their remaining in their current school during the next three years, almost half of elementary teachers surveyed (48.3 percent) selected "very likely" as their response (see Table 6). When the top two levels of possible responses were combined, almost three-fourths of elementary teachers indicated that they were either "quite likely" or "very likely" to remain at their current school. More than half of all other types of respondents indicated they were "very likely" to remain in their current school or position. Just over three-fourths of junior academy teachers (77.5 percent), academy teachers (77.7 percent), and conference administrators (78.2 percent) checked "quite likely" or "very likely" as their response. Teacher educators were the most likely to

say that they planned to stay in their current position for three more years.

The teachers surveyed seemed slightly more committed to working in the Adventist system than in their current school. Between 72 percent and 79 percent of elementary and junior academy teachers said they would "very likely" continue to work in the church school system for three more years. Only a small percentage (less than 8 percent) of the K-12 teachers in-

licated they were “not likely” to remain in the system for another three years.

Analysis of the measures of teacher quality and indicators of commitment reveal that educators in NAD are experienced, well trained, and display a high level of commitment to serving the church.

Conclusions

The overall patterns shown by these quality indicators—education, certifications, and continuing education—suggest that North American Division Adventist educators at the elementary and secondary levels prepare themselves for excellence in service through formal education and by meeting current certification standards. These findings continue to document a pattern of stable, committed educators in the division’s educational system.⁵ Maintaining a high quality, committed, and stable work force is important to ensuring high standards and quality in any school system. In order to retain well-prepared and committed teachers in the Adventist system and to ensure that constituents are aware of the high-quality teachers employed by the church’s schools, we recommend that Adventist leaders consider the following actions:

- Give further study to reasons for teacher commitment or lack of commitment to their current schools and the Adventist system.

- Explore approaches to encourage K-12 educators to seek and maintain government-issued teaching certificates in addition to maintaining their denominational certificates. Increasing the number of teachers in the Adventist system who possess government credentials will help teachers, schools, and the system respond to critics who allege that Adventist educators are not as well prepared as teachers in public or other school systems.

- Explore approaches to encourage system-level administrators and teacher educators to pursue continuing education. This will ensure that they stay on the cutting edge of administrative and professional trends. ✎

To access the entire Profile 2007 report, go to the following Website: <http://circle.adventist.org/download/Profile07report.pdf>.

Previous Profile Studies in *The Journal of Adventist Education*

Brantley, Paul S. “Curriculum and Instruction in Adventist Schools” 50:3 (February/March 1988), pp. 6-11.

_____. “Curriculum and Teaching in Adventist Schools: Results of the Third North American Division Poll” 54:3 (February/March 1992), pp. 21-25.

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Fourth Biennial Poll of NAD Educators” 56:5 (Summer 1994), pp. 17-20.

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Burton, Larry D.; Pretoria Gittens-St. Juste; Faith-Ann McGarrell; and Constance C. Nwosu. “What Do We Know About the Quality and Commitment of Adventist Educators?” 68:1 (October/November 2005), pp. 10-17.

Burton, Larry D.; Pretoria G. Gittens-St. Juste; and R. Lee Davidson. “Profile 2004: K-12 Teacher Perceptions of Adventist Education” 69:2 (December 2006/January 2007), pp. 19-25.

You can access these articles online at THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION Website: <http://jae.adventist.org/>.



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NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Linda Darling-Hammond, D. J. Holtzman, S. J. Gatlin, and J. V. Heilig, “Does Teacher Preparation Matter? Evidence About Teacher Certification, Teach for America, and Teacher Effectiveness,” *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 13:42 (2005). Retrieved February 17, 2010, from <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/147/>.

3. Ibid.; Linda Darling-Hammond, “Keeping Good Teachers: Why It Matters, What Leaders Can Do,” *Educational Leadership* 60:8 (2003):6-13.

4. Larry D. Burton, Pretoria Gittens-St. Juste, Faith-Ann McGarrell, and Constance C. Nwosu, “What Do We Know About the Quality and Commitment of Adventist Educators?” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 68:1 (October/November 2005), pp. 10-17.

5. See the sidebar at the right listing the previous Profile studies.