

# PROJECT AFFIRMATION

*Finding New Ways to  
Market and Enhance  
Adventist Education*

By Charles T. Smith, Jr.

# P

ROJECT AFFIRMATION, MASTER PLANNING, MISSION CLARIFICATION, SYSTEM RENEWAL. What are all these terms? How are they related? How will they affect you, as an Adventist teacher in North America?

On January 7, 1988, the North American Division (NAD) Board of Education, K-12, and the Board of Higher Education (BHE) launched PROJECT AFFIRMATION as a planned change process to engage North American Adventists in creating a shared vision of the mission of Adventist education and a renewed system to achieve the mission.

The long-term outcome of this planned change process will be master plan working documents that reflect the mission, aim at renewing the system, and have the greatest likelihood of support from North American Adventists. These documents, scheduled for presentation at the 1990 NAD Year-End Meetings, will play an important role in the ongoing planning process initiated by PROJECT AFFIRMATION.

Major components of PROJECT AFFIRMATION include (1) the Seltzer Daley Market Research Survey, (2) the planning conference, (3) task force goals and activities, and (4) developing models and training facilitators to listen to constituencies.

## **The Seltzer Daley Study**

PROJECT AFFIRMATION's first major undertaking was a broad scale market research effort carried out by the Seltzer Daley Companies of Princeton, New Jersey,

**At the Southwestern Union Project Affirmation meeting Betty Lewins, of Little Rock, Arkansas, presented a marketing report.**

*Major components of PROJECT AFFIRMATION include (1) the Seltzer Daley Market Research Survey, (2) the planning conference, (3) task force goals and activities, and (4) developing models and training facilitators to listen to constituencies.*

Photo removed

to identify church members' perceptions about Adventist education. This study became the first of a series of events to establish two-way communication between the church's educational leadership and constituencies and obtain church-wide involvement in planning and decision-making.

Commissioning the study was the joint boards' response to declining enrollments in Adventist schools, increasing numbers of Adventist families choosing to send their children to non-Adventist

schools, tensions resulting from escalating tuition and operating costs, and difficulties in retaining high-quality faculty and staff.

The Seltzer Daley Study revealed a broad base of support for Adventist education at all levels—elementary, secondary, and college. Most church members believe our schools are “absolutely essential” or “very important” to the future of the church. This support was shared by Adventist pastors and educators. However, SDA students surveyed expressed

less enthusiasm about Adventist education.

Adventist members have high expectations for the competence, caring, and Adventist commitment of teachers and for the quality of all instruction, Bible classes, and spiritual growth activities. They wish greater financial assistance could be available so no Adventist student would be turned away from church schools for lack of funds. They believe all church members, not just parents, need to be involved in supporting educational programs.

Many church members do not feel well-informed about Adventist schools, academies, and especially colleges. Though agreeing on the value of Adventist schools, many church members also state with almost equal fervor that “some major” improvements must be made in Adventist schools, especially in the area of academic quality. They also desire greater emphasis on spiritual and religious values.

### The Planning Conference

The second major step in PROJECT AFFIRMATION was a January 5-7, 1988, Planning Conference at which the Joint Boards and invited guests (representing various sectors of the church) examined and interpreted a wide range of data and agreed on priorities for the future of Adventist education.

Participants' recommendations focused on four areas: *Youth Concerns and Spiritual Values, Quality Education and Valued Educators, Marketing and Advocacy, and Financial Strategies and Alternatives*. They charged a coordinating council, four task forces, a project coordinator, BHE and K-12 executives, and a steering committee, with several responsibilities: to listen to church members, create a vision of the future with church members, set necessary change processes in motion, and develop master plan working documents for October 1990.

Within three weeks the steering committee, together with representatives of the Planning Conference and Search Institute consultants, Merton Strommen and Shelby Andress, identified nominations for the coordinating council, task forces, and full-time coordinator; published an executive summary of the January proceedings; agreed on a three-year operating plan; and scheduled visioning (careful consideration of anticipated future situations) and planning events for 1988. These meetings will provide models for church-wide input for the planned change process. Selection of project personnel gave careful attention to backgrounds, interests, and expertise, as well as to equitable representation for both genders, various ethnic groups, geo-

*Continued on page 46*

# PROJECT AFFIRMATION

Continued from page 9

graphic areas, and educational levels.

A first, highly significant visioning/listening event was a conference presidents' workshop, held April 4-5, 1988, in Washington, D.C. It sought to enlist the presidents' help in determining how to engage their constituents genuinely and productively in PROJECT AFFIRMATION. Success in this area would help create and implement a shared vision of Adventist education.

## Task Force Goals and Activities

The second official event of PROJECT AFFIRMATION, held April 25-26, 1988, was organizing the coordinating council and four task forces. These groups were charged with developing master plan working documents and simultaneously launching planned change activities to help achieve the goals of Adventist education. They quickly organized for their work and agreed on broad objectives for the next three years. Subsequently they set time lines for their projects, assigned or prepared position papers, and through intensive discussion made plans to implement their objectives.

All task forces meet quarterly and encourage input from church members. Chairpersons of each task force, listed later in this article, welcome reader interest and input.

The goals and objectives of the task forces make clear that PROJECT AFFIRMATION personnel affirm our rich heritage of Adventist education, whose principles are presented in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen G. White. Part of their task is to show the relevance and importance of this heritage to today's needs and its power to assist the church in establishing a unified vision for the future. They plan to emphasize the concepts of personal faith, commitment to a life of service, the power of choice, wholeness and completeness, balanced development (physical, mental, and spiritual), the Christ-centered life, community, and personal redemption and restoration through Christ's recreative power.

Bailey Gillespie, chairman of the Loma Linda University School of Religion's Department of Church and Ministry, chairs the task force on youth concerns and spiritual values. Its goal is "to enable Seventh-day Adventist students to embrace the essential elements of biblical faith and to frame a world view that shapes their personal value system, and life-style, and results in commitment to the mission of the Adventist Church."

Achieving this goal will involve listen-

---

*Adventist members have high expectations for the competence, caring, and Adventist commitment of teachers and for the quality of all instruction, Bible classes, and spiritual growth activities.*

---

ing to the needs of Adventist young people, developing more effective ways for them to apply biblical values to their everyday lives, and helping them to establish a dynamic saving relationship with Jesus Christ that will empower them for a life of service to God and their fellow human beings.

Task force projects include (1) producing practical, sequential, age-group appropriate methods and materials to enhance the development of moral attitudes; (2) surveying current moral and spiritual values of church members (youth, parents, and others) and the impact of Adventist education on value formation; (3) encouraging dialogue (e.g., youth-parent, youth-pastor, youth-teacher) regarding essential elements of biblical faith and values; (4) promoting teacher and student involvement in church and community service volunteer programs; and (5) fostering teaching styles that promote listening, discipling (companion) approaches to students.

The goals of the task force on quality education and valued educators, chaired by Erma Lee, associate director of education for the North Pacific Union, is "to achieve quality Adventist education through competent, committed Christian educators who are appreciated and affirmed in their endeavors to motivate students to reach their maximum potential and to develop academically, socially,

---

*The Seltzer Daley Study revealed a broad base of support for Adventist education at all levels—elementary, secondary, and college.*

---

physically, spiritually, and emotionally, resulting in a growing relationship to Christ and service to the church and society."

Activities of this task force will (1) promote professional recognition of Adventist educators inside and outside the church through salary parity, ministry of teaching credentials, teacher-of-the-year awards; (2) improve quality of instruction; (3) help parents and church members become better informed about the effectiveness of instruction and spiritual growth efforts at Adventist schools; (4) increase staff participation in expanded, improved professional growth and development opportunities designed for specific individual needs; (5) develop policies, standards, and administrator training programs for improved supervision of teachers and staff; (6) clarify and foster the components of "quality Adventist education"; and (7) enhance team relationships between teachers and pastors.

Don Schneider, president of the Rocky Mountain Conference, chairs the marketing and advocacy task force. Its goal is "to implement a coordinated marketing effort that prepares and provides appropriate resources and services for a multiple range of marketing needs, and whose primary goal is increased enrollment kindergarten-university."

Projects of this task force involve development of (1) seminars to help denominational administrative and educational leaders to recognize the importance of marketing Adventist education; (2) materials for local use to assist institutions in better assessing customer satisfaction and matching of educational programs to client needs; (3) job descriptions for and employment of marketing personnel at every level of the church; and (4) service-oriented marketing materials and tools for all levels of NAD educational programs.

The goal of the task force on financial strategies and alternatives, chaired by Charles Dart, president of the Southern California Conference, is "to develop a broad-based financial program with a variety of funding strategies that will offer the opportunity of Adventist education to every Seventh-day Adventist who can benefit and who meets admission standards regardless of financial circumstances."

Task force activities include development of (1) position papers on topics such as government aid to schools in Canada and the United States, possible restructuring of tithe percentages retained or redistributed to local entities for educational purposes, a prototype NAD foundation/corporation to generate and solicit funding for North American education at all levels, and study of

demographic factors within and without the church that affect the funding of Adventist education; (2) new strategies to increase funding for all levels of Adventist education so at least 10 percent more eligible students can attend Adventist schools; and (3) a ministerial continuing education series and in-service seminars for pastors, lay leaders, and all church members on stewardship and financing Adventist education.

### Models for Listening to Constituencies

Several models for listening to constituencies will be developed during 1988 and 1989. These will utilize effective ways to elicit concerns, values, and recommendations of a broad range of constituency groups. Subsequently to be detailed in facilitators' manuals, these models will be used in training at least one facilitator from each NAD conference to engage constituencies between March 1989 and August 1990 in planning for Adventist education. (Facilitators will be carefully trained persons who help promote the plans prepared by the study groups.)

The listening/visioning sessions are designed to reach out quickly and solidly to key constituencies of the church: youth, parents, teachers, pastors, local union conference lay, professional educational and church administrative leadership, as well as the grassroots membership of the church. As they meet in visioning conferences, project personnel will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, believing that He will lead the membership of the whole church in planning the educational/redemptive mission of the church.

Visioning conferences have three components: reviewing strategic information about Adventist education, setting goals, and determining priorities and directions for specific action plans that will renew and revitalize Adventist education. Plans will (1) commit those involved to make a difference in Adventist education, (2) show constituencies and church leadership that the whole church is responsible for bringing about needed change, and (3) involve constituencies in discussing critical issues relating to their needs, concerns, and hopes for the future. Plans should define priorities, address critical issues, encourage pilot testing of promising new ideas, and facilitate ongoing evaluation.

Several events in the Pacific Northwest, Canada, and the Lake and Southwestern unions have already involved educational leadership, union executive committees, academy principals and Bible teachers, and elementary and secondary teachers. Additional events will involve parents, teachers, students in Adventist and non-

Adventist schools, and pastors and educational leadership in the Atlantic, Southern, and Pacific unions.

Priority topics include ethnic needs, rationale for school/college choice, psychological ownership of and meaningful involvement with local schools, promoting the Adventist educational system and exploration of new strategies for funding Adventist education.

PROJECT AFFIRMATION is designed to assist the church in its battle for the minds, hearts, and souls of its young people, to show young people and their families that the church and spiritual values are relevant to their needs and those of their fellow human beings. It also seeks to ensure that our schools minister to the needs of students and their families as whole persons created in the image of God. We solicit your prayers and your support for PROJECT AFFIRMATION. □

*Dr. Charles T. Smith, Jr., is Coordinator, PROJECT AFFIRMATION, North American Division Office of Education. He writes from Takoma Park, Maryland.*

## NEWS NOTES

*Continued from page 29*

themselves informed but not pushy, were open to differing opinions but yet were convinced of the necessity for a Christian worldview to permeate the college classrooms."

Another participant commented, "I have become aware of a teacher's need to shore up his worldview and his classroom practices."

But the best compliment to the institute came when one teacher observed, "I enjoyed the institute so much, especially the exchanges with all those other teachers, that I'd come again next year if it weren't against the rules."—Wilma McClarty. □

*Dr. Wilma McClarty is Professor of English at Southern College of SDA, Collegedale, Tennessee, and a participant in the first Institute for Christian College Teaching.*

## OF INTEREST TO TEACHERS

*Continued from page 42*

a projected 24 million Americans—could not identify the United States.

"A separate 81-question test administered to the Americans found similar gaps in knowledge.

"For example, only half knew the country in which the Sandinistas and Contras were fighting; 25 percent could name the countries that acknowledge having nuclear weapons; and only 15 percent could name the world's largest city.

The study also found that Americans consider map-reading skills more important than the ability to write a business letter or use a computer. But less than two-fifths of Americans consider geographic knowledge 'absolutely essential' to be considered a 'well-rounded individual.'"—*Education Week*, vol. VII, No. 39, August 3, 1988. Reprinted by permission.

### State Board Advice on Home Schools

"State education officials should work both to cooperate with the growing home-schooling movement and to set basic standards for it, the National Association of State Boards of Education suggests in a recent report....

"The 10-page report is intended only to provide state-board members with background on the issue. NASBE has no official policy on home schools, a spokesman for the group said.

"Among its other suggestions, the report calls on state officials to

"Establish a procedure between public educators and home-schooling parents.

"Define criteria for home schooling at the state level, and apply them uniformly throughout the state.

"Establish regulations to monitor students educated at home but officially enrolled in a private school. Such 'satellite students,' it says, should receive a diploma clearly differentiating them from regular students.

"Require that home-school parents hold at least a high-school diploma or a General Education Development certificate.

"Limit 'process requirements' to submission of a list of texts and materials, a proposed syllabus, or the name of the correspondence course the parent intends to use.

"Require that the results of a nationally normed test as baseline data for each child who will begin home schooling at age 8 or older.

"Require that, during the first two years of schooling, the parent report quarterly on the child's progress to either the state or the district.

"Hold parents accountable for the academic progress of their children by requiring either a yearly evaluation by someone other than the parent, a portfolio of student work, or the results of a standardized test."—*Education Week*, vol. VII, No. 39, August 3, 1988. Reprinted by permission. □