PROJECT AFFIRMATION

Finding New Ways to Market and Enhance Adventist Education

By Charles T. Smith, Jr.

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.

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

PROJECT 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.

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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.
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, Morton 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 back- grounds, interests, and expertise, as well as to equitable representation for both genders, various ethnic groups, geo-

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


**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.

**NEWS NOTES**

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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."

Dr. Wilma McClarty

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**OF INTEREST TO TEACHERS**

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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.