

# THE OREGON PLAN FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

BY ED BOYATT, ANITA MOLSTEAD, AND DICK MOLSTEAD

**W** . Edwards Deming describes it as “the ongoing process of continuous improvement.” Stephen Covey sees us “sharpening the saw.” And Ellen White encourages us to “allow nothing to stand in the way

of earnest endeavor for self-improvement . . . and to reach the highest standards of excellence.”

The words of those great teachers remind us that personal and professional growth and renewal are essential for the Christian educator, and that our conferences and administrators must support ongoing development in philosophical and practical ways. The Oregon Conference, where the authors work, has developed an innovative and practical program for staff development that other organizations may find helpful.

We believe that through effective staff development, the needs of students, teachers, and educational and social systems can be addressed and met.

We base our program on four basic truths:

- Students deserve the best.
- Constituencies demand the best.
- A changing society requires changes in the classroom.
- Teachers must continuously improve their skills and add to their repertoire of effective strategies.

First, our schools must be student-centered. Every-

thing we do must be done in response to the question: “How will it help our students?” The individual needs of students must be the primary consideration when designing every part of the school year, from the daily lesson plan to the annual curriculum. For the sake of our students, we must consider every new idea or

teaching method in the light of its potential to improve learning conditions—and must adopt new concepts if they prove to be powerful teaching tools.

Second, our schools must recognize the fact that society and our constituents demand quality. The very survival of our educational system depends on how our clients perceive the level of excellence in our classrooms. Therefore, we must become a community of learners who strive to make a good school even better. Quality education requires that every facet of school life be addressed.

Our schools must develop programs that prepare students for a changing society. The industrial age is rapidly giving way to the information age. The workplace no longer emphasizes turning out products. Instead, it demands cooperating, processing information, solving problems, and communicating. We must prepare students for adult life by helping them to develop those skills.

Finally, we must continuously examine our teaching practices with an eye to improving them. Professional dialogue encourages optimal professional health. To assure their professional health, organizations must

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provide a systematic, ongoing, and goal-oriented staff-development program.

The North Pacific Union Conference and Oregon Conference and their principals and teachers are working together to structure a staff-development program that can accomplish the four objectives stated above. Personnel from all levels cooperate to determine the strategies and to actually implement the methods that enable our schools to deliver what students need and society demands.

The conference and union have cooperated in several practical ways to achieve these goals. For example, by combining resources, these two organizations each year provide \$300 per teacher for professional growth. This budget allows teachers to attend workshops and other training sessions where they can polish their classroom skills. Because the teachers themselves choose which training sessions to attend, they feel more in charge of their professional lives—and, as a result, more accountable for their own development.

At the local level, the Oregon Conference promotes staff development in practical ways. The conference goals specify the innovations and ideas that we believe will affect student learning in positive ways. (See Figure 1.) Most of these goals deal with professional growth and focus on two primary areas: teacher needs and building administrator/teacher relationships. The conference publishes newsletters that announce upcoming workshops, conventions, and other professional meetings. In addition, it cooperates with the National Diffusion Network<sup>1</sup> to provide teachers with that organization's staff-development programs. The conference customizes its workshops to ensure that they meet the goals of the conference and the needs of the teachers.

In addition, the K-12 Oregon Conference Curriculum Committee has given staff development a prominent place on its agenda. In doing so, the committee has encouraged programs that train teachers to use alternative as-



Teachers in the Basic Cooperative Learning class taught by author Anita Molstead demonstrate the poem their group wrote.



Angie Beck, teacher at Portland Adventist Academy, and Matt Weber, principal, Klamath Falls Adventist School, work together on a project during the Talents Unlimited Workshop held during Oregon Conference's Fifth Annual National Diffusion Network Teachers' Institute.

assessment, employ technology as a teaching and learning tool, and follow William Glasser's program for quality schools.<sup>2</sup>

The Oregon Conference maintains a strong working relationship with Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington, by offering its personnel to help train teachers to use specific cutting-edge techniques. Associate superintendents Dick and Anita Molstead teach courses in such subjects as cooperative learning and dimensions of learning at the college during the summer session, as well as off campus during the school year.

As part of the cooperative effort among administrators and teachers, su-

perintendents and principals readily share noteworthy books, articles, and tapes with teachers. Proving that leadership must practice what it preaches, they also take classes, visit innovative schools, read professional materials, and attend workshops to remain informed about up-to-date practices and research.

Additionally, principals from several area schools meet quarterly to share knowledge and experiences. During the 1994-1995 school year, for example, teachers and principals from two regions attended a five-day workshop on William Glasser's quality schools program.

The Oregon Office of Education en-

courages and supports innovative practices that apply appropriate implementation and evaluative procedures. We expect teachers to pilot cutting-edge curricular and instructional practices. During the current school year, teachers are introducing block scheduling, alternative assessment, and thematic instruction. The Oregon Office of Education also continues to expand its library of in-service materials, emphasizing sets that include an audiocassette or videocassette, a listener's or viewer's guide, and a facilitator's manual.

For their part, teachers develop individual growth plans at the beginning of each school year, including ways in which superintendents and principals can assist them in reaching their desired goals. (See Figure 2.) For example, teachers need time to accomplish their professional goals—an element that, according to Bruce Joyce,<sup>6</sup> often is missing from the teacher's daily schedule. Oregon is exploring several ways to find release time for staff development other than in the 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. time slot. Options include using weekly half days or monthly full days for staff development. Superintendents and principals also help teachers arrange for substitutes so that they can visit other public and private school classrooms to observe effective teaching methods in action and to form a support network with other teachers.

The Oregon Office of Education encourages teachers who are interested and able to become workshop presenters. This procedure not only affirms the talents and expertise of master teachers, but also provides quality workshops for those targeted by the conference for staff development.

Teachers who express an interest in Oregon's mentor program are assigned protégés in a program that benefits both parties. As one mentor recently reported, participation in the program has helped her to become a better teacher: "There are many valuable outcomes from the mentor program, such as the sharing and support that goes both ways for us. I feel I gained a lot from listening to my protégé. Her ideas, her energy and her creativity inspired me!"



Oregon Associate Superintendent Anita Molstead, dressed as Anthony Ant, reads *Amazing Anthony* to kindergarten students at Tualatin Valley Jr. Academy.

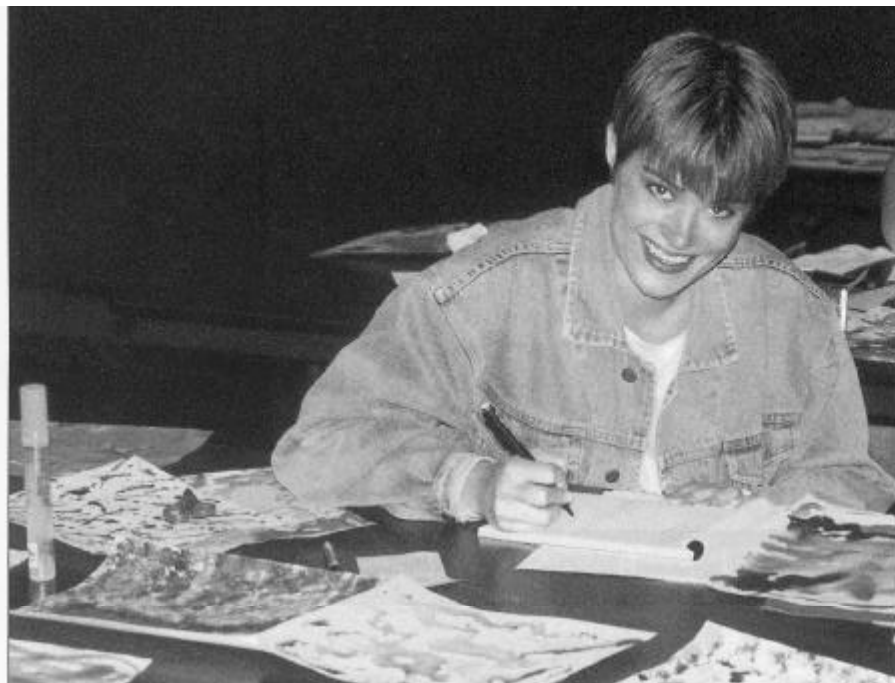
Figure 1

### Goals of the Office of Education Oregon Conference of SDA 1995-1996

#### THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION WILL

- I. Assist administrators and teachers in implementing responses to the Valuegenesis research and recommendations with emphasis on a grace and service orientation, faith maturity, and at-risk behaviors.
- II. Ensure the completion and systematic review of administrator and teacher Professional Growth Plans.
- III. Ensure the completion and systematic review of School Improvement Plans.
- IV. Promote staff development by:
  - A. Encouraging the formation of intra/inter-school teacher study teams.
  - B. Exploring alternative school schedules/calendars to provide more release time for staff development.
  - C. Focusing staff development in the following areas:
    1. A variety of student assessments;
    2. Dimensions of learning (thinking skills);
    3. Quality Schools (William Glasser program);
    4. Cooperative learning;
    5. Character education;
    6. Technology as a tool;
    7. Mastery learning;
    8. Multi-age classrooms;
    9. Integrated Thematic Teaching (ITT);
    10. Awareness and implementation of content area standards.
- V. Encourage and support innovative practices that apply appropriate implementation and evaluation procedures.
- VI. Implement the inclusion of keyboarding into the elementary curriculum.
- VII. Facilitate parent communication and involvement.
- VIII. In-service school boards on the duties and responsibilities of effective boardsmanship.





Kari Stevens, principal of Pleasant View School in Seaside, works on the book she wrote as part of the Image-Making Workshop during the Oregon Conference Teachers' Institute.

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Mentors know that by helping first-year teachers, they are providing a needed service; as one teacher put it: "I sleep better at night because I do for others what I wish had been done for me."

Our primary job as educators is to improve the conditions for learning. In the past, staff development has centered primarily on the awareness level of teachers and administrators, not on the behavior of teachers or the learning conditions of schools. The Oregon Conference has sought ways to fulfill its commitment in helping teachers to develop their classroom skills. By giving teachers autonomy, expecting accountability, and providing the needed time and resources, good teachers—and good schools—are getting better. ☞

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. W. Edwards Deming, *Out of the Crisis* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Center for Advanced Engineering Study, 1986), p. 53.
2. Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), p. 287.
3. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1952), p. 281.
4. National Diffusion Network, 1726 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.
5. William Glasser, *The Quality School* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).
6. Bruce Joyce, *Changing School Culture Through Staff Development* (Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1990), p. xvi.

Figure 2

### Oregon Conference of SDA Professional Growth Plan

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

I PLAN TO ACCOMPLISH THE FOLLOWING GOALS DURING THIS SCHOOL YEAR:

I. INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL GROWTH (Reading, Classes, School Visitation, Workshops, Convention)

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II. CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION (Curriculum, Instructional Strategies)

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THE PRINCIPAL OR OFFICE OF EDUCATION CAN ASSIST ME IN REACHING MY GOALS BY:

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