

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION IN NORTH AMERICAN SCHOOLS

Results From the Profile '95 Survey of SDA Educators

BY PAUL S. BRANTLEY

Adventist education stands on the threshold of a new millennium. Are our schools and classrooms ready for what lies ahead? In March and April 1995, the Profile '95 survey solicited the confidential views of 671 randomly chosen North American Division (NAD) elementary and academy teachers, along with 112 local conference, union conference, and NAD educational leaders.

Profile '95 is only the latest in a series of comprehensive surveys of educators sponsored by the North American Division every other year since 1987. The Profile surveys have served as an important source of information for several reasons: (1) random sampling helps make the findings representative of all NAD educators; (2) surveying different kinds of educators allows for cross-group comparisons; (3) surveying the group over many years helps reveal emerging trends; and (4) survey results can guide leaders in making policy and developing curriculum.

Adventist educators take the Profile surveys seriously. For the fifth straight time, more than 80 percent of the busy SDA educators who received the form took the time to complete it—

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an impressive record for mail survey research.

What We've Learned Thus Far

Now that the NAD has completed its fifth cycle of studies, a profile of curriculum and teaching is beginning to emerge. A synopsis of what we've learned from prior surveys (1987-1993) follows:

- Adventist educators in the NAD appreciate being part of a larger system. All groups feel the need for overarching philosophy, goals, and essential learning to guide them in their work.
- Adventist educators are quite concerned about the spiritual aspects of schooling—their own faith as well as the faith of their students. Both elementary and secondary teachers are interested in more effective ways of teaching Bible.
- Adventist educators express some confusion about curriculum guides, the standardized testing program, and the textbooks they use. They do not always understand how the three components relate to one another.
- SDA educators do not feel adequately prepared to use new curriculums. Few teachers feel adequately in-serviced before implementation. Appropriate follow-up is rare.
- Teachers at every level feel isolated—to a much greater

extent than do conference and union personnel. This isolation is particularly acute among new teachers, personnel in small schools, and teachers at the secondary level.

The Profile '95 Survey—SDA Educators View the Future

Profile '95 focused on Adventist teachers' preparedness for the future. The survey first sought to determine whether educators shared a consensus on the goals proposed by the NAD Curriculum Futures Commission. In addition, the survey measured how well teachers are prepared to plot new directions and implement educational innovations.

Methods. The survey questionnaire was developed at Andrews University using items from prior surveys as well as new items. The North American Division Curriculum Committee (NADCC) members were asked to suggest items for inclusion in the survey. Different forms of the survey were prepared for the various categories of respondents. Of the 514 elementary teachers who responded, 238 identified themselves as multigrade teachers, 51 taught kindergarten, 63 taught grades nine and 10, and 141 also served as elementary principals. One hundred fifty-seven senior academy teachers listed the following as their major assignments: Bible, 25; science, 21; English, 16; history, 15; mathematics, 13; music, 12; other areas, 50. A total of 90 conference personnel and 22 NADCC members were also included in the survey.

Consensus on Goals

In preparing students for the 21st century, the North American Division needs to develop clear expectations for student achievement and behavior. A concise set of goals can help a system to focus on desired areas.

When it comes to goals, Adventist educators are in a favored position. They are united by an overarching ethos, in spite of the growing diversity within the system. But to what extent do elementary teachers, academy teachers, conference personnel, and union/NAD curriculum leaders subscribe to a particular set of goals?

Procedures. In the Profile '95 survey, the 10 goals proposed by the Curriculum

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Futures Commission were listed in condensed form. Educators were asked to indicate (1) which goals they felt were most important and (2) what they felt needed to be added, changed, or deleted. We did a content analysis of their responses.

Findings. All groups gave broad endorsement of the goals. Only 157 of the 783 respondents indicated a desire to see any goals revised, added to, or deleted. Suggestions were mostly cosmetic. The 10 goals upon which there was widespread consensus are as follows:

- Discovering, accepting, and valuing

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TABLE 1
URGENT NEEDS OF TEACHERS
"Which areas below deserve the most attention on behalf of educators in NAD schools? Select three areas."

Area of Concern	Elementary Teachers	Senior Academy Teachers	Conference Personnel	NAD Curriculum Committee
Spiritual developing a more vibrant faith in God (Self and students)	77%	78%	78%	50%
Curriculum integrating the curriculum in ways that show connectedness and relevance	56	42	62	73
Instruction learning effective, up-to-date ways to improve student achievement	53	53	50	59
Technology preparing our students and ourselves for an information society	43	49	64	36

- the principles found in God's Word
- Embracing and sharing the tenets of the SDA Church
 - Competence in academic coursework
 - Critical thinking and the development of logical problem-solving skills
 - Knowledge and skill in the use of technology for communication and learning
 - Developing lifelong learners with aesthetic appreciation
 - Achieving and maintaining optimum health through balanced living
 - Belief in the brotherhood of man-

Profile '95 focused on Adventist teachers' preparedness for the future.

zational, assessment, and personal. The top four needs are identified in Table 1.

Use of New Methodologies

To what extent are Adventist teachers

staying abreast of professional developments in the field of education? Respondents were asked about a variety of educational trends and innovations.

Procedures. We constructed an implementation profile that gave teachers safe ways to declare with candor where they fell on the continuum. Although the instrument used self-report, teacher responses roughly matched estimates of where conference, union, and NAD personnel felt teachers would fall on the continuum.

Findings. The "like to try" category indicated teachers' openness to an inno-

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- kind and the worth of self, others, and the environment
- Skills in interpersonal relationships (family and others)
 - Awareness of career options and the world of work, including those related to the mission of the SDA Church

Urgent Needs of Teachers

As Seventh-day Adventist education looks to the future, it would do well to attend to the needs of classroom teachers, who work at the cutting edge of education. What do educators and leaders view as the most urgent needs of classroom teachers?

Each respondent was asked to select three of the most urgent needs of teachers from a list of seven: spiritual, curriculum, instruction, technology, organi-

TABLE 2
ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' VIEWS OF
INNOVATIVE PRACTICES
n=517

"How do you feel about the following innovations?"

Practice	Not Interested	Not heard about	Heard about	Would like to try	Starting to implement	Using with proficiency
Cooperative learning	2%	2%	12%	13%	48%	23%
Teaching for multiple intelligences and learning styles	2	6	12	33	34	14
Integrated curriculum; thematic instruction	3	5	19	27	32	14
Experiments in flexible scheduling; core curriculum variations	4	18	18	34	17	8
Portfolios	7	15	20	33	22	3
Teacher study groups; peer coaching	5	12	21	42	14	6
Inclusion strategies	4	52	20	11	11	2
HyperCard, Linkway, etc	2	65	14	16	3	1
Distance learning technology; satellite hookups	5	7	30	53	5	1
School-to-work programs/ business partnerships	9	18	33	35	4	1
TQM	2	81	9	5	3	1

vation when they could have merely checked “heard about.” Distance learning technology is a good example of methodology in which teachers expressed interest. Because teachers were largely unaware of innovations such as “HyperCard” and “TQM” (Total Quality Management), few reported implementing anything in these areas. In fact, very few teachers felt proficient in using any of the innovations listed in the survey. Senior academy teachers rated themselves low in all 11 areas and lower than elementary teachers in using cooperative learning and thematic instruction. This may suggest the need for a bold plan of in-servicing. (See Tables 2 and 3.)

Preparedness for Newer Information Technologies

Consider these tidbits taken from *New Work Habits for a Radically Changing World*, by Dr. Price Pritchett: Today’s average consumers wear more computing power on their wrists than existed in the entire world before 1961. The number of components on a computer chip: 1960, one; 1970, one thousand; 1990, one hundred million; and 1992, one billion. Computing power is now 8,000 times less expensive than it was 30 years ago. If we had similar progress in auto technology today, you could buy a Lexus for about \$2; it would travel at the speed of sound, and go about 600 miles on a thimbleful of gas!

How much of this potential has reached our schools? Although the world has entered the Information Age, how many NAD educators are using these applications to enhance their teaching?

Procedures. Survey respondents were asked to tell how far they had progressed on the information superhighway. Responses of the four groups (elementary, secondary, conference, and NADCC) were then compared.

Findings. Few NAD teachers considered themselves sophisticated users. A sizable proportion are in low gear, waiting for some way to make their newly acquired equipment and programs educationally productive.

This may indicate a potential for training in this area, as it appears that teachers are ready to move to the next step—using the computer for a wide variety of applications in teaching.

A great proportion of educators at all levels have access to computers. Use of IBM compatibles is up for all groups—especially elementary. Apple usage has dropped among elementary teachers and remains constant among the other groups since the last Profile survey. The proportion of teachers using the Internet is still quite low. Clearly, information technology is making only a modest impact on NAD schools. This may indicate a need for training in these areas. Teachers do have some hardware, but need to learn how to use the computer for a wide variety of classroom applications.

Ratings of Curriculum by Elementary Teachers

Procedures. In one section of the Profile study, teachers were asked whether they were familiar with a variety of SDA curriculum products, and if so, to rate the quality of these items. In some cases, because of departmentalization, teachers would not know about resources for every area. Only those who indicated some awareness of the products were asked to rate their quality.

Findings. It is useful to compare these results with the those four years ago (Profile ’91). As a whole, the newer rat-

TABLE 3
SENIOR ACADEMY TEACHERS’ VIEWS
OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICES
n=157

“How do you feel about the following innovations?”

Practice	Not interested	Not heard about	Heard about	Would like to try	Starting to implement	Using with proficiency
Cooperative learning	2%	7%	31%	18%	31%	12%
Teaching for multiple intelligences and learning styles	2	7	20	39	21	11
Integrated curriculum; thematic instruction	5	12	31	35	12	4
Experiments in flexible scheduling; core curriculum variations	3	11	22	43	18	3
Portfolios	6	35	25	25	8	1
Teacher study groups; peer coaching	7	18	20	43	10	3
Inclusion strategies	5	70	15	9	0	1
HyperCard, Linkway, etc	2	61	12	22	3	0
Distance learning technology; satellite hookups	6	6	28	52	7	1
School-to-work programs/business partnerships	5	8	24	53	7	3
TQM	4	79	11	5	1	0

ings are somewhat more favorable. In 1991, only four SDA curriculum products received more than a 70 percent favorable rating (grades of “A” or “B” from the teachers). In 1995, 12 SDA curriculum materials received higher than 70 percent favorable ratings, and three (New Language Arts Curriculum K-12, New HBK Medallion Text, and Small Schools Survival Guide) received favorable ratings exceeding 80 percent. Especially gratifying was the high rating given the kindergarten curriculum *A Child’s World* (90 percent) and the new fifth/sixth-grade science-health textbooks (93 percent)—the highest rating for a curriculum item in the history of the Profile surveys! All materials received over 50 percent favorable ratings, a testimony to the progress that unions and the NAD have made in preparing more effective curriculums for classroom use.

Curriculum Implementation and Senior Academy Teachers

Profile ’95 assessed five recent curriculum resources, most of which used the new format of shorter, more concise curriculum guides. For the first time, the survey attempted to get secondary teachers to explain in some detail their reasons for using or not using the curriculum guides. Since academy teachers would probably be acquainted only with resources in their specific teaching areas, the survey asked only those who used the guides to rate their quality.

Procedures. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of use, as well as the helpfulness of the resources. They were also requested to assess the quality of their in-service experiences.

Findings. Curriculum guide use by secondary teachers appears to be somewhat low, even allowing for the specialized nature of the materials. Of the curriculum materials used, the physical education guide was best received, although the number of cases was too small to make definitive projections.

The data indicate a clear relationship between usage and the level of in-service support as perceived by teachers. Of the senior academy teachers who said they were in-serviced well, 62 percent used the guides—90 percent of whom rated the guides as helpful. Of the senior

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academy teachers who were not in-serviced well, only 17 percent reported using the guides, and less than half of those felt that the guides were helpful. In addition to better in-service training, senior academy teachers desired more classroom-ready materials and teacher study groups so they could get together and share ideas.

Conclusions

As a new millennium approaches, Adventist educators must adequately prepare their students for what lies ahead. Although experts often extol the place of technology in preparing for the future, what is even more important is the spiritual renewal of teacher and student. Teachers repeatedly cited spirituality as a concern on this survey as well as on previous Profile surveys. We must continue to find ways to make sure that Bible teaching gets our “freshest thought, and our best methods, and our most earnest effort” as Ellen White envisioned a century ago.

It is gratifying to note widespread consensus on the goals and purposes of Adventist education. Overarching benchmarks help give direction to the collective efforts of educators throughout

TABLE 4
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND TEACHING
“Just where are YOU on the information superhighway?”

	Elementary Teachers (n=517)	Senior Academy Teachers (n=157)	Conf. Supt. & Assoc. (n=90)	NADCC (n=22)
Still in the garage; I can't seem to get oriented into using computers to any extent.	4%	4%	3%	0%
Waiting for a ride; I'm interested but need someone to help me get moving.	17	13	5	5
Started up my engines; I'm really excited! I've already made plans to get started.	10	6	7	5
In the driveway; I've tentatively begun doing some things that look promising.	7	6	19	14
In low gear; I'm using computer systems for some basic teaching or non-teaching things.	51	52	44	41
In high gear; I use computer systems for a wide variety of applications in teaching.	10	15	21	32
Near my destination; I am sophisticated user, developer, and consultant.	2	3	1	5

TABLE 5
RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

“Which of the following are readily available for your use at any time?”

Resources	All Respondents (n=783)	Elementary Teachers (n=514)	Academy Teachers (n=157)	Conf. Supt. & Assoc. (n=90)	NADCC (n=22)
FAX machine	55	40%	79%	91%	82%
IBM PC or compatible	76	71	84	91	82
Apple PC	24	25	27	20	9
Modem for computer communications	35	26	39	69	82 (est)*
The Internet	17	13	22	22	55
CompuServe	20	12	19	59	64

*estimate based upon follow-up verification

North America and the world. In spite of differing methods, this should ensure unity on our ultimate goals.

It is disappointing to see how few classroom teachers are aware of and using some of the newer educational approaches. Innovations such as cooperative learning and teacher study groups have proved highly effective. Learning to teach students with disabilities is essential. Yet few teachers feel proficient in the use of these methodologies. Much more attention must be given to the ongoing training of teachers if the curriculum is to make a difference in the lives of students.

SDA educators have a nodding acquaintance with the computer, but most are still in “low gear.” Considerable training is needed to help them use software effectively and regularly in classroom teaching. The potential of information networking and exchange is barely being tapped.

Although much remains to be done, Adventist teachers in North America rate the quality of SDA curriculum higher than in past years. With improved in-service training, teacher collaboration, and spiritual renewal, we can be optimistic that Adventist education will adequately prepare students for the 21st century—and for an eternity beyond! ✍

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TABLE 6
ASSESSMENT OF CURRICULUM GUIDES — Senior Academy Teachers

Survey Questions	Substance Abuse PAC Manual		Science Curriculum Guide 9-12		Computer Curriculum Guide 9-12		Social Studies Curr. Guide 9-12		Physical Educ. Curr. Guide 9-12	
		N		N		N		N		N
Have you used this material at all this year?	NO	139	NO	119	NO	123	NO	116	NO	118
	YES	4	YES	23	YES	14	YES	21	YES	10
How much have you used?	Quite a bit		Quite a bit	7	Quite a bit	3	Quite a bit	5	Quite a bit	7
	Used a little	3	Used a little	16	Used a little	9	Used a little	16	Used a little	3
	Not used	1	Not used		Not used	2	Not used		Not used	
How helpful have you found this material?	Quite helpful	2	Quite helpful	2	Quite helpful	6	Quite helpful	11	Quite helpful	8
	Little/no help	2	Little/no help	2	Little/no help	5	Little/no help	9	Little/no help	1
How well were you in-serviced?	Quite well	1	Quite well	4	Quite well	3	Quite well	7	Quite well	6
	Not well	3	Not well	16	Not well	7	Not well	12	Not well	3