

Curriculum and Instruction in North American Division Schools

Results From the Profile '97 Survey

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THE CURRICULUM planned in committee rooms may look very different than what is taught in classrooms. The Profile studies, which began more than a decade ago, regularly provide the North American Division (NAD) with snapshots of what happens after curriculums are voted and introduced to Seventh-day Adventist schools. The surveys examine Adventist education through the eyes of church educators, measuring what teachers know about the materials and whether they use and like them.

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—not just vocal or visible persons; (2) data on different groups allow for comparisons between teachers and conference or union administrators; (3) longitudinal studies make it possible to forecast and detect trends; (4) survey results can guide leaders in curriculum planning.

Adventist educators take the Profile surveys seriously. The survey is taken in the spring of every odd-numbered year. For the sixth straight time, ever since the first Profile in 1987, more than 75 percent of those contacted took the time to complete it—often supplying detailed notes and explanations. The return rate is unusually high, indicating the NAD educators' desire to tell about their work and how it could be more effective.

What We've Learned

Now that the North American Division has completed its sixth cycle of studies, a

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By Paul S. Brantley

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profile of curriculum and teaching is beginning to emerge. Here is a synopsis of what we learned between 1987 and 1995:

- Adventist educators in the NAD appreciate being part of a larger system. All groups feel the need for an overarching philosophy and goals to guide them in their work.

- Adventist educators are concerned about spirituality—their own personal faith as well as the faith of their students. Both elementary and secondary teachers desire more effective ways to teach Bible and Christian beliefs.

- Adventist educators do not always know how to correlate curriculum guides with textbooks and the standardized testing program. A significant proportion of teachers fail to consult curriculum guides.

- Both educational leaders and teachers feel unprepared to use innovative educational methodologies. 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 '97 Survey—Adventist Educators View the Future

The North American Division has established a bold new vision for the future described in its report *Focus on Adventist Curriculum and Trends for the 21st Century (FACT21)*. Statements of philosophy and goals were developed and sent to the field. In addition, the division identified nine preferred prac-

tices, including innovative technology, to feature in Seventh-day Adventist classrooms. Profile '97 sought to measure educators' response to these new initiatives and their readiness to implement the bold innovations called for by the FACT21 Report.

Methods. The survey questionnaire was developed at Andrews University using items from prior surveys, as well as new items. The NAD Curriculum Committee members—who plan curriculum for the division—were asked to suggest survey items. The various categories of respondents received slightly different forms of the survey. Others surveyed include NAD curriculum committee members and conference education leaders. Every sixth elementary and secondary teacher was randomly sampled from a master list of more than 4,000. Respondents included 381 ele-

mentary teachers, 129 senior academy teachers, 81 conference educational superintendents and associates, 27 members of the NADCC, and—for the first time—57 college education professors.

Focus on the FACT21 Report. The first section of the questionnaire asked for educators' reaction to the newly released FACT21 Report prepared by a special Curriculum Futures Committee.

The report had been seen by 92 percent of NAD committee members but by only half of teacher educators and one-fifth of the elementary teachers. However, all categories of respondents reviewed the report favorably—ranging from more than 85 percent of conference, union, and NAD leaders to 61 percent of senior academy teachers.

Effectiveness in Reaching NAD Goals

A very important part of the

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FACT21 Report is its 10 goals for Adventist education. For the first time, respondents were asked how well the NAD education system helps students reach these goals. Their responses appear in Table 1. Not surprisingly, educators saw Adventist education as most effective in developing students' intellect. All categories of educators rated academics as first in effectiveness, consistent with the popular idea that school is primarily concerned with cognitive learning. Although "Accepting God and His Word" was rated third by the educators, "Commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church" rated next

to the last of the 10 categories, only slightly ahead of "Aesthetic Appreciation."

Multicultural Education

Adventist schools are becoming more and more culturally diverse. Respondents chose their preferred approach to multiculturalism: (1) celebrating all cultures, showing how each contributes to the whole; or (2) de-emphasizing multiculturalism and focusing on a common culture. For every three educators *advocating* multiculturalism (75 percent), one preferred to *de-emphasize* it and emphasize the common

Both educational leaders and teachers feel unprepared to use innovative educational methodologies.

culture (25 percent). The consistency of the divide at all levels points out the need to address this issue.

Use of Effective Methods and Preferred Practices

Are Adventist teachers keeping current with educational methodologies? Respondents were asked about a variety of educational trends and innovations.

Procedures. We constructed an implementation profile that allowed teachers to candidly state where they fell on this continuum. Although the instruments relied on self-reporting, evidence showed that the ratings were reasonably accurate. Teacher self-ratings roughly matched estimates by conference, union, and NAD leaders.

Findings. The findings contain both good and bad news. While few teachers feel proficient about using many of the good ideas touted in education today, they do seem willing to learn about them.

Few of the leaders surveyed felt proficient about helping teachers with any of the new methods. This highlights the importance of professional development for both teachers and educational leaders.

Professional Development

Professional development refers to the practices an organization uses to help its employees work more effectively. Respondents were asked what methods of professional development they preferred.

This produced intriguing comparisons to a similar survey from about four years ago. Traditionally, Adventist educators had preferred the beginning-of-the-year teachers' conventions, but all educators now wanted alternate modes of staff upgrading, such as monthly study groups and regular

Table 1

North American Division Education Goals

How effective is our North American Division school system in helping students reach the following NAD goals? Circle a numeral from 1.0 ("ineffective") to 7.0 ("effective").

Ratings From High to Low in Terms of System Effectiveness in Reaching Goals

	Elem. Teachers (Rank)	Acad. Teachers (Rank)	Conference Personnel (Rank)	NADCC Members (Rank)	College Educators (Rank)	Goal Attainment Rank
Intellectual Development	(1) 5.7	(1) 5.7	(1) 5.7	(1) 5.7	(1) 5.5	1
Communication Skills	(2) 5.3	(2) 5.3	(2) 5.3	(3) 5.3	(4) 5.1	2
Accept God and His Word	(3) 5.1	(4) 5.0	(3) 5.2	(5) 5.3	(3) 5.2	3
Healthy Living	(4) 5.0	(7) 4.7	(5) 5.1	(4) 5.3	(2) 5.3	4
Life Skills	(5) 5.0	(5) 4.9	(6) 5.0	(6) 5.2	(6) 5.0	5
Responsible Citizenship	(6) 4.9	(6) 4.8	(4) 5.1	(2) 5.4	(7) 5.0	6
Career and Service	(8.5) 4.7	(3) 5.0	(7) 4.8	(8) 4.8	(5) 5.0	7
Family and Interpersonal	(8.5) 4.7	(8) 4.7	(8) 4.8	(7) 4.9	(8) 4.9	8
Commitment to Adventist Church	(9) 4.6	(10) 4.5	(9) 4.7	(9) 4.6	(9) 4.6	9
Aesthetic Appreciation	(10) 4.5	(9) 4.5	(10) 4.6	(10) 4.4	(10) 4.3	10

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workshops throughout the school year. The one-shot, end-of-summer conventions are recognized as insufficient for teacher orientation and inspiration.

One of the most effective methods of teacher support is coaching by a resource person. Surprisingly, only eight percent of elementary teachers and 12 percent of academy teachers wanted someone to come to their classrooms to explain materials and observe them using the curriculum resources. Perhaps they feel insecure about inviting people into the private domain of their classroom? Leaders must help teachers feel safe enough to rely on them for support.

Adventist teacher educators may be underutilized in professional development efforts. More than half of those surveyed indicated that they would like to spend more time assisting teachers.

Information Technology

Computing power is presently 8,000 times less expensive than 35 years ago, according to Price Pritchett in *New Work Habits for a Radically Changing World*. Yet how much of this potential has reached the schools? Indications are that educators—even Adventist educators—have not tapped much of the potential of computers for school applications.

Procedures. Survey respondents were asked to estimate how far they have progressed along the “information highway.” Responses of the five groups (curriculum committee members, elementary teachers, academy teachers, conference personnel, and education professors) were compared with one another and with prior years.

Findings. Comparing Profiles '97 and '95 indicates that most NAD educators continue to be “in low gear” on the information highway. However, the proportion of educators in all groups who say they are in “high gear” has increased. More NADCC educators (union and division level) report themselves in high gear and beyond than in low gear. Fewer elementary teachers had shifted gears.

A great proportion of educators at all levels have access to computers. Use of IBM compatibles is up for all groups, but Apple use has leveled off or decreased from two years ago.

More educators now have computers and other forms of technology available. Ninety-two percent of elementary teachers and 96 percent of academy teachers have a computer printer—and almost all of them use the equipment. The proportion of World Wide Web

users is relatively low, although 42 percent and 69 percent respectively have Web capability. Nearly half of elementary teachers “don’t have and don’t use” the Internet or E-mail.

Thirty percent of conference personnel fall in the “have but don’t use” category when it comes to using the Web; however, a much higher percentage use the Internet or E-mail. Merely having technology available is necessary but not sufficient to guarantee usage. Clearly, information technology is making only a modest impact in NAD schools and classrooms. Although the hardware is present, teachers need to learn how to use it for a wide variety of practical educational applications.

Assessment of Curriculum Materials

For years, the North American Division has expressed alarm at how few teachers use curriculum guides—a con-

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Table 2
Teachers' Perceptions of Innovative Educational Practices
HOW DO YOU FEEL about the following innovations?

Options: 1. Not interested in 2. Not heard of 3. Heard about
4. Would like to try 5. Started implementing 6. Using with proficiency

	"Using With Proficiency"		"Would Like to Try"	
	Elem. Tchrs.	Acad. Tchrs.	Elem. Tchrs.	Acad. Tchrs.
Portfolios	4%	5%	29%	24%
Flexible Scheduling	11	17	29	30
Teacher Networks	5	2	46	52
Multiple Intelligence & Learning Styles	12	18	27	25
Info. Technology EMG/CD Multimedia	6	9	33	37
Integrated Curriculum	19	8	20	31
Inclusion for Disabilities	10	6	21	22
Innovative Instruction	7	10	29	22
School/Work Programs	2	6	44	41
Curriculums in Witnessing and Service	12	13	36	38

cern not unique to Adventist education. In recent years, shorter, more teacher-friendly guides have been produced. Profile '97 asked teachers whether they used these guides in long-range planning. Slightly more than half gave an unqualified "Yes"; the remainder either left the question blank or said "No." Sixty percent of senior academy teachers said they used the guides, a small increase over previous years.

Procedures. Teachers were asked whether they were familiar with a variety of Adventist educational products. If so, they were asked to rate the quality of those items. Because of departmentalization, teachers would not be expected to be acquainted with materials unrelated to their teaching assignments. Only those who indicated awareness of the products were asked to rate them.

Findings. The new ninth-grade Bible series received high ratings. Other resources that rated excellent included the science/health *Explore* series for grades seven to eight (69 percent); *A Child's World* kindergarten series (68 percent); the *International Children's Bible* (68 percent); and the science/health *Discover* series for grades five to six (67 percent).

Conference personnel estimates of teacher satisfaction with the materials proved to be quite similar to the actual ratings by teachers.

Senior Academy Teacher Ratings. Several materials received high ratings from academy teachers. The physical-education resource manual received an

86 percent excellent rating from the few teachers who had used it. Also receiving high ratings for excellence were the business-education curriculum guide (83 percent), science concepts (75 percent), science experiments (75 percent), and the English curriculum guide (68 percent). These ratings suggest that teachers can and will use high-quality curriculum guides.

Senior academy teachers were asked to rate their textbooks. Of the extensive variety used, academy teachers rated the books “excellent” half the time and “good” a third of the time. Although good textbooks can be valuable aids, they should not necessarily directly mandate the curriculum offered to students.

Conclusions

As a new millennium approaches, Adventist educators must adequately prepare their students for what lies ahead. Fascination with technology and methodology must not overshadow attention to spirituality. Teachers repeatedly cite spiritual concerns as priorities in this age of secularism and skepticism. Bible teaching must have our “freshest thought, our best methods, and our most earnest effort” as Ellen White en-

Table 3
Resources at Your Fingertips: Classroom Teachers
“How many of the following are ‘at your fingertips’ for you to use . . . whenever you like?”

	“Have and Use”		“Have But Don’t Use”	
	Elem. Tchrs.	Acad. Tchrs.	Elem. Tchrs.	Acad. Tchrs.
Fax Machine	44%	73%	25%	20%
Internet/E-mail	30	48	22	32
World Wide Web	22	38	19	31
Apple/Macintosh	24	27	8	9
IBM PC	79	81	9	10
CD Applications	63	56	20	28
Computer Printer	81	89	11	7
Videocassette Recorder	73	78	10	8
Video Projector	35	51	12	19

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visioned a century ago.

Curriculum assessment remains an underdeveloped area in the North American Division K-12 system. Curriculum goals for the division have been set. Now the division must assess how well students are accomplishing the desired goals and purposes.

Although much remains to be done, Adventist teachers in North American Division schools rate the quality of the church's curriculum higher than in past years. With improved curriculum delivery, training, 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 4
Information Technology and Teaching
“Just where are YOU on the information highway?”

	Elem. Tchrs.		Acad. Tchrs.		Conference		NADCC		Edu. Prof.	
	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997
Still in the garage I can't seem to get oriented into using computers to any extent.	4%	4%	4%	3%	3%	2%	0%	0%	n/a	4%
Waiting for a ride I'm interested but need someone to help me get moving.	17	10	13	12	6	5	5	0	n/a	2
Starting up my engines I'm really excited! I've already made plans to get started.	10	7	6	8	2	7	5	0	n/a	4
In the driveway I've tentatively begun doing some things that look promising.	7	6	6	8	19	5	14	11	n/a	7
In low gear I'm using computer systems for some basic teaching or non-teaching things.	51	54	52	46	44	48	41	41	n/a	46
In high gear I use computer systems for a wide variety of applications in teaching.	10	13	15	18	21	28	32	41	n/a	32
Near my destination I am a sophisticated user, developer, and consultant.	2	2	3	6	1	4	5	4	n/a	4