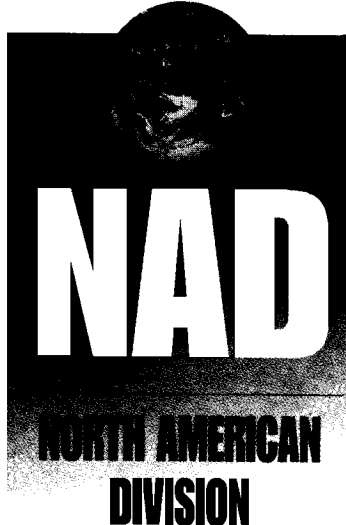


TAKING A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO ADVENTIST EDUCATION 1995-2000 REPORT



Adventist education in the North American Division (NAD) carries out very efficiently the institutional part of its mission. One sociologist suggests that native churches founded in North America go through five phases: incipient organization, formal organization, maximum efficiency, institutionalism, and disintegration.¹ Most Adventist leaders and educators feel the North American church is solidly in stages three and four.

One of our gifts is using this efficiency and institutional structure to help improve Adventist education around the world. The downside is the challenge of reviving the fervor that helped North America create such an excellent system of constituent-supported Adventist education so that it matches the enthusiasm we see in other parts of the world church.

Enrollment trends indicate that our colleges and universities have reached their highest enrollments since the peak years in the 1970s. Our academies have held steady, while we have had declines at the elementary level. Of particular concern is the large number of small one-teacher schools that have closed due to the aging population of rural churches. The growth of urban Adventism among less-affluent, first-generation immigrants will also pose a challenge during the next five years.

The world of business and management uses the term “systems thinking” to describe how to become more effective. At the beginning of the 1995-2000 quinquennium, the NAD executive committee voted a new definition for Adventist education:

The denomination should adopt a systems approach to Christian education by broadening its scope to include all aspects of the church that touch the lives of its youth in such areas as Adventist schools, Sabbath School, Pathfinders, Adventist Youth, Adventist Junior Youth, summer camps, and other youth programs.

Peter Senge, one of the leading theorists

Richard Osborn is Vice-President for Education of the North American Division in Silver Spring, Maryland.



How has our division attempted to implement this vision with efficiency and institutional resources? The NAD director of education became a vice-president coordinating both K-12 and higher education. But more important, he and his associates actively collaborate with all church departments and administrative areas, rather than focusing only on education. It is generally agreed in our division that Adventist educators work together collaboratively as well as, if not better than, any other church group.

The General Conference Annual Council’s “Total Commitment to God” document generated considerable controversy in North America. Rather than getting mired in complaints, the division contracted with the Hancock Center for Family and Youth Ministry of La Sierra University to develop *Potentials*, practical spiritual-assessment tools for K-12 teachers that include teaching strategies.

Another group developed a Spiritual Master Planning Guide that colleges worldwide could use. A key element in the new collaborative emphasis is promoting Christian service motivated by a love for Jesus Christ. The division offers the Caring Heart Award to its nearly 100 senior academies. Each academy nominates the student best exemplifying service on campus, who is then awarded a \$500 certificate at a public ceremony. The funds, which can be applied toward tuition or a mission project, are matched by a U.S. Government foundation that promotes service. This has helped give service the same kind of recognition as academic or athletic achievement.

The use of technology in Adventist education has captivated the imagination of educators and generous donors. The NAD’s education World Wide Web site (<http://www.nadeducation.adventist.org>) provides a helpful network for the world of religious education. It includes maps, school/college information, statistics, policies, links to other Adventist education Web sites, and a job bank. Equally important is the development of curriculum resources that can be accessed from the Internet. The division-funded Circle project based at Andrews University (<http://circle.adventist.org>) will contain a listing of all curriculum materials developed by conferences, unions, and the division and will eventually include a downloadable index of ma-

of systems thinking, suggests that

Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing inter-relationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static “snapshots. . .” All are concerned with a shift of mind from seeing parts to seeing wholes, from seeing people as helpless reactors to seeing them as active participants in shaping their reality, from reacting to the present to creating the future.²

In other words, “Adventist education” embraces more than operating church schools, academies, and colleges. It includes every opportunity the church has to provide religious education to its young people, whether they attend church schools, public or private schools, or are being home schooled. Families and local congregations form an integral and essential part of this system.

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Students from Atlantic Union College (South Lancaster, Massachusetts) do problem-solving on the computer.

terials from other church divisions.

“Adventist Education for the 21st Century” (AE21) is an innovative K-12 distance learning project sponsored by North America in close cooperation with the Southern Union and Florida Conference with special funding from Versacare. This three-year pilot project initially provided distributed education via digital satellite and then by ISDN lines to students in small schools across the division. An integrated curriculum was developed just for this program. Higher education is now developing an Adventist Distance Education Consortium to unify various approaches. As the quinquennium ends, the NAD, in collaboration with Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries, is hiring a full-time distance-education coordinator who will develop strategies for using technology to bring Adventist education and evangelism to new people groups worldwide.

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Cooperative learning between teachers and students is imperative in the college experience. A student gets individualized attention from a chemistry teacher at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Whenever our division develops materials, books, guides, policies, or other resources, we keep in mind ways for them to benefit students in a variety of locations, including other divisions. Examples of such materials produced during this quinquennium include a new elementary and secondary Bible textbook series; updated curriculum guidelines; revised teacher-certification procedures; a correspondence course in religion offered by Home Study International for public school students; a new narrative edition for school accreditation; a video designed to recruit non-Adventist students called *Safe & Sound*; a series of Adventist heritage stories developed by the Lake

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Damian Toews and two of her students at Ketchum Adventist Junior Academy in Vinita, Oklahoma.

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A student from Greater Boston Academy, Stoneham, Massachusetts, visits a resident at the nearby Life Care Center.

A 3rd grader at Nome Adventist School in Alaska proudly displays his art project, a tie-dyed T-shirt.

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A student from Walla Walla College (College Place, Washington) helps an elementary pupil with his classwork.

A student holds her prized ladybug, part of her project at the Douglasville Adventist School's science fair in Georgia.

Student volunteers from Southwestern Adventist University (Keene, Texas) prepare for a day of digging at the site of a new church building in Tugur Mures, Romania, during their spring break.

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Picnic Day combines the physical and the social for students at William A. Kirlew Junior Academy in Miami, Florida.

Grade 4 students at Browning Elementary School in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, learned about fire safety and home evacuations during Fire Prevention Week.

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A National Honor Society induction service in Bermuda.

Class begins with prayer at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee.

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Mrs. Damian Toews gives personal attention to a student at Ketchum Adventist Junior Academy in Vinita, Oklahoma.

Union; a monthly teacher's bulletin prepared by the Atlantic Union; and a weekly E-mail newsletter for principals and chaplains from Piece of the Pie Ministry. Much of the work in secondary education has centered around the report of the Curriculum Futures Commission, "Focus on Adventist Curriculum for the 21st Century" (FACT21). Detailed descriptions of the preferred teaching practices identified in this report will be available online for Adventists everywhere to use.

During the past five years, the NAD has tested an informal, collaborative approach to tertiary education, using a Higher Education Cabinet. A Com-

A student from Loma Linda University (Loma Linda, California) discusses an X-ray with a young patient.

mission on Collaboration is beginning to look for grass-roots ways for our colleges/universities to cooperate with one another. For example, the new open recruiting policies of the division allow colleges to do limited recruiting in one another's territory, thus giving students more information and choices. Another major development has been a new process for accreditation developed in close cooperation with the General Conference Educa-

tion Department. Since all of our colleges have extensive outside regional accrediting visits, the new approach calls for denominational accreditation teams to focus on the church-related part of the institution's mission.

The greatest challenge facing higher education in the next five years will be human resource issues since the aging of the professoriate will require us to find many committed Adventist pro-

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Two students doing dissection in biology class at Sandy Lake Academy in Bedford, Nova Scotia.

Students who attended the 1999 Michigan Conference Prayer Conference visited 16 churches and preached, then did nursing-home visits in the afternoon.

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Spiritual leadership training at Georgia-Cumberland Academy in Calhoun, Georgia, is directed by Ron Priest, Don Keele, Greg Harper, and Shaunessey Cargile.

Students at North Okanagan Junior Academy in Armstrong, British Columbia, constructed a "volcano."

continues to provide an opportunity for NAD students to study in other countries, as well as benefits for the schools where they enroll. All-time high enrollments in this program illustrate our young people's interest in a broader global mission.

As North America begins a new quinquennium, we pray that God will help us continue to use maximum efficiency and institutionalism to maintain excellence in Adventist education while sharpening our focus on mission. ✍

Students at Red River Valley Junior Academy in Winnipeg, Manitoba, enjoy studying a Bible assignment together.

fessors with doctorates. A major point has been discussion of the church's remuneration system for higher education.

Adventist Colleges Abroad

REFERENCES

1. David Moberg has developed this sociological model, which was explained by George Knight in "Adventism, Institutionalism, and the Challenge of Secularization," *Ministry* (June 1992), pp. 6-10, 29.
2. Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday Currency, 1990), pp. 68, 69.

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