



LEADING THE JOURNEY

An E-newsletter on EXCELLENCE in Leadership

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Evaluating Curriculum and Instruction

Leadership, NAD Principals' Handbook (excerpt)

The principal should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program. A variety of evaluative methods should be used, such as:

- Mapping the curriculum
- Conducting exit interviews
- Administering graduate follow-up studies
- Monitoring subject-area trends
- Assessing student learning through performances, demonstrations, writing samples, portfolios, and exhibits
- Surveying stakeholder groups (e.g., students, parents, constituents)
- Reviewing visiting committee reports
- Analyzing course outlines
- Observing instruction

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Making Data Work

*Lyle Bennett, Vice-Principal and Lead Teacher
Rio Lindo Adventist Academy*

There has always been data in the schools where I have worked. It just didn't make much difference.

I remember once each year all the teachers looked at the standardized scores for our students. I don't remember a process with any particular outcome. I do remember staff, including myself, offering up the same excuses as to why student didn't get higher test scores. The excuses were the same every year. Most frequently, we blamed the test and/or the students. Data didn't lead to improved student learning.

To be fair, I remember some administrators asked us to use the scores to improve our teaching. But most often this led to teachers making more excuses. "See, Johnny can't read at 10th level. So that is why he is failing in my class. He can't read the textbook."

As a school, we had never been asked to systematically and school-wide address the learning needs of our students. I suppose there was fear about the financial implications if learning needs were truly taken seriously. We were not asked to change. And it was comfortable to just keep doing the same thing each year. So no one really rocked the boat.

In 2010, Rio Lindo Adventist Academy staff committed to continuous school improvement. Lord Kelvin is credited as saying, "If you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it." Data was now important.

We were guided in our thinking about data by Dr. Victoria Bernhardt of California State University, Chico. She pointed out that there are **four areas of data** to consider when thinking about

Evaluating NAD Textbooks

*Carol Campbell, Director, Elementary Education and Curriculum
North American Division*

Textbooks are a primary resource for supporting student learning. The evaluation of textbooks prior to recommended use in K-12 Adventist schools across the North American Division (NAD) is done to ensure alignment with Adventist Education Standards. Textbooks are selected or written to closely reflect an Adventist worldview. This curricular lens accepts the Bible as the standard by which everything is measured. Textbooks selected for use in Adventist schools should help students:

- Be thoughtful, conscientious Christians, and law-abiding citizens
- Attain curriculum goals for spiritual ideals, beliefs, attitudes, and values of the Church
- Understand and experience development of the whole person
- Build Christian characters and an interest in serving others
- Generate interest and understanding of developmentally appropriate issues
- Nurture an appreciation of the true, the honest, and the beautiful
- Answer questions on the origin, nature, and destiny of humankind within the context of the Adventist worldview.

Textbooks are reviewed, developed and adopted by the NAD Curriculum Committee. Each summer NAD-coordinated committees of classroom teachers, school/conference leaders,

Making Data Work

school improvement.

Demographics: Who are the students, the staff and the school's constituencies?

Thanks to our opening report, we had some of this data. But it wasn't very deep or broad. Little of it represented change over time.

For example, we knew English was a second language for our international students. But we didn't know who among our American students had English as their second language. So we started asking and recording these results. We changed our application form to reflect this new area of data. Other demographic data was recorded for the first time.

Perceptions: What did our students, parents and staff think about different aspects of our school experience?

Of course, there had been surveys done every six years for the accreditation process. But as we looked at these results, we realized the questions were different every time with no consistency. With some professional help, we developed consistent surveys for students, parents, and staff. We started giving these surveys every year. We began tracking the results over time.

Student learning: What are students learning? How does their learning progress over time? What areas of learning could we best address school-wide?

We immediately realized that with the high level of new students at our school each year the usual reports were inadequate to tell us what we wished to know. Therefore, we developed new ways to have this data become more meaningful. Tracking cohorts over time began to hush our excuses and point to needed changes.

School Process: To what extent do the different school processes support the student learning outcomes?

I had never before considered this as data to be collected. We soon realized that student outcomes were a reflection of our many and various processes. We began by using Dr. Bernhardt's method of self-evaluation to collect data.

But all the data in the world means nothing if it is never processed or decisions made without thinking about what direction the data points. As we developed more meaningful data, we began to find meaningful ways to use our data.

But the most powerful way data has impacted our thinking is we now look at data from classrooms. What exactly do we expect our students to learn? How do we know that they have learned? How do we adjust our teaching to ensure that all our students are learning? This classroom learning data is so immediate. It is effective to support student success. So now Rio Lindo's regular professional development focuses on supporting our teacher's ability to engage this data.

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and higher education professors review published textbooks or work on developing texts for various subject areas, on a five-to-seven year cycle. The summer committee forwards a textbook adoption recommendation to NAD K-12 Curriculum Committee which makes a decision in December. New textbook lists are posted early in the new calendar year to facilitate plans for purchasing and implementing new textbooks in the next academy school year. Visit the NAD website to access the current textbook list. (See: <http://adventisteducation.org/curriculum/>)

The textbooks are important learning resources that assist students with learning. The big ideas and essential questions of life should lead students to develop a personal worldview. This gives meaning to the knowledge learned and a vision of how to use the skills acquired. In Adventist schools, textbooks and instructional material closely aligned with Adventist Christian beliefs and values are essential in leading students to understand that: (a) God created, (b) Satan distorted and destroyed, (c) God rescues and redeems, and (d) God re-creates a new earth. This biblical worldview equips students to assess the authenticity and relevance of their learning, and to intelligently utilize the knowledge and skills learned. Our teaching and our textbooks should add more than what is common to American education. They must provide something of eternal value.

The NAD Curriculum Committee classifies textbook adoptions and other instructional resources in six levels as follows:

Level #1—Adopted for basic use. The materials are required to be adopted for use in Adventist schools.

Level #2—Approved for basic, supplementary, or enrichment use. The materials are highly recommended but not required for use in Adventist schools.

Level #3—Approved for use in pilot or experimental programs. The materials may need field testing and may be used in pilot or experimental programs. Such material may be returned to the NAD Curriculum Committee for consideration and re-classification.

Level #4—Approved for information only. The materials are acceptable and may be used in Adventist schools as desired or needed.

Level #5—Approved in concept, but referred for additional study. The materials are NOT to be utilized until revised/edited, re-reviewed and re-classified.

Level #6—Reviewed, but not approved. The materials placed in this category are NOT approved for use in Adventist schools.

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