

# What Do We Know About the Quality and Commitment of Adventist Educators?

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We've all heard them—the horror stories about incompetent or poorly trained teachers, administrators, or professors at Adventist institutions. Those rumors and anecdotes about the quality of Adventist education fly throughout the church at large and within the educational system as well. But what are the facts? Profile 2004 (see “The Profile Studies: A Tradition of Inquiry” on page 15) provides evidence that helps to paint a more wholistic picture of Adventist educators in the North American Division. And that picture reveals a well-qualified and committed workforce.



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Profile 2004 sought to investigate the perceptions and concerns of educators throughout the NAD. We therefore contacted K-12 classroom teachers; educational administrators at the

school, conference, union, and division levels; and teacher educators at NAD colleges and universities.

Since e-mail addresses often change, and electronic lists may contain typos, making the messages undeliverable, the research team decided to oversample by inviting all K-12 teachers, administrators at the various levels, and teacher educators with e-mail addresses to participate in the study. We were able to obtain 541 useable surveys this time, about the same number of participants as previous Profile studies, whose contacts were made by mail.

The Profile 2004 survey collected informa-

tion on three measures of teacher quality and asked for nominations of excellent educators throughout the U.S., Canada, and Bermuda. Indicators of quality included the highest degree earned, current certifications, and continuing education (work toward new or renewed certification). Analysis of these three indicators reveals that NAD educators on the whole are well trained and experienced.

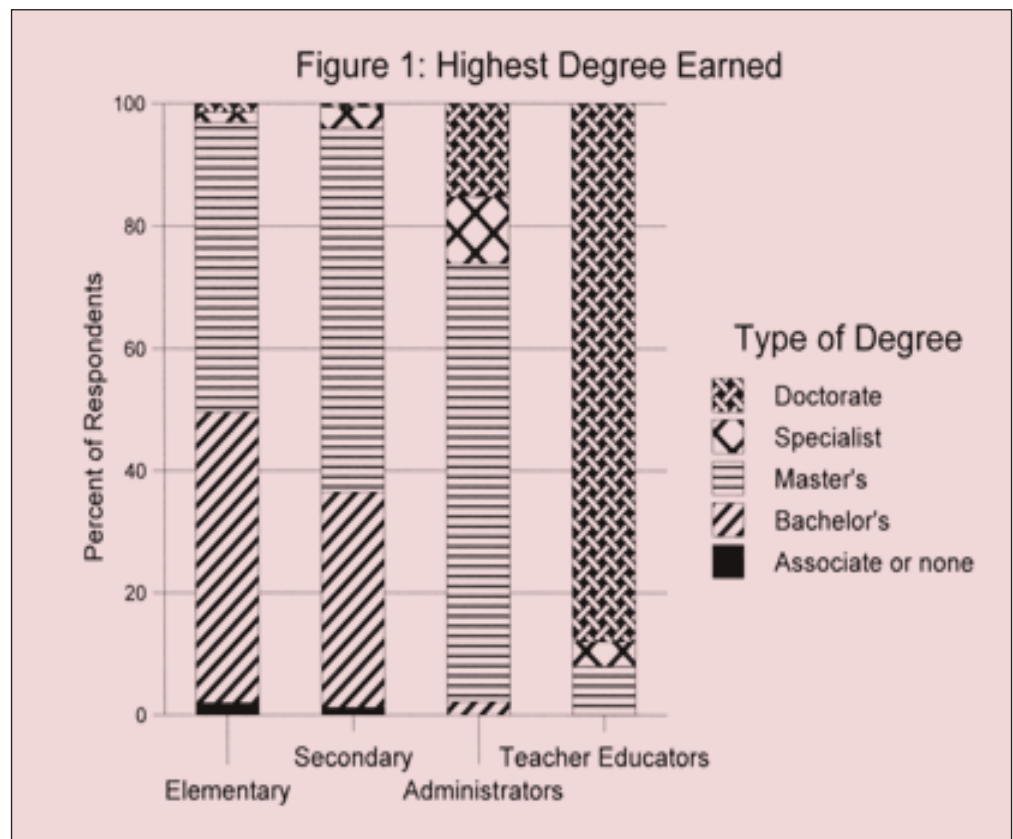
### Degrees Held

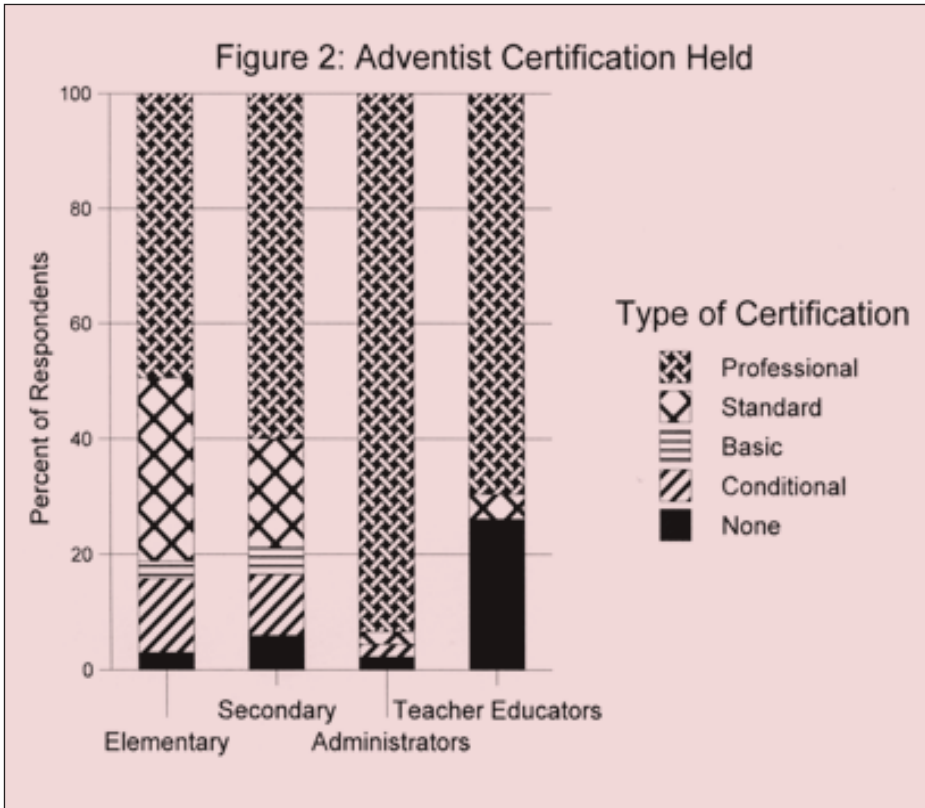
In terms of the highest degree completed, patterns were evident, based on the respondents' job descriptions. Secondary teachers tended to hold more advanced degrees than elementary teachers. Likewise, system-level administrators tended to hold more advanced degrees than K-12 administrators; and teacher educators, for the most part, had earned more advanced degrees than all other respondents.

Elementary teachers with bachelor's degrees (47.6 percent) only slightly outnumbered those with Master's degrees (47.2 percent) (see Figure 1). More than half (59.5 percent) of academy educators indicated they held a Master's degree, while 35.3 percent held a bachelor's degree. More than two-thirds of system-level administrators (71.7 percent) had Master's degrees; 26.1 percent held degrees beyond that level. As would be expected, teacher educators had the largest percentage (88.0 percent) of doctoral degrees. The fact that more than 60 percent of all respondents had earned Master's degrees or higher reflects the traditional Adventist emphasis on preparation for service through education.

### Teaching Certification

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America issues teaching certificates to persons who meet minimum standards. In each category, the largest percentage of respondents indicated they currently held the Professional Certificate, the highest teaching qualification issued by the church (see Figure 2). For K-12 teachers, the second highest number of respon-





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dents held the Standard Certificate, which requires completion of a bachelor's degree and course requirements plus three years of successful teaching in the Adventist system. A little more than 10 percent of the K-12 respondents indicated that they held Conditional Certificates, typically issued to those who have completed a bachelor's degree or perhaps even hold a state teaching certificate but have not completed the specific Adventist requirements for certification.

Forty-five percent of all respondents indicated they held no form of state or provincial certification. This could explain some of the negative comments about Adventist teachers' qualifications if people equate the lack of a state/provincial certificate with inadequate teaching preparation. However, some states and provinces do not require private school teachers to hold state credentials, so the church has not pushed teachers to maintain dual certifications except where it is required.

### Continuing Education

The third measure of teacher quality included in this study was continuing education. The largest number of respondents in each category reported that they were working toward renewal of their current certificate. The second-largest group of K-12 teachers reported working toward their Professional Certificate. A large number of K-12 teachers and system-level administrators said they

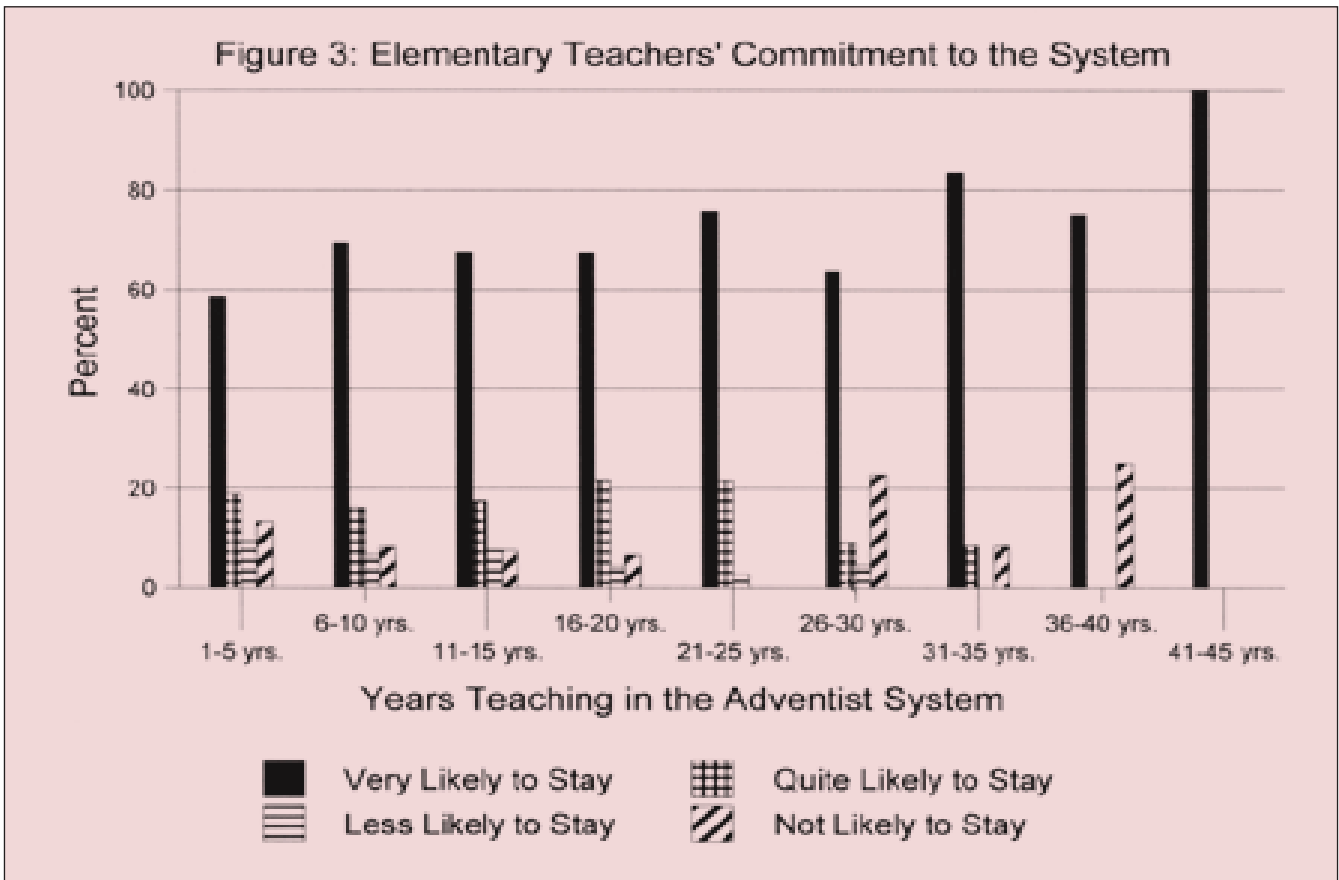


Figure 4: Secondary Teachers' Commitment to the System

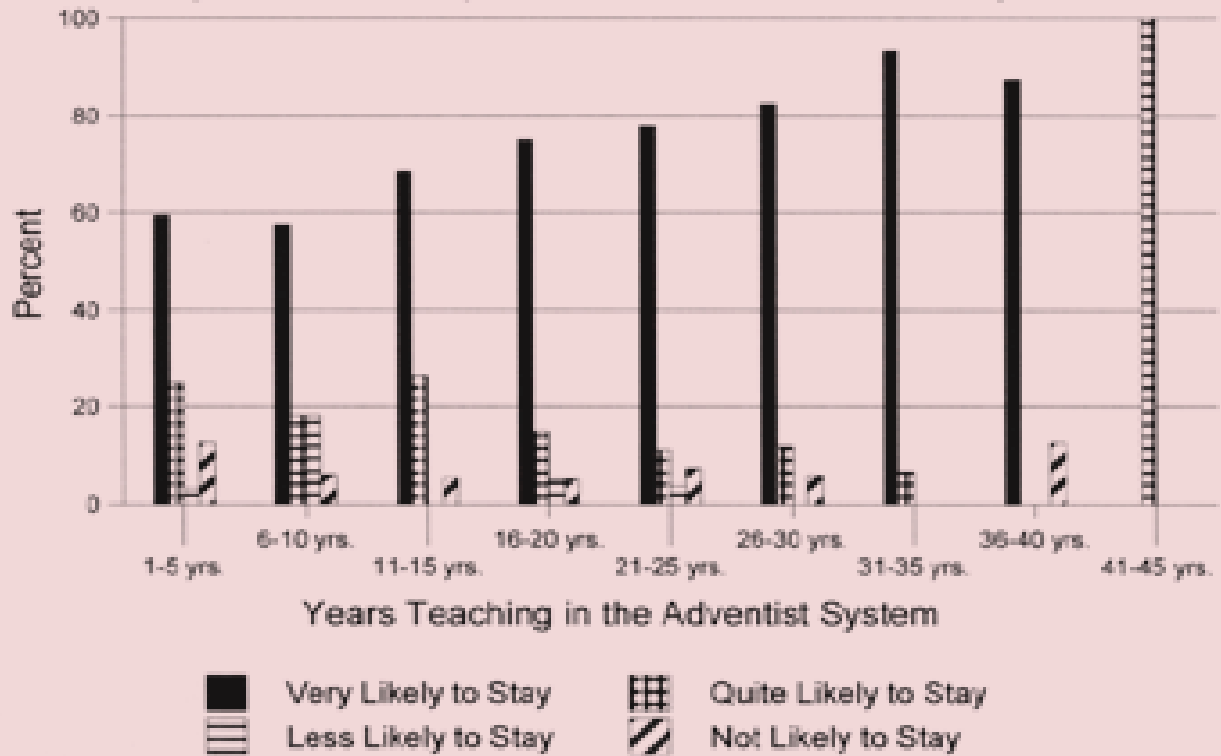


Figure 5: Elementary Teachers' Commitment to Present School

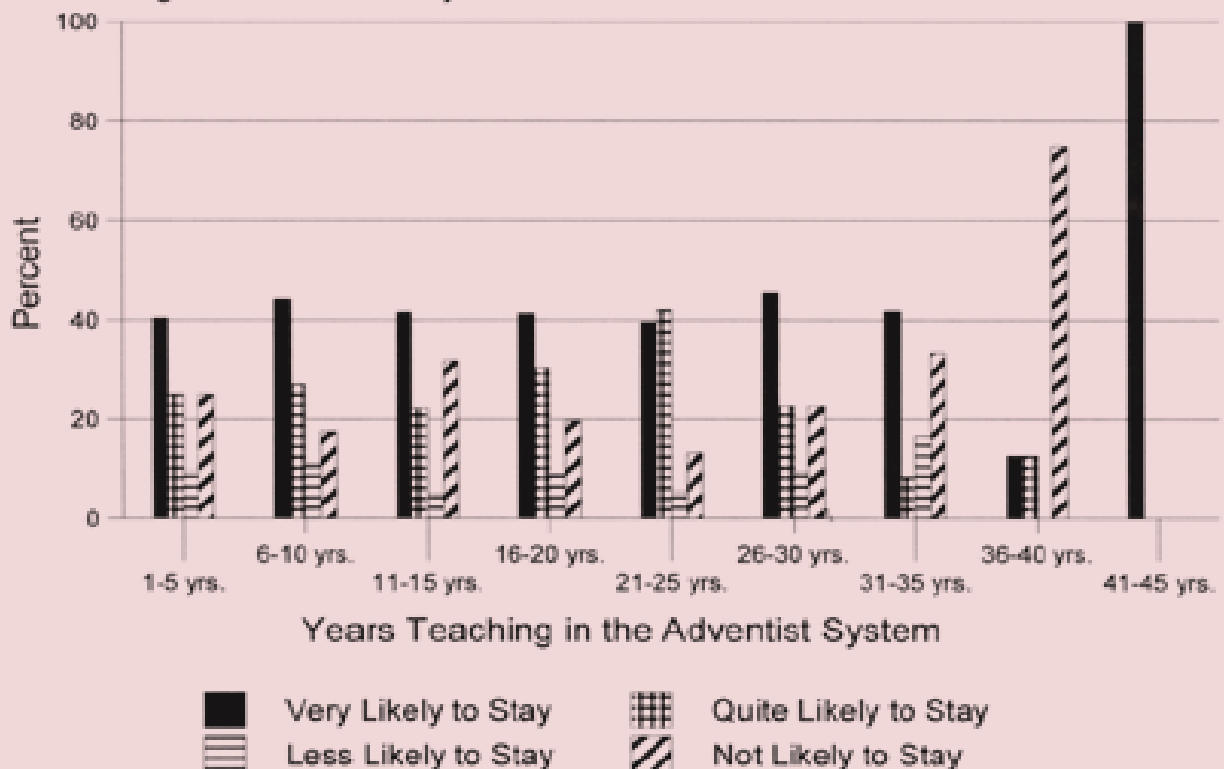
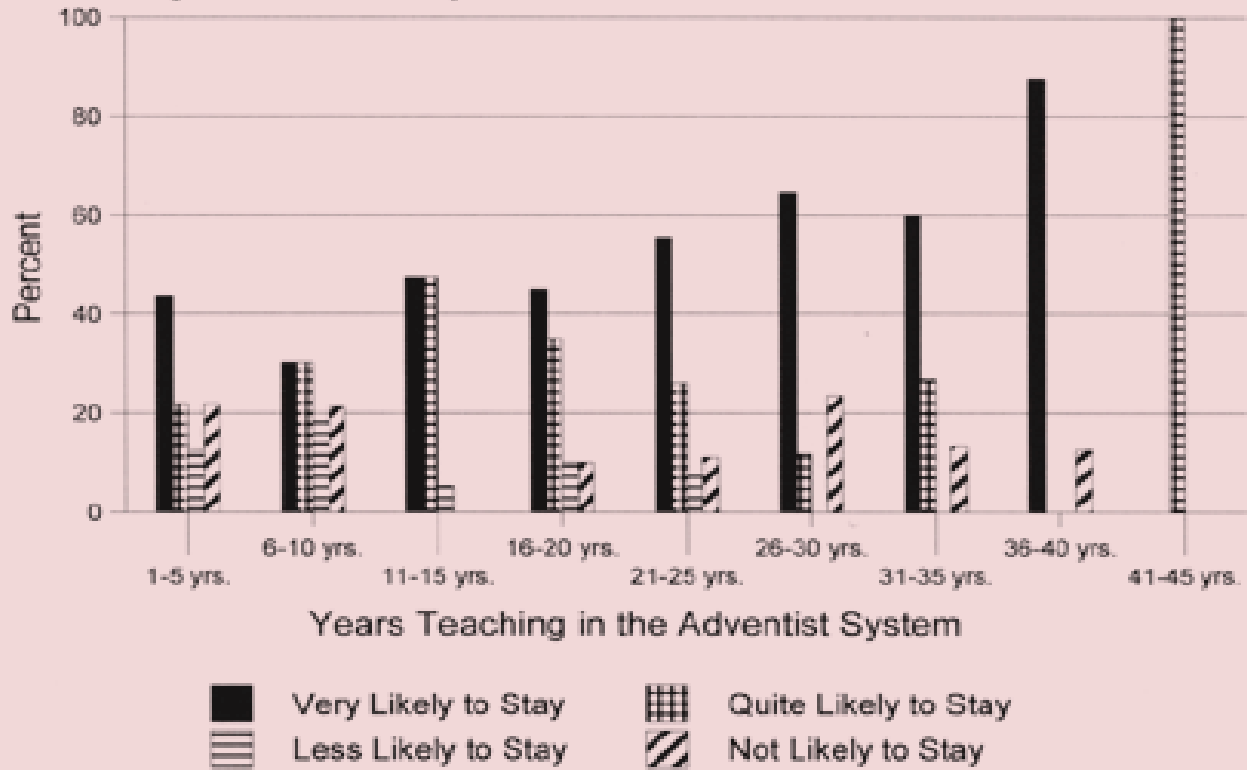




Figure 6: Secondary Teachers' Commitment to Present School



were not working on any certificate. There may be several explanations for this response pattern. Two reasons could be: Respondents partway through their certification period would not need to work toward renewal for another year or two. Other respondents might be planning to retire before their current certificate expires.

#### Commitment to Adventist Education

Several survey questions measured teachers' commitment to the Adventist educational system: (1) How many years have you worked in the system? (2) How likely are you to stay at your present school for the next three years? and (3) How likely are you to stay at any Adventist school for the next three years?

The average elementary teacher had worked 15.25 years for the church; the average secondary teacher 16.74 years. The median number of years reported by elementary teachers was 14, for secondary teachers, it was 16 years. These values indicate a fairly even distribution of less- and more-experienced teachers.

For both elementary and secondary teachers, commitment to the Adventist system increased with years of experience in the system until retirement age (see Figures 3 and 4). Perhaps those less committed to the system are weeded out as time goes on, and teachers nearing retirement may feel reluctant to leave a system in which they have invested so much time and energy. More than 60 percent of K-12 teachers indicated they would very likely or quite likely stay at their present school, and an even higher percentage indicated they would stay with the Adventist system. For elementary teachers, this number dropped after 31 years in the system.

## The Profile Studies: A Tradition of Inquiry

Since 1987, the North American Division Curriculum Committee (NADCC) and Office of Education have collaborated with a team of researchers from Andrews University to conduct a biennial study of Seventh-day Adventist education in Bermuda, Canada, and the United States. For the 2003 Profile cycle, the team was expanded to include educational researchers from across the NAD. As a result of the expansion of the research team and technical problems associated with administering the survey online, the 9th Profile Study was not conducted until May 2004 and was renamed Profile 2004.

The purpose of the Profile studies is to survey a wide range of NAD educational workers in order to understand their perceptions about Adventist curriculum and current educational issues. These studies are particularly important to K-12 teachers because they provide an organized way for these persons to express their opinions about the church's textbooks and resource materials. Profile results are presented to the NADCC to help that body make informed curricular decisions. Additionally, the results of the Profile studies are shared with Adventist teachers through publication in the *JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION*.

For each Profile study, surveys are completed by K-12 teachers and administrators; conference, union, and division educational administrators; as well as teacher educators at the 12 NAD colleges and universities offering accredited teacher-education programs. In 2004, for the first time, the Profile survey was administered online through the *CIRCLE* Website. While this made it accessible for any Adventist educator with an Internet connection, the survey software's limitations led to many delays and several corrupted items.

The largest group to say they probably would not stay in their present school were K-12 teachers with five or fewer years of teaching experience (25 percent). Still, only 15 percent indicated they were unlikely to stay in the Adventist system (see Figures 5 and 6). For teachers with 6-10 years of experience, 18 percent indicated they would not likely stay at their present school, while only 10 percent said they probably would not stay within the Adventist system. These figures are consistent with turnover rates in American public schools.\* Only as teachers approach retirement age, after 26 or more years of service, does this pattern change.

By the time K-8 respondents had worked 26-30 years in the system, just as many teachers said they were leaving their present school as well as the Adventist system. Qualitative data from Profile 2004 indicate this is primarily because of retirement plans. (This pattern was not seen in responses from secondary teachers.)

It is clear from the Profile 2004 data that a large majority of NAD educators are well educated, properly certified, and committed to employment within the Adventist educational system. As the church faces the challenges

of filling every position in every school with highly qualified and committed people, we must remember the importance of partnering (See "The Quest for Exemplary Educators" on page 17). Our administrators must partner with Adventist teacher-preparation institutions to encourage more Adventist youth to go into teaching. We must work together with our members and students. And most important, we must partner with Christ for true transformation to occur, and to accomplish our goals. ✍



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\* Linda Darling-Hammond, "Keeping Good Teachers: Why It Matters, What Leaders Can Do," *Educational Leadership* 60:8 (2003), pp. 6-13.

### Previous Profile Studies in the *JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION*

Brantley, Paul. "Curriculum and Teaching in Adventist Schools: Results of the Third North American Division Poll" 54:3 (February/March 1992), pp. 21-25.

Brantley, Paul S. and Larry Burton. "Curriculum and Teaching in Adventist Elementary and Secondary Schools: The Fourth Biennial Poll of NAD Educators" 56:5 (Summer 1994), pp. 17-20.

Brantley, Paul S. "Curriculum and Instruction in North American Schools: Results From the Profile '95 Survey of SDA Educators" 59:2 (December 1996/January 1997), pp. 14-19.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Curriculum and Instruction in North

American Division Schools: Results From the Profile '97 Study" 61:2 (December 1998/January 1999), pp. 26-32.

\_\_\_\_\_ and Young Hwangbo. "Curriculum and Instruction in North American Schools: Results From the Profile '99 Survey of Adventist Educators" 63:1 (October/November 2000), pp. 4-9.

\_\_\_\_\_ and Alfredo Ruiz. "Profile '01: Results From the Eighth Biennial Study of Adventist Educators" 64:2 (December 2001/January 2002), pp. 16-24.

## The Quest for Exemplary Educators

**T**he final item on the Profile 2004 survey asked respondents to identify persons who were doing an exemplary job of developing and maintaining partnerships between their academy, pastors, and parents. Many respondents gave reasons for nominating specific individuals or schools: individuals' spirituality, exemplary work in teaching and learning, making a difference in the lives of students, communication with parents, partnership between schools, collaboration with church, school, and community, helping struggling families, promoting Adventist education, rapport between teachers and students, exemplary leadership, maintaining quality standards, inclusion, and active involvement in the community.

Ninety-two individuals responded to this item. They named six institutions and 67 individuals they felt met the stated criteria. The individuals nominated represented 22 additional institutions. These nominees came from across the North American Division. At least one person mentioned was not an employee of the church, but rather a local lay member. Another nominee was a church pastor. The nominated individuals and institutions are listed below. They represent the good things that are occurring in our educational system and deserve our affirmation.

### Institutions

Andrews Academy (Michigan)  
 Avalon Adventist Academy  
 (Port Hardy, British Columbia)  
 Collegedale Academy (Tennessee)  
 Fraser Valley Adventist Academy  
 (Aldergrove, British Columbia)  
 Milo Adventist Academy (Oregon)  
 Tri City Junior Academy (Pasco,  
 Washington)

### Individuals

Aaron, Robin  
 Anderson, Richard  
 Bair, Timothy  
 Baker, Glen  
 Becker, Mark  
 Branon, Kathy  
 Brayton, Myrna C.  
 Burgin-Hall, Judy  
 Carey, Phil  
 Cheeseman, Jane  
 Cone, Jesse  
 Coon, Jay  
 Corbin, Gary  
 Cornell, Mr. (Highland Academy,  
 Tennessee)

Cox, Michelle  
 Crabtree, Lynden  
 Crosby, Gale  
 Dawes, Sonia  
 DeVore, Candy  
 Dudley, Don  
 Dunston, Lowell  
 Farmer, William  
 Gabrys, Steve  
 Gardner, David  
 Gatama, Peter  
 Graham, Denise  
 Hall, David  
 Hallam, Keith  
 Hansen, Lyle  
 Harter, Alex  
 Holm, Mark  
 Honey, Kevin  
 Housing, Sherry  
 Hurd, Alan  
 Jamieson, Tracey  
 Jeffery, Dave  
 Kossick, Kevin  
 Kruger, Judy  
 Lay, Andrew  
 Lee, Deb  
 Lee, Tom

Lenz, Ruth  
 Lewis, Sharon  
 Light, Del  
 Litchfield, Le Claire  
 Livesay, Barbara  
 Longhofer, Wayne  
 Lund, Connie  
 Mathis, Don  
 McKenzie, Roo  
 Messenger, Jacqueline  
 McGuire, Tommy  
 Moore, Wanda  
 Newhart, Glen  
 Nugent, Betty  
 Pega, Wendy  
 Roehl, Louis  
 Shaw, Ken  
 Sheridan  
 Short, Don  
 Smith, Ken  
 Smith, Kristie  
 Smith, Wayne  
 States, Ernest  
 Turner, Ron  
 Yount, Lorene  
 Ziesmer, Craig