EDUCATION Matters
in the Southwestern Union Conference
December 2024
Volume 29 • Issue 1

Why Professional Development Matters

Seven PK–12 educators from the Southwestern Union recently met in Denver, Colorado for the ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) Annual Convention. ASCD is a global education organization focused on empowering educators to advance and elevate learning to meet the needs of all students—equitably and wholly. Several SWUC educators are nominated by their superintendents each year to attend this premier convention.

This is just one example of ways in which the SWUC Office of Education supports its educators in their quest for knowledge. Research confirms that the most important factor contributing to a student's success in school is the quality of teaching. Thus, schools should be places where both adults and students learn. When educators learn, students learn more.

In PK–12 schools in the Southwestern Union, professional development is the strategy schools use to ensure that educators continue to strengthen their practice throughout their career. Professional development yields three levels of results: (1) educators learn new knowledge and skills, (2) educators use what they learn to improve teaching and learning, and (3) student learning and achievement increase because educators use what they learned in professional development.

Since improvement requires change and all change requires learning, it's important to identify and develop structures and processes for professional learning that build the collective capacity of staff to support a culture of change. Professional development can take many forms, but the most effective and sustainable structure engages teams of teachers to focus on the needs of their students. Educators learn and problem solve together in order to ensure all students achieve success.

This process is often embedded in what is referred to as a Professional Learning Community or PLC. A PLC is a collaborative culture that is committed to continuous improvement and collective responsibility for teaching and learning, through active learning, modeling, and coaching. As one researcher notes, a PLC facilitates the building of human capital through social capital which over time yields decisional capital. An added benefit of PLCs is that professional development occurs in the context of educators' daily work; they benefit most by learning in the setting where they can immediately apply what they learn.

During the 2022–2023 school year, the SWUC Office of Education began a two-year onboarding process for educators to engage in PLCs. Professional development is a critical component of the process, with curriculum-based learning focused on a set of math competencies. Initial data indicates that the process is having a significant impact on student learning. In addition, educators who have participated in PLCs are beginning to define learning as a "two-way street:" **student learning depends on every teacher learning all the time**!

Features of Effective Professional Learning

- Evidence-informed. It does not just use what seems intuitively right or superficially fun. It scrupulously refers to sound research.

- Collaborative. It is not mainly based on individual study in conferences or workshops. It promotes collaborative professionalism through team participation, joint planning, and collaborative inquiry.

- Embedded. Mostly, it is not packaged into after-school workshops or external conference events. It occurs in teachers' everyday work itself, through practice, coaching, feedback, and experimentation.

- Continuous. It does not rely on isolated or episodic workshops or training sessions. It operates sustainably over a long period that involves regular engagements with desired new practices.



Shirley, D. & Hargreaves, A. (2024). *The age of identity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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PURPOSE

Education by Design Scholarship—EbD scholarship applications are due; send to jpage@swuc.org.

Education by Design

Recruitment of Teachers—Two initiatives regarding the recruitment of teachers have been developed: SWUC Teacher Education Scholarship and SWAU Intro to Teaching Dual Credit Course. Contact Dr. The at SWAU if an academy would like to offer the Intro to Teaching Course.

SWUC Teacher Incentive—A retention bonus of $5000 will be given at the end of each of the first three years of teaching to SWAU teacher education graduates hired by the SWUC conferences. To be eligible for the bonus each year, the teacher must continue teaching for the conference the following year. The bonus is to be paid directly on student loans or paid as a lump sum to the teacher if the teacher does not have student loans.

Aspiring Teacher Club—Scholarships are available to inspire the next generation of teachers from among our academy students. Contact Jackie Downs (jdowns@sffcfoundation.org) from the SFFC Foundation if you are interested.

Perspectives in Adventist Education—This podcast series, recorded at the 2023 NAD Teacher's Convention, features insightful conversations with educators and thought leaders on crucial topics like integrating faith and science, supporting student mental health, and harnessing the power of technology. Whether you're an educator, parent, or simply curious about the Adventist approach to education, this podcast offers a unique glimpse into how Adventist educators are shaping the future generation. Tune in to hear inspiring stories, practical strategies, and thought-provoking discussions that illuminate the transformative power of Adventist Education.

Listeners can access the podcast in four places - on the website, on Apple, and on Spotify, and on Youtube and Youtube Music.
Listen in your browser: https://adventisteducation.podbean.com/
Listen on your Favorite Podcast App:
Apple: https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/perspectives-in-adventist-education/id1769955826
Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/show/3Kh2Y5vZjV7KRWW7bKLoai
Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnPjGoqHCdBDY2yLf4dysWCZAbKvRRVsB

A discipleship guide for the 16 Myers-Briggs personality types—The Myers-Briggs type indicator (MBTI) is one of the most popular personality inventories in the world. Many Fortune 500 companies use it as a tool to hire and place people in positions where they can be most productive. For followers of Jesus, the MBTI can be a powerful tool to help you identify how God has made you, and what that means for your relationships with others.

PLAN

Library Resources—The Southwestern Adventist University Library has developed a collection of open-source resources for academy students that can be found here.

Elementary Curriculum Timeline—See the attached chart for timeline information.

Library and Science Materials—Funds are available annually to junior and senior academies for library and science materials. Junior Academy Library Subsidy Application; Junior Academy Science Subsidy Application; Senior Academy Library Subsidy Application; Senior Academy Science Subsidy Application

AEtech Updates—See the attachment for the latest Adventist Education Technology (AEtech) updates.

Creative Products 4 Reading—Email Melissa Hanson at creativeproducts4reading@gmail.com to gain access to an Orton-Gillingham Based Reading Program.

Every Kid Outdoors—The U.S. National Park Service hosts the Every Kid Outdoors initiative for fourth-grade students. Teachers can submit requests for all fourth-grade students to receive a free National Park Pass. The pass is valid from September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025. Activities and resource guides are available to use with students to learn about the parks. Use this resource to encourage students to stay active and learn about the environment.

"I Love U Guys" Foundation—Programs for crisis response and post-crisis reunification are used in more than 50,000 schools, districts, departments, agencies, organizations and communities around the world. They are created through the research-based best practices of school administrators, psychologists, public space safety experts, families, and first responders.

Early Childhood—The CREATION Kids Early Childhood Education Curriculum is in the process of being revised over the next two years.

The Early Childhood Developmental Learning Standards have been revised.

Generative AI Guidelines—The NAD Generative AI Guidelines are attached. They may be adjusted to fit your context.

K-2 Phonics—UFLI and Heggerty (Bridge to Reading) have been adopted as the K-2 word recognition component of Pathways. Training will be announced.

Lifeline—Updated Lifeline supports for multi-grade administrators is available-- https://adventisteducation.org/subsites/multigrade/overview-3

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PRACTICE

PL Funds—Professional learning funds are available for attending a convention, workshop, or webinar every four years.

Webinars—See the attached flyer for 2024–2025 Educator Webinars.

K–12 STEM Summer Institute—See the attached flyer for the STEM Institute.

Science Teachers' Workshop—During the summer or fall of 2025, the Union will collaborate with SWAU to have a workshop for secondary science teachers. Details will be shared when they are available.

ASCD—The annual Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) Convention is June 29–July 2, 2025 in San Antonio.

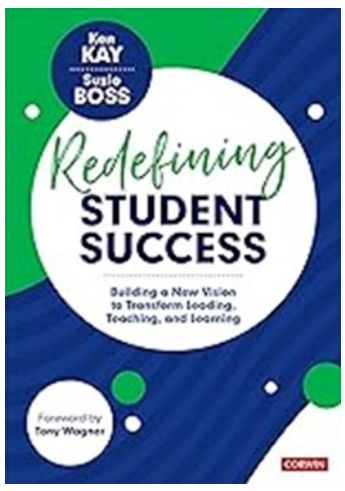
ASDASA—The next NAD ASDASA Convention is February 9–12, 2026 at the Hilton Woodlands.

SWUC Educators' Convention—The next SWUC Convention is August 3–6, 2026 in Frisco, TX.

NAD Educators' Convention—The next NAD Convention is August 7–10, 2028 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center.

Robotics Tournaments
March 25, 2025—Lone Star Camp—Register here.
March 26, 2025—Bentonville, AR—Register here.

Featured Book Review—
Redefining Student Success, 2024



Authors Ken Kay and Suzie Boss focus on the future of learning, requiring bold educational leadership as well as a dramatic redefinition of what it means to be a successful student today. The following are addressed:

- Concrete guidance on how to create a Portrait of a Graduate and a Portrait of an Educator, which will help ensure teachers have a unified vision for student success and professional growth

- Compelling examples of students already engaged in creative, self-directed problem solving around issues that matter to them and their communities, together with stories that illustrate how districts and schools have arrived at their own vision of what education must become

ASI Resources for young preachers in training—https://asiministries.org/newbeginnings/

Mental Health Resources—Set of 7 booklets on mental health issues published by Advent Source.

PRODUCT

Data Cards—The Data Card for 2024–2025 is attached. Please let us know if you would like copies.

Data Profiles—Demographic Data Profiles will be sent by the first of January.

MAP Testing
Winter MAP Testing Window—January 6–24, 2025
Spring MAP Testing Window—April 21–May 9, 2025

Surveys—Student, Staff, and Parent Surveys are scheduled for February 10–21, 2025.

Program Data—Survey Data is available on Union-wide implementation of Continuous School Improvement (CSI) and Standards-based Learning (SBL).

CSI Plans—In addition to a CSI Plan, it is recommended that schools develop the following plans:

Spiritual Master Plan
Marketing and Recruitment Plan
Technology Plan
Emergency Preparedness Plan
Professional Learning Plan
Social Media Policy

Portrait of a Graduate—The 7Cs are being renamed Portrait of a Graduate. Please see the attached flyer.

SOUTHWESTERN UNION

SouthwesternAdventistEducation.com

Contact: Education@SWUC.org