Gargantuan Task Completed

“They said it couldn’t be done, but we did it.”

Collaborating with CognitiveGenesis (CG), Seventh-day Adventist schools collected thousands of pieces of data in the form of surveys and standardized test scores aimed at examining the effectiveness of Adventist education. In November 2008, the last survey was returned. This school year, 2009, the last of four years of standardized test results was collected. All the data needed for analysis is now in hand, and CognitiveGenesis moves on to the next phase of its process—analysis and interpretation.

With the help of conference and school personnel, CognitiveGenesis distributed surveys to 30,000 North American Division elementary and high school students, their parents, teachers and administrators for three years to gather information on school, home, family, church and extra-curricular activities that possibly have an influence on academic achievement.

Surveying students, parents, teachers and administrators was a gargantuan, time-consuming, but necessary process. The amount of data gathered will provide researchers with years of raw material for investigative work.

In addition, standardized achievement and ability test scores were collected for these same students. Using test and survey results covering a multi-year period, researchers will be able to conduct longitudinal as well as descriptive analysis. Schools will continue to give the standardized tests for their own use in monitoring academic progress, but information collection for CognitiveGenesis is complete!

‘A+’ Results

The preliminary testing and survey results are in and are looking good!

- Students in Adventist schools achieve higher than the national norm in all grades tested and in all subjects regardless of class size or number of grades in class.
- The longer a student attends an Adventist school, the higher his/her achievement and ability.
- Students consistently achieve at a higher level than is predicted by their ability as measured by the Cognitive Abilities Test, regardless of school size.
Pastoral Involvement

On the CognitiveGenesis survey, teachers and administrators were asked to rate the perceived involvement of the constituent church pastors within their school. The data is yet to be analyzed, but teachers and principals are telling stories of novel and heart-warming pastoral involvement at their schools.

For example, four constituent churches are connected with Lodi Academy and Elementary Schools. A visitor to the schools noted that each time he visited, a pastor from one of the churches was on campus and involved with the students. Each time it was a pastor from a different church. At one of the churches a large sign was placed on the lawn during the summer inviting people to consider the academy as a good place to send their children to school. The scholarship committee of another of the four churches raised enough money for 15 new students to enroll at the academy this year who otherwise would have had to attend public school.

At Ozark Adventist Elementary School, the pastor of the Gentry church, besides giving a chapel every week, volunteered to collect the lunch money daily as a way of learning the names of each of the 84 students, whom he now greets by name when he sees them.

Whether there is a relationship between this kind of pastoral support and student achievement is not yet known, but the boost to teacher and administrator morale is readily evident. Active pastoral support also sends a clear message to church members that the pastors give high importance to the educational arm of their church.

If you have a pastor who is actively participating with your school, please let us know so that we can pass on what others are doing.

CognitiveGenesis Goes International

It was a big job, but a pleasant one. In September, Dr. Elissa Kido, CG’s project director, participated in an educators’ conference in Cancun, Mexico. Kido, who also serves as professor of curriculum and instruction at La Sierra University, addressed a general session of the first Inter-American Teachers Congress held September 6-10, 2009. More than 900 teachers from 33 countries attended the event. Representatives, ranging from their kindergartens to each of their 12 universities, shared knowledge and learned more about being excellent teachers in Adventist schools.

Dr. Kido spoke to the entire group about the CG Project. She also spoke to the K-12 and university breakout sessions on subsequent days.

At the general session Dr. Kido began her remarks in Spanish. The audience broke out in spontaneous applause when she said that she counted it a privilege to speak to them “in the language of heaven.” Her PowerPoint presentation combined Spanish and English slides to illustrate the results of the study.

End-of-Year Report to NAD

In November 2009, Dr. Kido and Dr. Jerome Thayer presented third-year findings from the four-year project during the North American Division year-end meetings. For the first time the report included longitudinal information.

Don Schneider, president of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, suggested that this is the kind of information parents need to hear, and where better to reach them than at camp meeting. He predicted that the next time he speaks to “this lady” [Dr. Kido], he expects that she will tell him that she has received so many invitations to speak at camp meetings that she cannot accept them all.
The Reason for Choosing National Norms

By the time you read this, there will be an article at www.CognitiveGenesis.org explaining why CG chose to use the 2005 national norms to assess students’ academic performance.

Texico Lay Leadership Heats CG report

The Texico Conference is the first conference to expand discussions of the CG project beyond conference personnel to lay leadership. Dr. Kido spoke to the lay group at the October 31 meeting in Corrales, New Mexico. She reported on the latest findings of the CG project. The lay leadership group includes church clerks, elders, treasurers, leaders of women’s, children’s, and prayer ministries, and Pathfinder leaders.

How Does My Child’s School Rate?

As the news of the results of CG spreads, parents want to know how their child’s school measures up. Annually each school receives achievement information. The school uses that information to adjust the curriculum to match what students need. The school also uses the data to inform parents where their children stand compared to other students in the nation.

A local school can tell parents where the school ranks nationally. Comparing test results of other schools is accurate only if the schools have given the same test in the same time period.

An e-mail from a parent says, “I like what CG is doing. Can the results be published? Publishing local results is up to the local school/conference. If the averages for your school are something to crow about, CROW. Let people know.

Canadian Union Teachers Cruising

This year’s Canadian Teachers’ Convention headed for the high seas aboard the Carnival “Imagination” cruise ship. For four days, 365 teachers cruised the Caribbean, a captive audience for convention presenters.

Dr. Kido and Dr. Robert Cruise gave a comprehensive report on the third-year results of the Canadian portion of the CG study. Students in Adventist schools in Canada are above the national norms in subject areas. Dr. Cruise also provided a breakout session and explained how to use test scores to improve classroom instruction. He described how teachers can conduct “action research” in their classrooms using the CG data.

Author Shane Anderson also spoke at the Canadian Convention. His book, How to Kill Adventist Education: and How to Give It a Fighting Chance, cites the first two years of CG results and commends teachers for their good work.
Edwin I. Hernández National Researcher - Member of CG Advisory Committee

Edwin I. Hernández, Ph.D., a national researcher, brings a wealth of relevant experience to the Advisory Committee of CG. Currently, he is the Senior Program Officer for Research, Education, and Congregation initiatives at the DeVos Family Foundations, and serves as the Director of the Center for the Study of Latino Religion at the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

Dr. Hernández attended Adventist schools from kindergarten through college. He graduated from Mt. Pisgah Academy and received a B.A. in Theology with Educational Emphasis from Loma Linda University. He earned a M.Div. from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, and continued his education at the University of Notre Dame, receiving both a M.A. and a Ph.D. in sociology.

Straight out of college, he became Associate Pastor at the Elms Haven Church in Northern California Conference before attending the Adventist Theological Seminary where he was involved in research and study that led to his M.Div. degree.

A prolific writer, he has co-authored five books and has contributed articles, chapters, and reports too numerous to mention here. Of particular interest to CG are his articles, “Religion Matters: Predicting Schooling Success Among Latino Youth” with David Sikkink (2003) and “Religious Involvement and Educational Outcomes: The Roles of Social Capital and Extracurricular Participation,” with Jennifer Glanville et. al. (2008)). His latest book is Gatherings of Hope: How Religious Congregations Contribute to the Quality of Life of Kent County (2008).

He was the principal investigator for “Valuegenesis: AVANCE,” a national research project on Latino Adventist congregations in the United States. The study focused on values, faith, and culture.

The book, AVANCE: A Vision For a New Mañana, and the outgrowth of the Valuegenesis AVANCE project co-written with Johnny Ramirez-Johnson, has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the Hispanic Adventist youth landscape.

Dr. Hernández lives in Berrien Springs, Michigan, with his wife, Maggie, two adult sons, Edwin Jr. and Michael. Lola, their dog, completes the family. In his limited spare time he enjoys tennis, walking, water sports, and most recently, kite surfing.

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