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May 16, 2011 - Miami, Florida, United States...Libna Stevens/IAD

As the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Inter-America aggressively focuses on education strategies to improve its educational system, board members met to vote on initiatives and curriculum programs and to discuss concerns regarding Adventist education in its 13 universities and hundreds of primary and secondary schools across the territory. Dozens of educators and church leaders gathered for the Board of Education K-12 and Board of Higher Education meetings which took place today at the Inter-American Division (IAD) headquarters in Miami, Florida.

"One of our main goals is to bring awareness to our church members that Adventist education is a matter of life or death, it's a matter of salvation," said Dr. Gamaliel Florez, as he addressed board members.

Increase enrollment

Florez said one of the goals is to increase enrollment at Adventist primary and secondary schools with more than just 25%-30% Adventist students attending. "We want every child, every young person to have the opportunity to receive Adventist education, so aggressive marketing campaigns are in the works."

He said leaders are also focused on increasing teachers' salaries, which is a major concern.

Teacher's salary

"We know that there are places in our territory where teachers' salaries in our schools are below the normal scale," said Florez. "This is not the church's plan," he added. Increasing the number of Adventist teachers was also highlighted in the meetings. Leaders also voted to make October 13, 2012 the day of the Adventist Educator in Inter-America.

Spiritual emphasis

Creating a more spiritual environment for students and teachers across institutions was another issue presented to board members. The plan is to have an increase in the reading and study of the Bible among students, teachers, and parents. Leaders want more bible bowl competitions to be held in the primary and secondary levels. They also voted to designate March 7 as a special day of spiritual emphasis and prayer across all educational institutions in the IAD.

Focusing on the bible will also take center stage in university campuses across Inter-America where a series of programs promoting the reading of the bible will take place. Students will also be given the opportunity to participate in artistic expression through poetry, music, and paintings on the inspiration they draw from studying the bible.

In addition, plans are in place to purchase thousands of Ellen G. White's book The Great Controversy and make it available to students over the next two years. The book will also be available to download as smart phone applications.

Textbooks

Special committees are already in place to review school textbooks for first and second grades.
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Inter-American Division > Communication Department

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Seventh-day Adventist leaders from throughout Inter-America were updated today on the growth and financial progress of the church's two publishing houses, GEMA Editorial House and the Inter-American Publishing Association. Both houses presented soon-to-be-available publications and upcoming marketing strategies during their bi-annual board meetings held at the Inter-American Division (IAD) headquarters in Miami, Florida.

Erwin Gonzalez (center), president of GEMA Editorial House, reports to board members on the financial stability of the institution during a meeting in Miami, Florida, on May 16, 2011.

GEMA

GEMA achieved $11.3 million in sales last year, which represents a 22% increase from 2009. "This has been the largest increase we have ever had," stated Erwin Gonzalez, GEMA's president, during his report to the board. GEMA, which primarily serves Mexico and other countries outside of Inter-America, recently became the top top Adventist publishing house in the world in Spanish-language publications.

Almost half of the 2010 revenue was brought in by colporters, and the rest from sales to churches and stores, said Gonzalez.

"It's not that colporteurs have sold less publications than before, it's just that the purchases by church members through churches and stores have increased significantly," explained Gonzalez, as he referred to the steady growth of the membership in Mexico.

"I feel so happy to see the contribution of GEMA as it serves the four unions in Mexico and around the world," said Pastor Israel Leito. "We rejoice that you have been able grow in the work of publications. GEMA is not some little publishing house, it is a publishing house which serves the world, too."

Filiberto Verduzco, treasurer of the church in Inter-America, congratulated GEMA for their financial report to the board.

"As I observe your report, I see that something extraordinary has happened and I am amazed," Verduzco said as he reflected on the low-kept inventory, low accounts payable and accounts receivable in GEMA. "GEMA has cleared its $1 million dollar debt with the Division and I want to express my congratulations for the good financial management of the entity," he added.

GEMA also presented its new books and publications for sale on health, family, marriage, stewardship, and prophecy, among others. GEMA's publications are geared to children, young people, women, and church members of any age.

"We are happy that GEMA ranks number five among the worldwide Adventist Publishing houses," said Gonzalez.

Leaders took an action to approve Samuel Manzilla as GEMA's vice president of marketing.

For more on GEMA's available books and publications, visit http://gemaeditores.com.mx/