

Education Report

RON JACABAN, VP FOR EDUCATION

This education report will share a brief update on what's happening across the 28 schools in the Oregon Conference. You'll find highlights from our schools along with a look at where we're headed. We're grateful for the ways God is working and for your continued support. Together, we remain focused on helping people experience Jesus and grow in faith.

How Oregon Conference Schools Use MAP Growth to Support Every Student

Across Oregon Conference schools, we are committed to helping every student grow academically and personally. One of the key tools we use to support this work is the NWEA MAP Growth assessment, which we administer to students from Kindergarten through 11th grade in Mathematics, Reading, and Language Usage.

MAP Growth is different from traditional tests. Instead of simply measuring whether a student is "at grade level," it adapts to each student's learning level. This allows us to identify what each student is ready to learn next — no matter where they are starting.

Supporting Students Through Goal Setting

Our teachers use MAP Growth results to help students set meaningful, personalized goals. After each testing session, teachers sit down with students to review their results in a clear and encouraging way. Together, they:

- Identify strengths
- Pinpoint areas for growth
- Set specific, achievable learning goals

This process helps students take ownership of their learning. They begin to understand their progress, celebrate growth, and stay motivated to improve.

What Our Data Shows

We are proud of how our students are performing and growing. From our most recent winter testing session:

- 79% of students in Reading scored in the average, high average, or high percentile ranges
- 75% of students in Mathematics scored in these ranges
- 83% of students in Language Usage scored in these ranges

These results show that a strong majority of our students are meeting or exceeding expected performance levels.

Looking Deeper: RIT Scores

MAP Growth also provides a score called a RIT score, which reflects the level of concepts and skills a student is ready to learn. Unlike grade-level scores, RIT scores help us understand academic growth over time. Across the Oregon Conference, our average RIT scores in all subjects and grade levels are higher than the national average

In simple terms, this means that our students, on average, are engaging with more advanced concepts than their peers across the country.



Our Commitment

These results reflect the dedication of our teachers, the support of our families, and the hard work of our students. Most importantly, they show that our focus on individualized learning and goal setting is making a meaningful difference.

We remain committed to helping every student grow, not just academically, but in confidence, ownership, and a love of learning.

Beyond the Classroom - Student Opportunities

Academic growth is only one part of a holistic Adventist education. Across the Oregon Conference, students are also engaged in meaningful opportunities that support spiritual development, teamwork, creativity, and leadership.

Bible Camps

Bible Camp continues to be one of the most impactful ministries of the Oregon Conference, providing students with meaningful opportunities to encounter Jesus, build authentic relationships, and begin the school year grounded in faith. These camps are intentionally designed not as one-time events, but as catalysts for spiritual momentum that carries back into local churches, schools, and families.

This past year, Middle School Bible Camp welcomed 210 students from public schools, homeschool settings, and Adventist schools across the conference. Nearly half of those students, 100, or 48 percent, made intentional decisions to move forward in their relationship with God by committing to connect with a pastor, begin Bible studies, or engage with a local church. Additionally, 31 students, or 15 percent, chose to be baptized, marking a significant milestone in their faith journey.

High School Bible Camp saw even greater participation, with 623 students attending from public schools, homeschool programs, and eight Adventist academies from the Oregon and Upper Columbia Conferences. Among them, 200 students, or 32 percent, committed to taking next steps in their walk with God, including deeper spiritual mentorship and church involvement. Fifty students decided to prepare for baptism, and 16 students were baptized during camp, surrounded by friends, pastors, and family. It was certainly a powerful moment of faith and community.

The purpose behind Bible camp is clear: to start the school year with Jesus at the center, establish positive and faith-filled relationships, and set the tone for a Christ-centered school culture. Bible Camp also helps students experience the reality that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is larger than their local context and deeply invested in their spiritual growth.

Programming is intentionally designed for each age group. Large-group worship sessions provide authentic, inclusive spaces for students to connect with God, while life groups create deeper relational and spiritual engagement. Middle school life groups are led by local adult leaders and organized by school or church, while high school life groups are student-led and intentionally mixed to promote openness, trust, and deeper conversations.

Recreation also plays a vital role in the camp experience. Activities such as swimming, climbing, go-kart racing, team sports, skate parks, and hiking create joyful shared experiences that build trust, break down barriers, and open pathways for meaningful spiritual conversations.

Together, these elements demonstrate the powerful impact of Bible camp as a ministry that nurtures faith, builds community, and prepares our young people to walk with Jesus beyond the camp setting and into everyday life.





Mission Trips

This year, the Oregon Conference had the privilege of organizing and leading a mission trip that brought together faith, service, and cross-cultural connection in a powerful way. A group of 43 participants, nearly half of whom were high school students through young adults, traveled to Kenya to serve the Maasai people through practical ministry and relational outreach.

This mission trip was uniquely envisioned and organized by Jason Calvert in partnership with the Oregon Conference to meet a specific need. It was designed for students and adults who desired to serve on a mission trip but were not connected to a school or church program that typically offers these opportunities. In doing so, the Oregon Conference created an avenue for broader participation and inclusivity, allowing individuals from across our constituency to step into global mission together.

The journey itself reflected the commitment and sacrifice that mission often requires. Participants traveled approximately 18 hours by plane before continuing on a 12 hour journey by bus and Jeep to reach the Mara West region, a remote area where the Maasai community lives.

While in Kenya, the team engaged in a variety of meaningful projects designed to serve both physical and spiritual needs. Construction and painting projects supported local infrastructure and learning environments. Team members also led dental education initiatives, teaching practical health practices that will have lasting benefits for the community. At a local school, the group conducted Vacation Bible School, sharing Bible stories, songs, and activities that brought joy, encouragement, and spiritual truth to the students they served.

Perhaps most importantly, this mission trip fostered deep relationships within the group and with the Maasai people. For the young people who made up a significant portion of the team, the experience offered spiritual growth, leadership development, and a broader understanding of God's work beyond their local context. For all who participated, the trip was a reminder that mission is not only about what we do, but about who we serve alongside and who we become in the process.

This Kenya mission trip stands as a testament to what is possible when the Oregon Conference creates pathways for service that are accessible, intentional, and centered on Christ.



Outdoor School Experiences

Outdoor School is a signature experiential learning program of the Oregon Conference, held each fall and winter at Big Lake Youth Camp for 6th-grade students across its schools. This immersive experience brings students together in a natural setting to build friendships and grow academically, socially, and spiritually. Students engage in four core, hands-on science classes taught by conference teachers, exploring topics such as ecosystems, water, fire ecology, and math in nature, along with a winter-specific motion unit where they design and test sleds.

Beyond the classroom, Outdoor School offers interactive learning through activities like a salmon migration simulation, evening programs, and shared cabin living with parent chaperones, fostering a strong sense of community. A central feature is its spiritual emphasis, with daily worship led by a pastor, helping students connect their learning to God's creation. Outdoor School provides far more than a field trip, it is a formative experience where students develop leadership, teamwork, and a deeper relationship with God, leaving a lasting impression on their educational journey.



Friendship Basketball Tournament

Athletics continues to be an important avenue for student engagement and growth. Hosted by Portland Adventist Academy, the Friendship Basketball Tournament takes place yearly the first weekend in March. It includes Oregon Conference schools and invited NPUC teams from other conferences.

Why does this matter? Athletics provides a valuable experience for students by building leadership, communication, and accountability skills that in turn are taken into their roles as student leaders and beyond. These experiences shape character, reinforce perseverance, and prepare students to navigate challenges in academic, professional, and personal contexts with confidence and integrity.



Music Festival

Music Festival brings together 130-150 students for a rich, collaborative experience. This year, the Oregon Conference held Band at Meadow Glade Adventist Elementary School. Choir/Handbells is scheduled for next year. Each year features a guest clinician with comprehensive instruction and breakout sectionals. The festival culminates in two performances. One at the hosting school and an afternoon concert for family and friends.

These experiences allow students to grow artistically while learning discipline, collaboration, and joy in performance.

LEGO® Robotics Tournament – First LEGO League

This year marked an exciting milestone as Columbia Adventist Academy hosted its first First LEGO League tournament (FLL). FLL goes far beyond robotics. Students work in teams to tackle real-world problems by:

- Researching complex issues
- Collaborating to develop solutions
- Reaching consensus as a team
- Documenting their work through by storyboard
- Presenting and defending their solutions to a panel of judges

The program emphasizes strong core values, including:

- Discovery
- Innovation
- Impact
- Inclusion
- Teamwork
- Fun
- Gracious Professionalism
- “Coopertition” – a blend of cooperation and competition

This regional event included seven teams from Idaho, Washington, Montana, and Oregon, and the top two teams qualified for the national tournament in Orlando, Florida. Looking ahead, five Oregon Conference schools have pledged to develop teams for next year’s competition.



We are also actively seeking financial sponsorship to support and expand this program. If you are interested, please contact Oregon Conference VP for Education Ron Jacaban.

Vision Statement

Our vision for education in the Oregon Conference is both simple and deeply mission-centered: “All students will experience Jesus and grow in faith.” This statement reflects our highest calling, not just to educate minds, but to shape hearts and lives for eternity. It sets a unifying direction for every classroom, campus, and program under our care. We want each student, regardless of background or starting point, to encounter Christ in meaningful ways and to develop a personal, growing relationship with Him. This vision will guide our decisions, priorities, and culture as we seek to ensure that spiritual growth is not incidental, but intentional and central to everything we do.

This report concludes with a testimony from one of our schools.

Is It Worth It?

By Dan Bates (teacher, Central Valley Christian School)

I am assuming we have all been there. The moments that make us question certain life choices. Perhaps it came after spending hours on a lesson plan only to have it fall flat on the floor. You know the one. The one where you went all out and even spent some of your own money only to have your class say, “This is boring. When is this going to be done?” Perhaps it was that certain email from a parent expressing their lack of enthusiasm with your classroom management style. Or the parent who comes into your classroom five minutes before school and says, “I want to talk to you after school today.” That’s always fun to have that running through your head the entire day.

The moments can come at all different times and from all different sources. The moments that cause us to stop and ask the question; Is it Worth It? Are the long days and short nights really making a difference? Do my students, parents, constituents really appreciate the sacrifices that I am making on a daily basis? Is what I am doing really making a difference for eternity? Why am I here? Why do our schools exist? Is it worth it?

This has been a challenging year for our school. A challenging year that has followed several challenging years. I have often talked with our principal, Amanda Nawara, wondering when our school is going to get a break? It is easy to give up in discouragement or simply stop from weariness. Amanda calls our school “The Little School that Could.” And it is true as I look back, despite all the challenges or obstacles our school has faced, God has provided over and over again. No matter how big the challenge, the miracle has always been bigger.

The past couple of months have been especially draining on our staff and especially our principal. Stress levels were higher than normal. Emotional fatigue for all of us was high and here we were worn out, stressed out and not sure what was going to happen. It was Friday morning and time for our weekly all-school chapel. All the students had gathered in my classroom for our worship time together. A day or so before, Amanda had told us during staff worship that Finnegan might be doing chapel instead of her. We don’t normally have students do the devotional thought. Especially a 4th grader. But Finnegan is not your typical fourth grader. We met Finn a few years ago – during COVID when most of the other schools were closed. From the start, we couldn’t help but notice his eagerness to answer all the questions of our chapel speakers. His participation was such that it bordered on being interruptive, but his answers have always been right on target, showing that not only was he actively listening to the speaker, but he also was “getting it.” So,



Amanda approached him and said, “Buddy, why don’t you do one of our chapels? I can work with you on it and it would be great for your classmates to hear from one of their peers.”

Finnegan was excited about the idea, and the date was set for February 28th. Amanda thought that this might be a good date as the birth of her baby was quickly approaching. Amanda told the school staff, “I might not be here on the 28th so at least chapel is covered.” At least she was hoping it would be. The morning of the 28th arrived and Amanda realized that after that initial conversation with Finnegan, nothing much had been said. With making sub plans for maternity leave, doctor’s visits, board meetings, teaching, etc., Amanda was swamped. Did Finnegan remember about doing chapel on the 28th or not? Just in case he had forgotten, Amanda came prepared, just in case.

When Finnegan arrived at school that Friday morning, Amanda asked him if he was prepared to give the chapel talk. From my vantage point I could see his eyes get big as the realization that this was the day they had talked about. To me it looked like a mixture of excitement and pure fear. He wanted to do it, but yet he wasn’t really sure that he could. Amanda said, “It’s ok buddy. If you want to do it that’s great but if not that’s ok. Why don’t you think about it for a bit?” During song service, Finn gave Amanda a thumbs up and whispered, “I want to do it.” She noticed and prompted him, “Go into the computer lab with Mrs. Bates to talk about it - to make sure you’re ready.” Finnegan and Anita went into the computer lab next to my classroom while Amanda finished leading the rest of the school in song service.

A few minutes later they reentered my classroom and gave Amanda a thumbs up. He was willing to go ahead with the chapel talk. After the song service Finnegan got up and proceeded to tell three stories: First, a nutshell retelling of Jesus’ death and resurrection leading up to walking and talking with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. He told about Peter denying Jesus three times. Then Finnegan went on to talk about the morning by the Sea of Galilee where Jesus was again talking with Peter, and Jesus asked Peter the question, “Peter, do you love me?” Finnegan told us, “It’s handy to have a mom who knows Greek.” He then told us about the word “love” in Greek and how the word “love” can mean different things. He continued by stressing the importance of having a love relationship with Jesus.

All that Finnegan was saying I had heard before. For me it was nothing new. But at some point, as he was standing before his classmates, it changed from a simple chapel talk to a heartfelt altar call. As he was sharing the love that Jesus has for him, the tears began to come to his eyes, and his voice began to shake. Finnegan looked at the faces of his friends and his teachers and said, “Do you get it? Jesus just wants to be your friend.”

At this point the emotions were too much, and he turned to Amanda and barely got the words out, “I think I need to stop now.” As Finnegan sat down amongst his classmates I was wiping the tears from my eyes. In fact, anytime I think of it I still get emotional. Mostly because a 4th grader reminded me to look at the love of God through the eyes of a child. To remember the wonder of it all. But I was also emotional because he spoke to a tired and worn-out staff who might be tempted to doubt if anything we are doing is making a difference. When we are tempted to ask ourselves the question, is it worth it? God, our Friend, sent a very clear answer through Finnegan: Absolutely!

