

Educational Leaders See Results from University's STEM Program

BY GENESIS GONZALEZ

Tools and support from Loma Linda University have boosted STEM instruction in K-12 classrooms

Educational leaders say a STEM instruction initiative hosted by Loma Linda University is helping stabilize enrollment and boosting instructional enthusiasm in denominational schools.

Nearly 800 K-12 teachers have been trained over the past seven years through the program, called Excellence in STEM Experiential Education (EXSEED). Instructors have taken part in numerous hands-on workshops offering mission-focused and integrative activities that can be implemented in their own classrooms.

EXSEED enhances integrated science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education in Adventist K-12 schools by bringing together teachers for one-week training sessions during the summer. The goal of EXSEED is to support and empower K-12 educators to apply the STEM disciplines within a mission-focused learning environment.

Gale Crosby, vice president of education for the Oregon Conference, has worked closely with Loma Linda University to challenge teachers in the Adventist school system to help prepare their students for careers in the medical, science, and technology fields. The

impact is already visible, even after just two years of participation, he said.

"Following our conference participation in EXSEED, enrollment has stabilized in our schools, and our churches are showing signs of growth," Crosby recently told a group of university executives, deans, and faculty.

Students appreciate the new focus. "It helps me to be a lot more creative," said one middle school student, who talked about the fun she's been having with her classmates working on collaborative projects and new, fun ways of thinking about school assignments.

Richard H. Hart, president of Loma Linda University Health, said EXSEED is a way to integrate the education resources of the Adventist Church that can benefit a variety of schools, such as the two-room school he attended in Northern Idaho as a child.

"There are still a lot of schools like that, and they are still just as much a part of the Adventist educational system as everyone else," Hart said. "We're wanting to empower teachers to teach STEM who may not have that strong of a background in those subjects.

"Our goal is to have the entire system working together to train our young people," he added. "Careers in STEM are developed as early as the sixth grade."

For more information about EXSEED, visit home.llu.edu/exseed or email exseed@llu.edu.

Student Brooklyn Scott and her teacher, Heidi Kruger, from Riverside Christian School in Washougal, Wash., explain to Loma Linda University leaders how they have implemented project-based learning in their classroom with fun, successful results.