

Realigning a Legacy

Foundation Refocuses
Long-Standing Commitment
to Faith-Based Education



Overview

Although we're not a faith-based organization, for most of our 51-year existence the Bainum Family Foundation has supported faith-based education as part of our mission. Founders Stewart and Jane Bainum largely credited their success in life to their education at Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) boarding schools, inspiring them to establish the Foundation in 1968 to give children living in poverty the opportunity to obtain a quality education.

In 2015, we introduced a new strategy and shifted our focus from older children and teens to early childhood (ages 0 to 8), acknowledging the need to reach children earlier with quality learning and vital wrap-around supports to give them a stronger foundation and better chance of success throughout life. Our priorities also shifted from an emphasis on individual impact to system impact. These changes prompted reexamination and realignment of our work in faith-based education. This Bainum Brief captures that change process and shares insights that could help other organizations going through similar transitions.



Building a Family Legacy

Throughout their lives, Stewart and Jane Bainum held a deep appreciation for faith-based education. Both grew up in poverty and credited their success in life to their education at SDA boarding schools in the 1930s. After the couple met and married in the Washington, D.C., area in 1941, Mr. Bainum started a plumbing and mechanical contracting business, built a real estate development company and founded ManorCare, a universally acclaimed nursing home company. In 1957, he built his first hotel and later established Choice Hotels International, which has become one of the world's largest hotel franchising companies.

In 1968, even though the family was still building its businesses, Mr. Bainum felt the time was right to start giving back in a more formal way. And so, that December, he established The College Foundation. Mr. Bainum had never forgotten the obstacles he'd faced in completing his education due to his family's poverty, and he wanted to help remove those obstacles for students in similar circumstances. Over the next two decades, the Foundation (which later became the Commonwealth Foundation and now is known as the Bainum Family Foundation) granted loans to many college-bound students from low-income families.

In 1988, the Foundation became a local sponsor of the national I Have A Dream (IHAD) program. Mr. Bainum promised college scholarships to 67 rising seventh-graders at Kramer Junior High School in southeast Washington, D.C. — a largely African-American neighborhood where most students lived below the poverty line and the school's standardized test scores lagged behind all but two other District schools — if they stayed in school and graduated. Beyond the college tuition and mentoring typically offered by local IHAD sponsors, Mr. Bainum chose to provide extensive resources and wrap-around supports to help the students succeed in junior high and high school.

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Despite the Foundation's intentions and investments, the students still faced serious challenges outside school (such as parents struggling with addiction, community violence and homelessness) that hindered their academic progress. Mr. Bainum and the program leader decided a change in environment might help. They sent 10 students to an SDA boarding school in Mount Vernon, Ohio — Mr. Bainum's alma mater.



Stewart and Jane Bainum with their four children (top), and Mount Vernon Academy, Stewart Bainum's alma mater.

Overall, 72% of the 67 “Dreamers” graduated from high school or obtained a GED (compared with 27% of their peers at Kramer who were not part of the program). The students at the school in Mount Vernon did even better, with nine of 10 graduating as scheduled in 1994.

Based on this success, Mr. Bainum decided to start a scholarship program — called Pathways to Success — to send children from low-income families in the Washington,

D.C., area to private Christian schools. It expanded from only boarding schools to include day schools as well, ultimately including 38 partner schools nationwide. The scholarship program later became known as the Boarding and Day School Program (BDSP), with a dedicated staff overseeing this and other faith-based work at the Foundation.



Through the years, the BDSP yielded numerous successes, but at the same time, there were growing challenges.

Since the program’s start in 1994, we have awarded more than \$45 million in scholarships to thousands of students, peaking in 2009 with 1,231 scholarships awarded. In addition to scholarships, we also provided support to partner schools to ensure they had the

resources, technology and wrap-around supports (including counseling, tutoring, literacy support, special education support, health care and mission/service trip opportunities) to help scholarship recipients learn, grow and succeed.

Additionally, our faith-based work included funding for major facility improvements at SDA schools. We also began international work in 1999 in partnership with Maranatha Volunteers International, ultimately funding the construction of 109 multipurpose church/school buildings across the Caribbean, North America, Central America, South America, Africa and Asia.

Time for Reevaluation

Through the years, the BDSP yielded numerous successes, but at the same time, there were growing

challenges. For example, Foundation staff were becoming increasingly concerned about difficulties in tracking student outcomes. Some students were not completing their education at the school where they had received a scholarship, and some schools were not tracking detailed outcomes data — only anecdotal stories. In addition, a number of schools came to rely on scholarship funding for financial stability. These issues were not conducive to positive long-term outcomes and sustainability.

The BDSP also observed some recurring trends across SDA partner schools, including:

- Varying levels of student readiness for high school English and other academic requirements
- Differences in principal training and teacher development, plus frequent turnover among principals

In 2013, the Foundation began to reexamine its overall impact and chart a new strategy — one that shifted its focus from older children and teens to early childhood (ages 0 to 8), and from individual student impact to system impact. This effort included review and realignment of our faith-based programs, resulting in the launch of several new programs and the discontinuation of others.

Putting New Programs in Place

Given the Foundation's new focus, the BDSP team (today called the Seventh-day Adventist Initiative, or SDAI) saw opportunities to support SDA schools and other SDA partners from a systems perspective to achieve broader and more sustainable impact. The change in programming also was motivated by recognition that the Foundation could better help both students and schools in the long term by shifting away from scholarships and focusing on creating high-quality, developmentally appropriate learning environments for infants, toddlers, children and youth.

As a result, the SDAI team developed and launched new programs in the areas of leadership excellence and instructional excellence while enhancing an existing program in the area of business excellence and continuing strategic facility investments. In its faith-based work — as with its other program initiatives — the Foundation aims to create effective models that others can use. The leadership, instructional and business programs all operate under the umbrella of the Advancement of Christian Education (ACE) Academy, which the Foundation established in 2015.

Leadership Excellence

Given the positive impact of effective principals on their schools, staffs and students — and the negative impact of principal turnover — the Foundation developed a program to enhance leadership at SDA schools. In partnership with the NYC Leadership Academy (NYCLA), a nonprofit organization that builds skills in educational leaders, the Foundation initially focused on a “principal in training” program that prepared aspiring principals for leadership roles. Ten of the 11 participants in the first training class are now serving as principals or assistant principals in SDA and other schools.



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Today, also in partnership with NYCLA, the Foundation is operating a Leadership Coaching Program that trains experienced principals as coaches and then pairs them with newer principals. The intensive two-year coaching program is being piloted with the Columbia Union Conference in Columbia, Maryland (which coordinates the Seventh-day Adventist Church's work in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States). This coaching model can be replicated by other SDA unions once the pilot concludes.

Instructional Excellence

To address wide variances in student readiness as they transition from faith-based K-8 schools to other schools, the Foundation has been working to develop the Instructional Framework for 21st-Century Educators. The Instructional Framework, which reflects Common Core standards and integrates the “Four Cs” of 21st Century Skills, is a research-based scope and sequence for teaching English/language arts literacy standards from kindergarten through eighth grade. It provides teachers with unified grade-level expectations and measurable learning targets to assess student success and compare outcomes with those of students nationwide. The effort is designed to enhance both classroom instruction and student achievement, not just in English/Language Arts but across all subjects.

Following a two-year pilot of the Instructional Framework at an SDA K-8 school in Hyattsville, Maryland, it is now being fully implemented at Creation Village Preparatory School (CVPS) in Celebration, Florida. To ensure that schoolwide processes are in place to most effectively apply the Framework, the Foundation is providing training and coaching to the CVPS staff, monitoring and providing feedback on the progress of the implementation, and collecting data to evaluate how well the implementation is achieving the expected outcomes. This will help build the school's capacity to implement best practices that can be validated, sustained, replicated and scaled. CVPS will serve as the Foundation's model and demonstration site as the Instructional Framework is made available to other schools.

Business Excellence

Since 2012, the Foundation has funded consulting resources for SDA schools and other SDA partners to help them think comprehensively about the future and develop strategic plans to ensure the overall health and viability of the organization. This work will continue and grow, as it represents an effective, high-impact investment that supports both quality and sustainability. Successful plans and business models developed as a result of this work can be shared with other SDA schools and partners.

Facility Investments

The Foundation continues to provide funding for SDA school facility improvements as well as funding to establish or enhance early learning facilities. In partnership with AdventHealth and LIFT Orlando, the Foundation is supporting the creation and operation of a 150-seat early learning center in Orlando, Florida, in a low-income neighborhood that is being revitalized.

The work in Orlando goes far beyond a brick-and-mortar investment. The Foundation is also serving in an advisory/technical assistance capacity to support the use of best practices in organizational leadership, instruction and business. The Foundation intends for the new early learning center, which opens in early 2020, to become a model to be replicated in other communities with similar needs.

And in partnership with The Lourie Center for Children's Social & Emotional Wellness, which is part of Adventist HealthCare, the Foundation is providing funding for two projects: expanding the center's main location in Rockville, Maryland, to serve 90 more children and their families, and expanding its Early Head Start and Head Start services into adjacent Prince George's County, Maryland. The Lourie Center aims to improve the social and emotional health of young children and their families through prevention, early intervention, education and training.

Making the Transition

In addition to launching new programs — which itself is a great challenge — this transition involved phasing out existing programs that had been a centerpiece of the Foundation's work for many years, including the BDSP. Foundation leaders were sharply aware of the potential impact of these decisions

on long-standing partners in faith-based education. Once the decision was made to take the SDAI work in a new direction, the Foundation team developed a comprehensive plan designed to communicate its intentions and support SDA partners through the transition.

Barbara Bainum, LCSW-C, who is currently Chair of the Board and also served as CEO and President of the Foundation from 2008 through 2019, says: “We were careful to ensure that any adjustments or

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realignment would retain the spirit of the legacy program that was so important to my parents. We also realized that this was only part of the equation, and that we would need to work closely with our SDA partners to communicate these changes clearly, listen to their concerns, provide a smooth transition period, and continue to invest in new initiatives that hold great promise for the future.”

Communication

Almost immediately after deciding on the new path forward, the Foundation’s SDAI team traveled to all partner schools over a three-month period for in-person discussions about the change and how we planned to not only ease the transition but also help the schools build their own capacity for long-term sustainability. SDAI staff were in regular conversation through phone calls and emails, further providing details about the change, what to expect and how the Foundation would support them through the process.

Timing and Transition Support

The Foundation team took two critical steps. The first was to implement a five-year timeline (with no changes taking place the first year) to gradually phase out scholarship funding. For example, if a high school student supported by a scholarship was in 10th grade, that scholarship funding would continue through 12th grade. This gave the schools time to adjust, build their own fundraising capacity and plan for financial stability while also giving scholarship recipients time to complete their educations.

The second step was to assist partner schools in



either establishing or enhancing their fundraising capacity, providing financial support over the course of three years for:

- Staff positions at the schools
- Consulting and coaching for school fundraising staff
- Training opportunities identified by each school's fundraising staff
- Funding for school staff to attend (along with Foundation staff members) two major advancement conferences to learn about alumni development and major gift best practices

This support was significant. In one year alone (2017-2018), staff at eight SDA partner schools received 360 hours of fundraising training and professional development provided by a variety of sources, all funded by the Foundation. To further leverage these investments, the Foundation is exploring the idea of bringing together fundraising professionals at these and other SDA schools in a community of practice to share best practices and connect with and learn from each other on an ongoing basis.

Now nearing the end of the five-year phaseout, the schools that invested in building their own fundraising capacity are seeing substantial returns.

Janel Haas Ware is Director of the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at Shenandoah Valley Academy, an Adventist college preparatory boarding school in New Market, Virginia, that has been an SDAI partner school for more than two decades and is the alma mater of Jane Bainum. She attributes much of the school's current financial health to the fundraiser development program.

Five years ago, with enrollment declining and debt rising, the school received funding from the Foundation to help properly establish the development office; provide accountability for best fundraising practices; support professional development for the director; and help engage alumni, parents and students to establish a thriving philanthropic culture for Shenandoah — all designed to support overall long-term school sustainability.

"The ability to develop relationships within our community and alumni network is what has allowed us to increase charitable income and begin building reserves," Ms. Ware says. Over the past four years, the school has been able to:

- Boost enrollment from 134 to 203 students, keeping its promise that "no qualified student is turned away from Shenandoah because of finances"
- Eradicate \$1.4 million in long-term debt and remain debt-free
- Provide approximately \$1 million in tuition assistance and scholarships each year to qualified students
- Purchase and maintain software updates to further develop the alumni-donor database, leading to an increase in financial gifts from individuals

- Remodel the school cafeteria and buy new appliances for its kitchen
- Develop a campus master plan focused on capital repairs and deferred maintenance, with the goals of decreasing liability and insurance costs, reducing the need for and cost of future maintenance, and increasing energy efficiency

“We want as many students as possible to have the opportunity for an Adventist boarding school education,” she says. “We have always worked hard to find funding for students who need tuition

assistance. With a fully developed fundraising program and ongoing financial support from alumni and friends, it has become unlikely that a student could ever lose the ability to attend school here because of finances. The support we have received and the knowledge we have gained as part of the fundraiser development program have eliminated that barrier.”

Regarding the connections she has formed with colleagues at other schools, she adds, “To have somebody else out

there pursuing the same goals, and to have collaboration and encouragement among other fundraising professionals, is invaluable.”

Lessons Learned

Much of the SDAI transition has concluded, but looking back, the Foundation team sees some actions that were well-planned and effective, and others we would now pursue differently. Following are highlights from this experience that could help other organizations (especially foundations or nonprofits looking to change a long-standing legacy program) faced with substantial change.

- Use data to support the rationale for change and protect the organization from blind spots in its decision-making. For us, that included gathering data about both school and student

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performance and assessing whether the Foundation's investments were having the desired impact. Lack of data about student outcomes turned out to be a key factor in making the change, and that became part of the messaging.



- Have a strong communication plan in place for both external and internal audiences. For the Foundation, internal stakeholders included staff, Board members and the Bainum family — audiences who were involved at different levels in this change but all of whom had significant interest in its success. In hindsight, we believe communication with staff beyond the SDAI team could have been stronger — especially given that other staff members (other program areas and accounting staff, for instance) also had regular contact and communication with the affected partners.
- Communicate in a way that honors the legacy. The scholarship program was virtually synonymous with Stewart Bainum, and discontinuing it could have been perceived as disrespectful to him. Our messaging acknowledged what the program meant to him but assured stakeholders that the new strategy upheld his intentions of both supporting faith-based education and providing quality educational opportunities for children living in poverty, helping them succeed in school and life.
- Be empathetic and responsive to partners both to preserve relationships and support their future success. Where possible, include a generous phaseout period to give partners or grant recipients time to adjust to a major change in a long-standing program.
- Ensure that partners have a feedback loop to communicate any concerns. Use their feedback to continually improve on how you convey change, lessons learned and more.
- Work closely with partners upfront to build in sustainability plans as part of any partnership agreement. This was not something we had done consistently with our legacy work, but now we do it regularly with all programs under our new strategy. Our emphasis on capacity building means that we want the benefit and impact of our investments — for our partners and the constituents they serve — to continue long after our involvement ends.
- Tell your story so others — and your own team — can learn from both setbacks and successes.



7735 OLD GEORGETOWN ROAD
SUITE 1000
BETHESDA, MD 20814
BAINUMFDN.ORG

Published periodically by the Bainum Family Foundation, Bainum Briefs are short papers that cover a range of topics, including research conducted by the Foundation and our partners, perspectives on issues related to our work, the thinking behind our work and lessons we've learned along the way.