



# An Investigation Into the Issue of Low Enrolment in Adventist Schools in Canada and How It Is Being Addressed

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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ISSUE OF LOW ENROLMENT  
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**By**

**Dennis E. Marshall**

**2008**



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## **ABSTRACT**

### **AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ISSUE OF LOW ENROLMENT IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST SCHOOLS IN CANADA AND HOW IT IS BEING ADDRESSED**

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This study was designed to investigate the low and declining enrolment in Seventh-day Adventist schools in Canada. The investigation was accomplished by conducting a survey among four groups of stakeholders: school administrators, teachers, support staff and school board members. The survey addressed areas such as program quality, facilities, resources, location, marketing, and the perceived roles of teachers, administrators, pastors and other stakeholders. The results of the investigation suggests that, although Adventists schools in Canada deliver a high quality educational program, several areas contribute to low and declining enrolment: tuition cost, program and personnel issues, school plant and facilities, competition and poor marketing. Of these drivers, high tuition cost is the most common reason given by parents for not enrolling their children in Adventist schools. But stakeholders believe that to arrest and reverse the declining enrolment trend, emphasis must be placed on having an aggressive marketing strategy involving key stakeholders.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background Information**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church (Adventist church) stepped into the world of education in 1872 with the opening of its first school with 12 students in Battle Creek, Michigan. Since then, the Adventist church has established one of the largest Protestant Christian school systems world-wide. As of 2006, the Adventist church operated 7,284 schools world-wide, 7,136 of which were primary and secondary schools (*Yearbook 2008*, p. 4). In the North American Division (NAD), which consists of the United States, Bermuda and Canada, 63,324 students were enrolled in 1,076 K-12 schools.

#### **The First Schools in Canada**

The Adventist church established its school system in Canada with the building of its first elementary school in South Stukely, Quebec in 1884. Subsequently, elementary schools were established in other provinces: Newfoundland in 1894, Ontario in 1895, Maritimes (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island) in 1899, Alberta in 1902, British Columbia in 1904, Manitoba in 1906 and Saskatchewan in 1908. Most of these schools were conducted in church buildings or in the homes of church members (Lekic, 2005, p. 24).

1894 saw the opening of the first Adventist secondary school in Canada in the province of Quebec, the Fitch Bay High School. In 1903, two other academies were established: Lornedale Academy in Ontario (currently known as Kingsway College), and Farmington Industrial Academy in the Maritimes. The following year, North-Western Training School was opened in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. In 1907, Alberta Industrial Academy (currently known as Canadian University College) was established in Leduc,

Alberta, and Manson Industrial Academy in Pitt Meadows, British Columbia. The last of the early ventures into secondary school education was the opening of Battleford Academy in Saskatchewan in 1916. From 1916 to the present, we have witnessed both the growth and decline of Adventist elementary and secondary schools in Canada.

Currently, the Canadian Adventist school system consists of 45 schools operating in six conferences (but eight provinces) with an enrolment of 3,523 students and 343 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers. The British Columbia Conference operates six elementary schools, six junior academies, three senior academies and an online learning program known as Distributive Learning or DL. The Alberta Conference operates seven elementary schools, one junior academy, one senior academy and a DL program. The Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference operates one elementary school and two junior academies. The Ontario Conference operates nine elementary schools and one senior academy. The Quebec Conference operates one elementary school and one junior academy. The Maritime Conference operates two elementary schools and one senior academy. There are also 2 boarding academies: Kingsway College in Ontario and Parkview Adventist Academy in Alberta (*Education Directory, 2007/08*). These boarding academies are classified as “union” schools because they fall under the jurisdiction of the SDACC and not the local conferences.

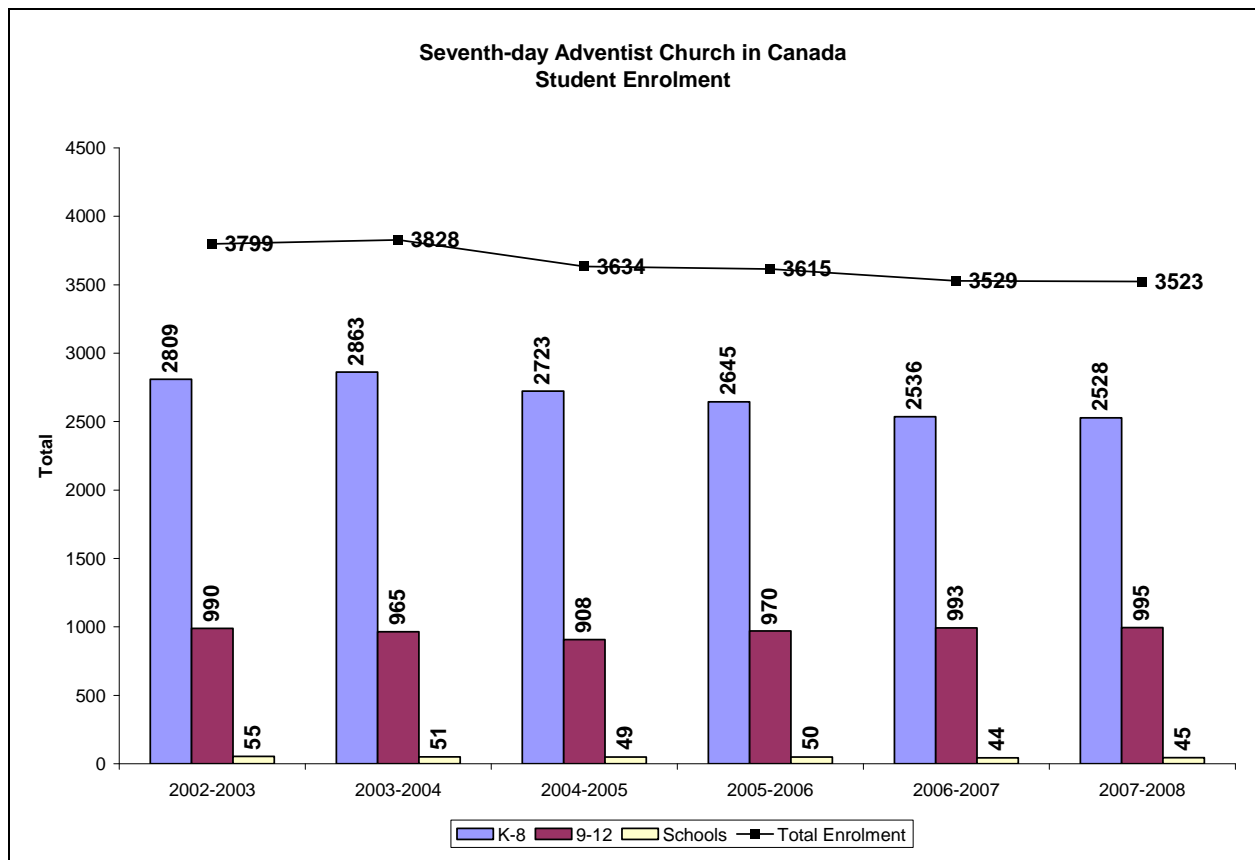
### **Declining Enrolment Trend**

Despite the continuous growth in church membership in Canada since 1972, school enrolment has remained at a low level, and over the past several years, a declining enrolment trend has been noted (see Appendix A). Through the years, many reasons have been given for this decline in school enrolment: tuition cost, changing demographics, competition from the public schools, the perception that the academic program in Adventist

schools is of a lower quality than that of the public schools, a lack of commitment on the part of parents to church values and our educational system.

Figure 1 graphically depicts the declining enrolment trend in Adventist schools across Canada over the past six years. During the 2002/2003 school year, a total of 3,799 students were enrolled in 55 K-12 schools. By the 2007/2008 school year, the enrolment had declined by 276 students to 3,523 (7%) and the number of schools had been reduced from 55 to 45 (18%). If the Adventist school system is to position itself as a credible option for Adventist members and parents in the wider community, strategic planning must take place to arrest and reverse this trend in declining enrolment.

**Figure 1**



Source: Opening school enrolment, Office of Education, Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada

## **The Need for a Marketing Strategy**

Declining enrolment in Adventist schools is not a local phenomenon. This trend is also being seen throughout the North American Division with the closure of several schools over the years. Realizing that something needed to be done, educational administrators at all levels of the Adventist church have sought ways to address the issue. For instance, in early 2001, Paul Brantley of Andrews University was asked by the General Conference Education Department to survey Union Education Directors and selected church congregations around the globe for ideas to formulate strategic plans for growth in enrolment (Lekic, 2005, p. 3). The North American Division employed an associate director of education in 2003 to coordinate promotion and marketing of Adventist education. In 2004 and 2006, the NAD held a marketing conference for all union directors of education, conference superintendents and other stakeholders. A similar conference is planned for February 2009.

Undoubtedly, there is a recognized need for an effective marketing strategy to address the problem of low and declining enrolment, thus opening a new path for growth and sustainability. This investigation is an attempt to identify the key drivers of declining enrolment in Adventist schools in Canada and to recommend marketing strategies to arrest and reverse this trend.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Several factors influence school enrolment in faith-based and other private schools: the demand for a higher quality education, the demand for religious services (Smith & Meier, 1995), the availability of government funding (Brummelen, 1995; Barman, 1991), school size, safety, location, and special programs. For instance, both Barman and Brummelen showed that an increasing proportion of Canadian parents enrolled children in faith-based and other private schools in British Columbia when the government decided to fund private schools (Barman, 1991; Brummelen, 1995). In another study, Guppy and Davies demonstrated that the Canadian public had a declining interest in public education because of curriculum and related issues (Guppy & Davies, 1999).

Tim Goddard argued that although private school enrolment grew with the coming of government funding, the middle class did not flock from public to private schools. Most Canadians, he asserted, would rather fix the current public school system than flee to another (Goddard, 2000). Alex Pomson, in his study of Jewish day-school growth in Toronto, showed that Jewish families were also neither in flight from the Toronto public school system nor heading in increasing numbers to Jewish day schools (Pomson, 2002).

Mike Lekic suggested that although Adventist parents commended Adventist schools for having a strong spiritual focus, a safe learning environment, and strong academic programs, many chose public schools over Adventist schools for their children because of the cost (Lekic, 2005). Glenn argued that while government funding is desirable and provides more opportunities for parent's choice in the schooling of their children, it could have a negative impact on the unique mission of faith-based schools by demanding an adherence to unacceptable new requirements (Glenn, 2004, p. 297).

Private schooling costs, program quality and school facilities affect school enrolment in Adventist schools in different ways, but other weightier matters also need to be considered. Michael Phillips and Salli Rasberry argue that the success of a business depends not on what the business says about itself, but on what others say about it (Phillips & Rasberry, 2005, p. 15). Thus, the best way to win customers (increase school enrolment) and be on the cutting edge is to run such a fabulous operation that loyal and satisfied customers will brag about the goods and services far and wide. In other words, “it is operating the business at a higher level than the industry norms and effectively communicating the improvement to customers” (Phillips & Rasberry, 2005, p.52).

Andy Sermovitz takes a similar position by emphasizing the need to do something special to get people talking about your business (Sermovitz, 2006, p. 40). Products or services must be appealing and desirable for word-of-mouth marketing to be effective. Hargreaves and Fulani link the success of the organization to the quality of its relationship to the external environment (Hargreaves & Fulani, 1998).

Graham Hooley, John Saunders and Nigel Piercy place the customer at the centre of operations. They look at the competitive positioning of the company, that is, the selection of target markets and the establishment of a competitive advantage. Furthermore, they argue that the marketing process should be conceived as inter-functional, cross-disciplinary, and not simply the responsibility of the marketing department. “Superior service, value, and innovation to build defensible, competitive positions rely on the coordinated efforts of many functions and people within the organization” (Hooley, Saunders & Piercy, 2004, p.11).

Izhar Oplatka (2006) argues that the survival of many schools depends to a great extent on their capacity to retain current students and recruit new ones, their mobilisation of resources, the achievements of their students, and their success in making their programs

attractive to the external environment. Marketing is therefore considered to be an indispensable managerial function if the school is to survive in its competitive environment. It is not enough for a school to be effective; it must also project an effective image to parents and stakeholders.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the results of a questionnaire and survey which was distributed to school administrators, teachers, support staff, and school board members across Canada. An historical review of Seventh-day Adventist schools in Canada has also been included to give context and meaning to the study.

The survey was intentionally designed to solicit feedback from a broad spectrum of stakeholders. School principals, who are required by policy to send opening and closing reports on enrolment to the SDACC Office of Education, have a first-hand knowledge of their school enrolment and can therefore provide a reasonable analysis of the rise and fall of enrolments from year to year. For instance, a school principal, through his/her contact and relationship with parents, can determine whether a drop or rise in school enrolment is related to problems with transportation, program quality, tuition costs, and/or families moving in or out of the area.

Teachers, who have first-hand knowledge of their classrooms, can provide pertinent information on issues such as programs, facilities, and resources. In the Adventist school system, teachers are expected to promote Christian education by visiting churches and giving programs on Christian education, and by promoting the school through positive word of mouth. They are also in close contact with students and parents and may sometimes be privy to certain information that principals are not aware of. Their perspective on enrolment decline should, therefore, contribute substantially to our understanding of the declining enrolment trend in Adventist schools.

Non-teaching staff, such as secretaries, custodians, business managers, etc., also have a perspective on enrolment that should be considered. For example, business

managers deal with the collection of fees and would be able to determine, based on their interaction with parents, whether the cost of Christian education is the reason why some parents choose not to enrol their children in their school. Custodians may give some important insights on the grounds and upkeep of the school building that might have an indirect impact on school enrolment.

School board members constitute an important group of stakeholders in the Adventist educational system. They approve school budgets, make recommendations on the hiring and firing of teachers, and keep a pulse on program quality, school enrolment, and other challenges facing schools.

Feedback on the questionnaire was solicited from a group of superintendents of education and boarding academy principals (the SDACC Education Council) who came together for a bi-annual meeting to discuss current educational issues and make policy changes affecting the operation of the Adventist K-12 school system in Canada. Once the questionnaire was approved, a letter (see Appendix C) was sent out to the target groups of stakeholders informing them of the questionnaire and how to access it on the web. Hard copies were also sent to participants in case some individuals did not have access to the web. Follow-up letters were also sent (see Appendix C) to remind participants of the deadline and the need to respond by the given date.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### **Demographics**

The survey was distributed to principals, teachers, non-teaching staff and school board members living in the provinces of Canada where there are SDA schools: British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

The survey was sent to 318 teachers and school administrators, 123 non-teaching staff and 481 board members for a total of 922 surveys (see Appendix D). Of this number, 448 (49%) responses were received, which is a fair representative of the target group. The response distribution indicates that 46 school administrators, 151 teachers, 48 non-teaching staff and 195 board members responded (Appendix D, #1). 43.4% of respondents were male and 56.6 % were female (see Appendix D, #2); 7.1% of respondents were under age 20, 55.3% were in the age range of 31- 49, and 37.7% in the age range of 50 plus (see Appendix D, #3). The majority of responses came from the provinces of Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta where the majority of Adventist schools are located. The other five provinces accounted for only 14% of the responses (see Appendix D, #4).

There are four classifications of schools in the Adventist school system in Canada: K-8/9 (elementary), K-10 (Junior Academies), K-12 (Day Academies) and 9-12 (Boarding Academies). At the time the survey was distributed, Canada had 29 elementary schools, 8 junior academies, 6 day academies and 2 boarding academies. Most of the responses came from elementary schools (42.8%) and day academies (31.6%), reflecting the two major school groups in the Adventist school system (see Appendix D, #5). Schools can also be classified as small schools (schools with 1-4 teachers) or large schools (schools

with 5 or more teachers). 26.9% of the respondents were affiliated with small schools and 73.1% with large schools (see Appendix D, # 6). Survey results also indicate that 54.3% of school principals had been in their positions for five or fewer years, 20% for less than one year, 17.1% for 6-10 years, and 8.6% for more than 10 years (see Appendix D, #8).

Adventist schools in Canada are few, often separated by wide distances, and not always easily accessible to students. Since the majority of schools do not operate a bussing service for their students (see Appendix D, #11), many parents must make special arrangements to get their children to and from school.

### **Government Assisted and Non-Government Assisted Schools**

All Adventist K-12 schools in Canada are owned and operated by Seventh-day Adventist Church organizations (conferences/union). Some schools receive government funding, but others do not. For instance, Adventist schools in British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba get partial government funding for school operation. But those in Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia do not. Schools receiving government funding are subject to more regulations and provincial monitoring than those without.

Survey results indicate that 58% of the schools responding to the survey receive government funding and 42% do not (see Appendix D, #7). This suggests that parental cost (tuition) for Adventist education in government-assisted schools should be, on average, less than it is in schools that receive no government funding. A comparative cost analysis indicates that parents pay much less for tuition in British Columbia than in Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes (see Appendix B). If tuition is a deciding factor in school enrolment, it may be safe to assume that the enrolment in schools receiving government funding would be higher than enrolment in schools receiving no government funding.

Students attending Adventist schools are generally from middle and lower income families (Lekic, 2005, p. 91). In many cases, Adventist students depend on the generosity

of donors and the financial help from their home churches to help them pay for their tuition. The Worthy Student Fund is a fund established by churches/schools to assist students in need of financial help. When principals were asked to indicate the percentage of their student body who receive financial assistance from the Worthy Student Fund, the responses varied widely (see Appendix D, #9). One can conclude from these responses that many parents are making a great sacrifice to send their children to Adventist schools, and for many students, the generous support of church members and other sponsors in their school constituency is crucial for their continued attendance.

### **Variables Affecting School Enrolment**

The enrolment in Adventist schools throughout Canada is well below the maximum number of students the schools can accommodate. This disparity in enrolment might be due to changing demographics, program issues, finance, etc. To better understand the reasons for the current enrolment gap – the difference in enrolment between the current school year and the previous school year – principals were asked to explain the difference between the previous year and the current year's enrolment. Of the 45 schools in operation, 37 principals responded. Figure 2 lists the common reasons survey respondents gave.

**Figure 2**

**Reasons for Enrolment Increase/Decrease**

Reasons for Enrolment Increase	Reasons for Enrolment Decrease
Good Word of Mouth marketing by parents Good Word of Mouth marketing by pastors Dissatisfaction with the local public school Greater involvement of school in the community Excellent support from the school board School upgrade, thus attracting more Quality program and satisfied customers Changing the school week from a five-day cycle to a four-day cycle	Poor school board marketing Pastors not promoting school Public school competition Competition from home-schooling School board squabbles No school bus service Parent's dissatisfaction over specific issue Economic downturn and parents move away Distance between school and home Financial difficulties

Source: Canada School Enrolment Survey, 2008

A careful examination of the responses given by survey participants on such issues as school plant and facilities, school safety, program quality and academic achievement, tuition cost, etc., provide tremendous insights with respect to low and declining enrolment in Adventist schools.

***School Plant, Facilities, Location and Resources***

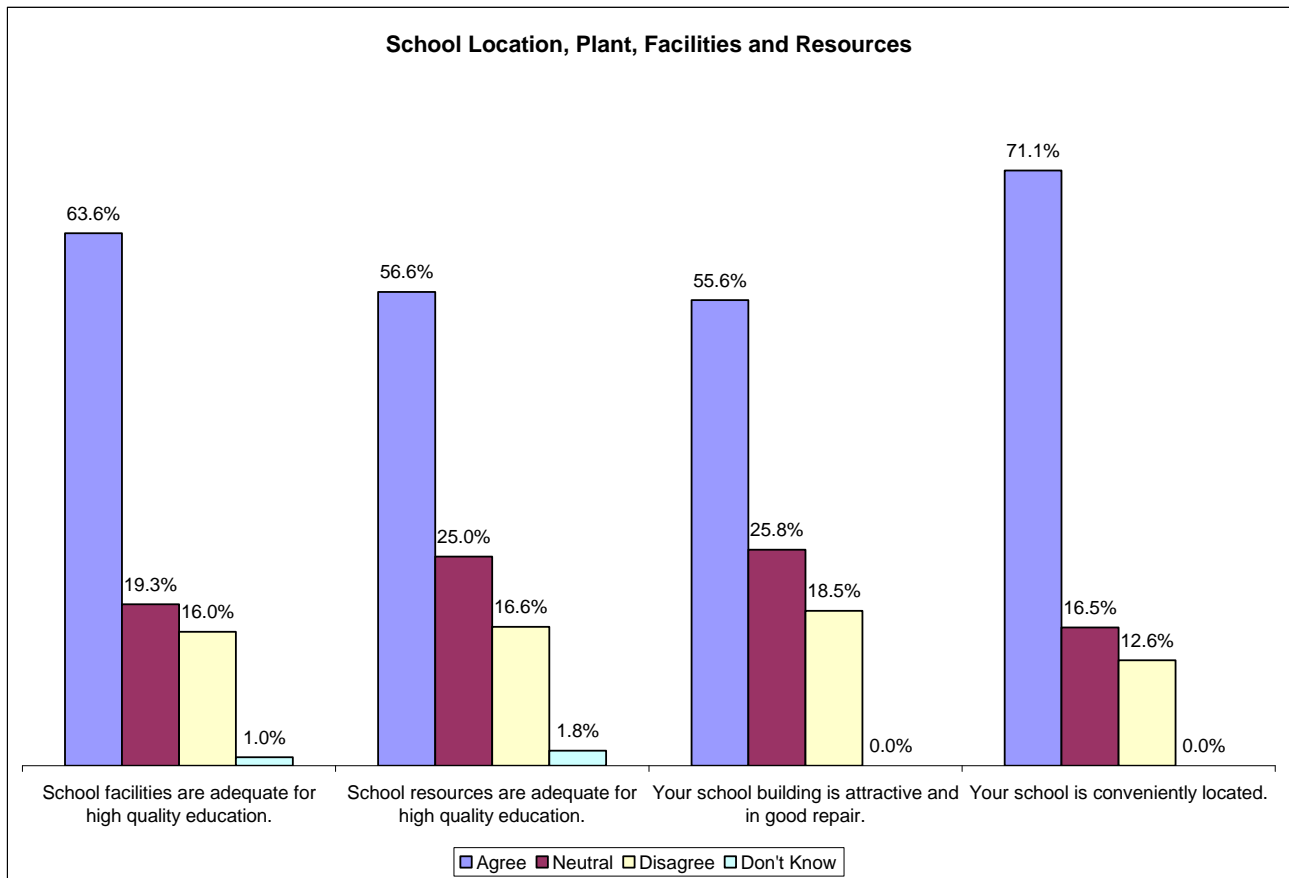
Though appearances can be deceptive, the look of the school plant and its environment create important first impressions of the school. Figure 3 is a graphic representation of what stakeholders said about their school plant, facilities, location and resources. When asked if their schools were attractive and in good repair, 55.6% said they were, 25.8% were neutral about the appearance of their school, and 18.5% believed their school was not.

With respect to facilities, a total of 63.6% of the survey respondents agreed that their school facilities were adequate for high quality education, whereas 19.3% were neutral, 16% disagreed, and 1.0% did not know. With respect to resources, 56.6% of the

respondents agreed that their school had the resources in place to promote high quality education. In contrast, 25% were neutral on the matter, 16.6% disagreed and 1.8% didn't know. The fact that only 57% believed their school had the resources to support a high quality program places doubt on the ability of a significant number of schools to deliver high quality education, and feeds the perception that Adventist schools offer a lower standard of education than the public schools.

School location is an important factor in the equation of school choice, especially for parents with children in the elementary grades. A total of 71.1% of respondents agreed that their schools were conveniently located, but this does not necessarily mean that their schools were located within walking distance of the students' homes. Rather, it most likely meant that the schools were not difficult to get to by public transportation or by private car if working parents, for example, chose to drive their children to school on their way to work. Several survey participants commented later that the word "convenient" was a relative term, and should have been more accurately defined. The neutral response of 16.5% of respondents and the 12.6 % who believed their school was not conveniently located suggests, however, that some schools are difficult to access and that transportation would pose a problem for some families unless special arrangements could be made. Earlier it was noted that some students traveled long distances to get to school, and in the majority of cases, the schools did not arrange bussing service.

**Figure 3**



Source: Canada Adventist School Enrolment Survey, 2008  
(See Appendix D: 17, 18, 21, 22)

**School Safety**

In an era of increasing school violence, one of the chief concerns of parents is to find a school that offers a safe haven for their children. Parents want to know that when they leave their children at school, their safety is not at risk. 57.3% of survey respondents agreed and 28.5% strongly agreed making it a total of 86% of respondents who classified their school as a safe place for students. Only 3.8% disagreed that their school was safe, and 10.6% had no opinion on the matter (see Appendix, D#19).

Another way of determining the safety of a school is to look at the attitude and behavior of its students. Are the students well behaved? Do they have respect for their

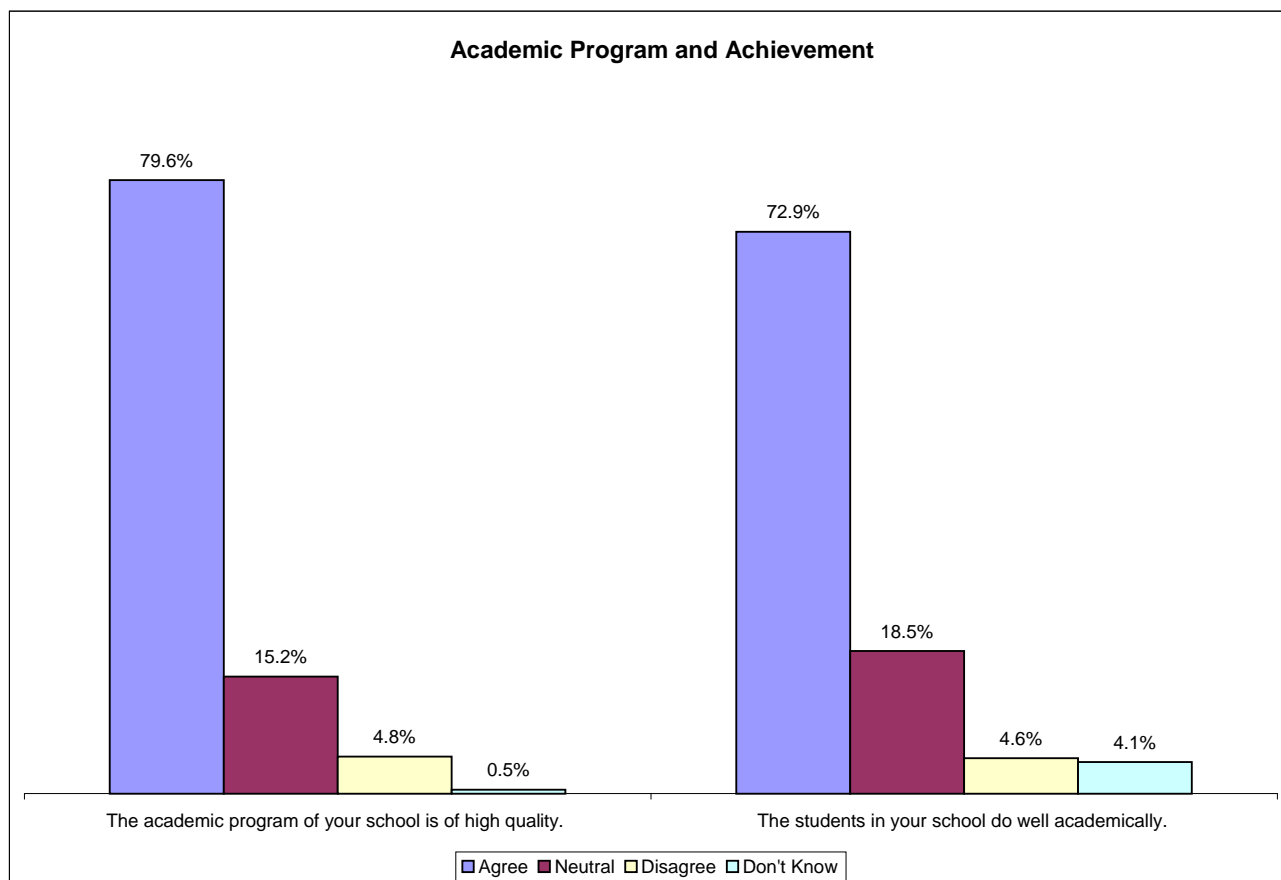
teachers and for one another? Are they co-operative? In other words, are the students attending the school well-disciplined? When asked to comment on the behavior of students, 64.1% of the respondents agreed that their students were co-operative and respectful and 13.8% strongly agreed – a total of 77.9% who rated their students as respectful and co-operative. This result supports the idea mentioned above of a positive, safe school environment. Only 1.8% disagreed, 0.8% strongly disagreed, and 18.8% gave a neutral response (see Appendix D, #33).

### ***Program Quality and Academic Achievement***

Program quality has to do with the rigor of the curriculum, the breath (range of subjects) of the program offering, and program delivery. Today's parents want to know that the schools their children are attending are delivering an academic program that will adequately equip them for further education in any post secondary institution of learning. When asked to comment on whether their school delivered a high quality education, 79.6% of respondents believed it did (see Figure 4). It is important to note, however, that 15.2% of the respondents were of a neutral opinion, and 4.8% disagreed.

Schools must provide a high quality academic program, but it is equally important that they must deliver it in a way that translates into students' high performance. When asked to state whether or not students who attend Adventist schools do well academically, 72.9% of respondents believed that they did (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**



Source: Canada Adventist School Enrolment Survey, 2008  
(See Appendix D: 20, 28)

A related issue is the number of graduates from Adventist schools who choose to pursue postsecondary education. 44.9% of respondents believed that most graduates from their schools go on to college or university and 15.9% strongly agreed – a total of 60.8% who responded affirmatively. 14.6% of the respondents were neutral and 19.7% said that they did not know (see Appendix, D #29).

### ***Extra Curricular Activities***

Extracurricular activities are those programs for students, supervised by teacher volunteers, that fall outside the normal curriculum of the school. Sports programs (both intramural and intermural) and clubs such as math and drama are examples of such

activities. 46.3% of survey respondents agreed that their school provided a variety of extracurricular activities, and 18.8% strongly agreed – a total of 64.4% who rate their schools as doing well in this area. 35.6% were uncertain or believed their schools did not provide a variety of extracurricular activities (see Appendix D, #23).

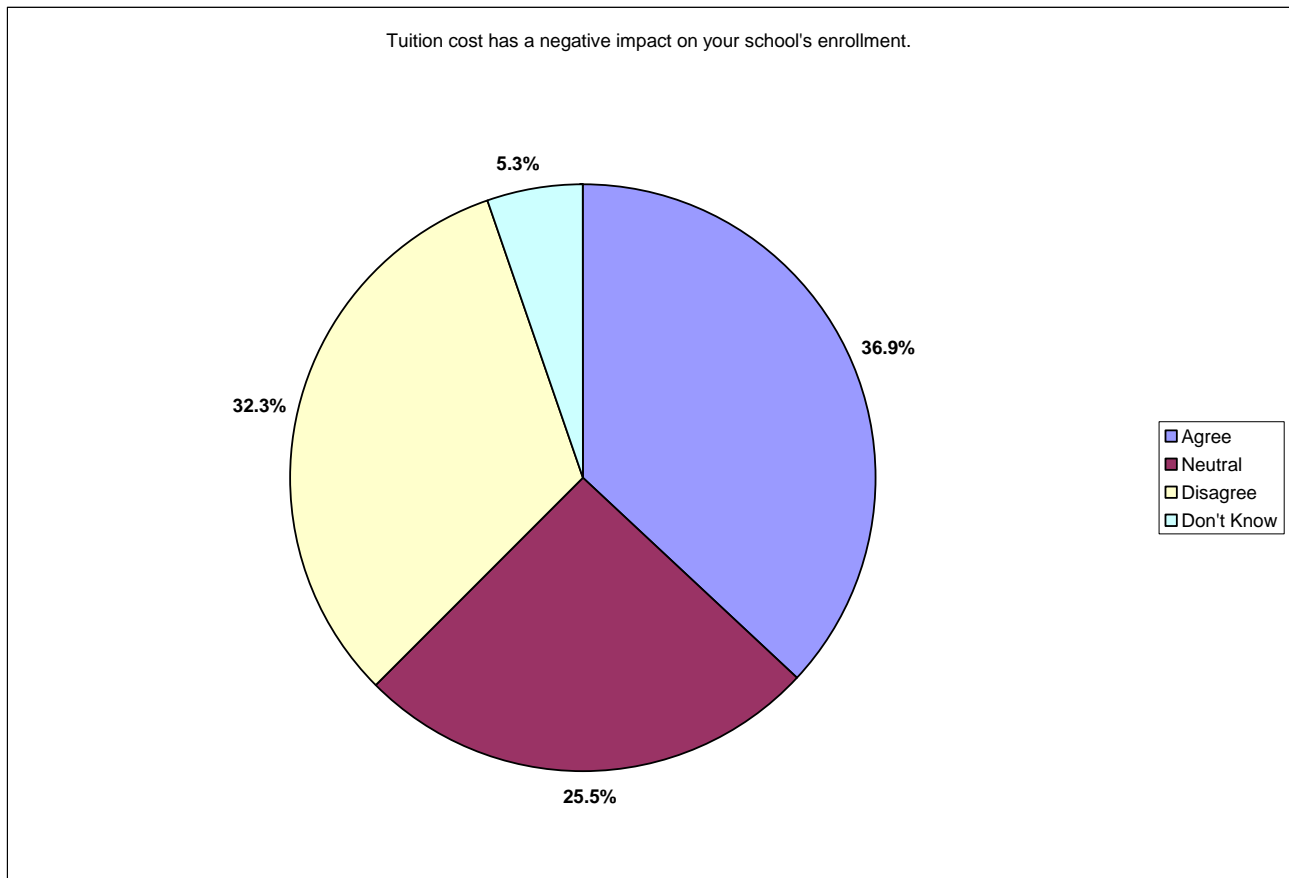
### ***Involvement in Religious Activities***

Survey participants were also asked to rate their students participation in religious activities. Religious activities were not defined, but could include anything from formal worship before classes start, prayer at the beginning of each class, outreach programs, Weeks of Prayer, and other programs having a spiritual focus. Since Adventist schools are established to help Adventist children develop a Christ-like character, it is important to determine the involvement of students in spiritual activities. Survey results show that a total of 76.8% of respondents believed that their students enjoy participating in religious activities (see Appendix D, #32).

### ***Tuition Cost***

High tuition cost is often cited as the cause of low enrolment in Adventist schools. In an attempt to find out how compelling this argument is, survey participants were asked whether tuition cost had a negative impact on their current school enrolment. Figure 5 shows that 36.9% of the respondents believed that tuition cost had a negative impact on their school enrolment. In contrast, 25.5% gave a neutral response, 32.3% disagreed and 5.3% didn't know. The fact that 63.1% of respondents were unconvinced that tuition had a negative impact on enrolment suggests that cost may not be the most compelling factor affecting low enrolment in Adventist schools.

**Figure 5**



Source: Canada Adventist School Enrolment Survey, 2008  
(see Appendix D: 25)

***Retention Rate***

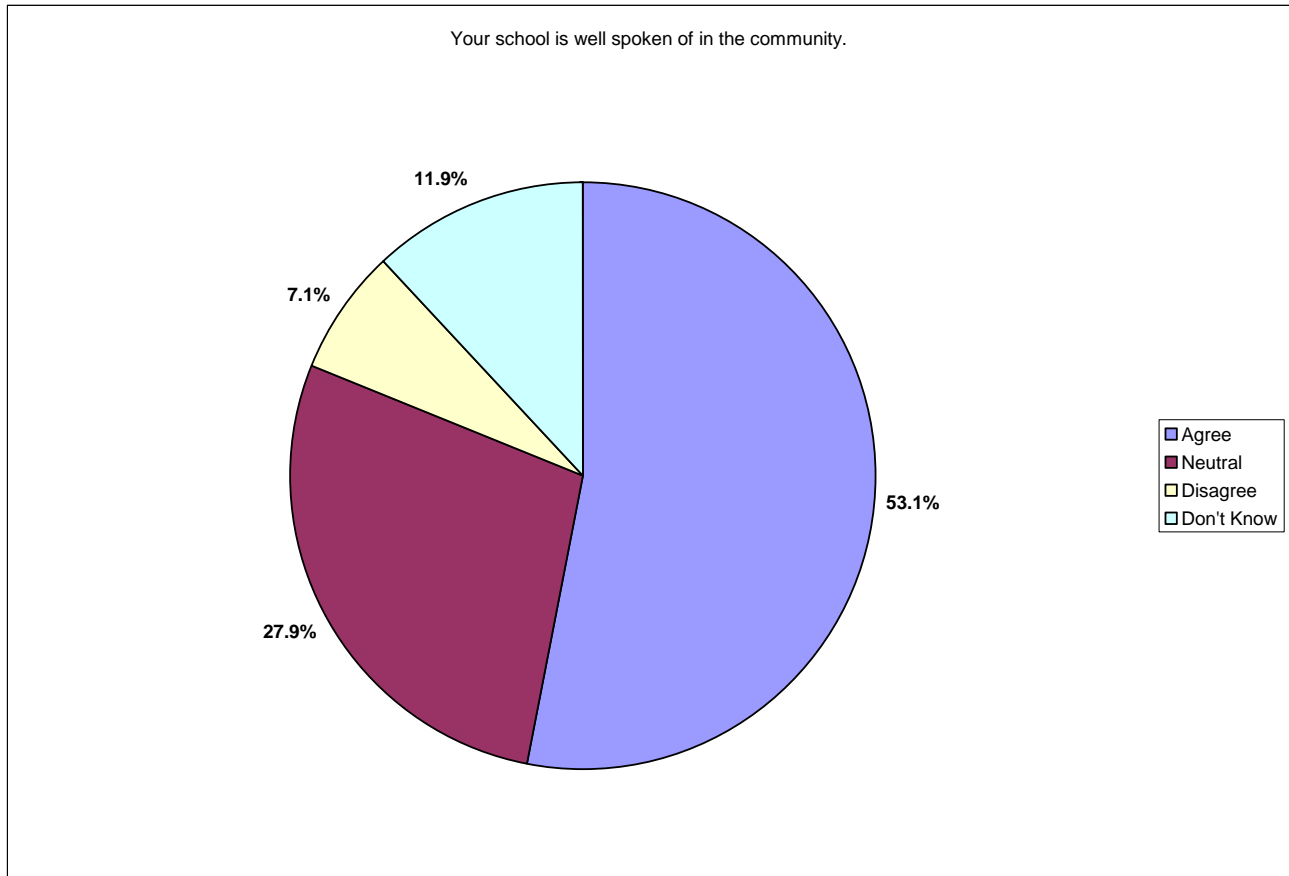
The retention rate of a school has to do with the school's ability to hold on to its students from year to year, an important factor to consider when accounting for school enrolment. The retention rate may be related to the quality of the school program, reflecting in turn on its teaching personnel and school governance. It is therefore important for a school to have a good retention rate, for this can impact the school's credibility. When asked to comment on their school's retention rate, 51.5% of the respondents agreed that their school had a high retention rate and 11.2% strongly agreed, making it a total of 62.7%.

21.1 % had a neutral response, 9.4% disagreed, 1.3% strongly disagreed and 5.6% did not know (see Appendix D, #3).

### ***Community Perception***

The ability of a school to thrive and be on the cutting edge is often affected by how the community perceives it. Stakeholders who have a vested interest in their school may speak highly of it, but if the school is not perceived as a quality school or as a school that adds value to the community in which it is located, it will have little or no support from the community as far as the recruitment of students is concerned. With this in mind, survey participants were asked to give their impressions of how their school was perceived in the local community. Figure 6 shows that 53.1% of survey respondents believed that their communities have a positive view of their school. The fact that 27.9% gave a neutral response to this question and 19% disagreed or did not know indicate that a serious disconnect exists between many Adventist schools and their communities.

**Figure 6**



Source: Canada Adventist School Enrolment Survey, 2008  
(See Appendix D: 31)

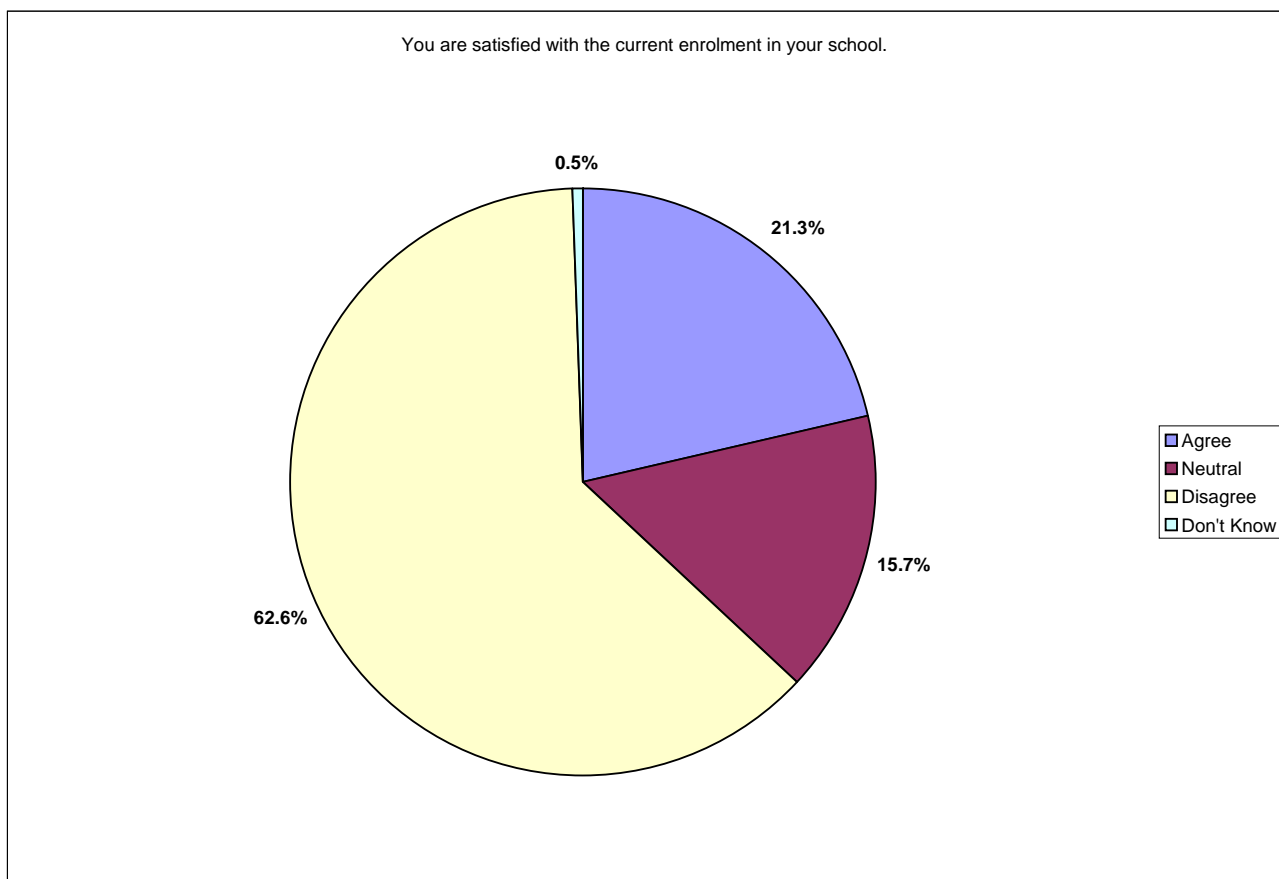
***Satisfaction with Current Enrolment***

In response to comments on the enrolment challenges faced by Adventist schools and the SDACC's desire to increase enrolment across the union, a teacher at a recent teachers' convention commented that she had no desire to increase the 15-student enrolment in her small school. Most of her students, she explained, were from a non-Adventist background and were uncooperative. An enrolment increase would only add more stress to her life and have a detrimental effect on her health.

Her rather unexpected response provides another dimension to the issue of low school enrolment. When survey participants were asked if they were satisfied with their

current enrolment, 62.6% replied that they were not satisfied, 15.7% were neutral, and only 21.3% were satisfied (Figure 7).

**Figure 7**



Source: Canada Adventist School Enrolment Survey, 2008  
(See Appendix D: 34)

### **Stakeholders' Support for Seventh-day Adventists Schools**

To what extent do stakeholders support and promote Adventist education? This section will consider stakeholders' responses to the marketing of their schools. A dynamic relationship exists between school enrolment and how well school programs are supported and promoted by stakeholders. In other words, enrolment is more likely to increase when the stakeholders play an active role in marketing their school.

### ***Support from Parents***

Survey participants were asked to indicate whether or not parents were very supportive of Adventist schools, and whether or not they were engaged in promoting Adventist education through positive word of mouth. A total of 67.5% of respondents agreed that parents were very supportive (see Appendix D, # 24). Similarly, a total of 64.9% of survey respondents felt that parents were engaged in promoting their schools through positive word of mouth (see Appendix D, #45). Though an average of 66.2% of respondents believed that parents are supporters and promoters of Adventist education, one third (33.8%) think otherwise. This means that many schools in the Adventist school system may not have the parental support base that is critical for promoting their school.

### ***Support from Students***

When survey participants were asked to give their opinions on students' support for their schools, a total of 70.6% felt that students were supportive (see Appendix D, #26). In a recent interview of students in a small K-10 school in British Columbia, a similar response was given. Students were asked to indicate by a show of hands if they would be willing to promote their school among their friends who were attending other schools. The majority of hands went up. When asked to indicate what was special about their school that would make them want to promote it, students talked about the family atmosphere of the school and the supportive teachers they had. A few students expressed contrary opinions. The most frequent objection was the smallness of the school and the limitations it put on such things as sports and the opportunity to have a wide circle of age-appropriate friends.

A related question dealt with the involvement of students in community projects. How students relate to their community and how the community perceives them can have a positive or negative impact on the school. Adventist school leaders are encouraged to involve their students in community activities such as visiting nursing homes, giving musical

programs, conducting stop-smoking programs, participating in cleaning up the environment, etc. When survey respondents were asked if students in their schools were engaged in community service projects, a total of 66.1% answered affirmatively, 20.1% expressed no opinion on the matter, 9.1% disagreed and 4.6% did not know (see Appendix D, #27).

### ***Support from Teachers***

Teachers are expected to be strong supporters and promoters of their schools. In the Adventist school system, teachers, and principals are expected to visit churches with their students to promote Christian education. They may showcase their school choir, give a PowerPoint presentation or show a DVD highlighting different aspects of their school program, or simply talk about the benefits of being in an Adventist school. With this in mind, survey participants were asked to give their opinion on teachers' support and promotion of Adventist schools. A total of 81.4% agreed that Adventist teachers support and promote their schools through positive word of mouth (see Appendix D, #47).

### ***Support from Board Members***

Board members are key stakeholders in the Adventist school system. They are the ones who make important decisions on the hiring and firing of teachers, school management and operation, school marketing, budget allocation, etc. It is therefore expected that board members would be champions of Adventist education. When survey participants were asked their opinion on whether school board members supported and promoted their schools through positive word of mouth, a total of 65.9% answered affirmatively, 18.6% gave a neutral response, 5.9% disagreed and 9.7% did not know (see Appendix D, #46). When one third of the survey participants (34.1%) are unable to give an affirmative response, this indicates that in some jurisdictions, strong support from board members for Adventist education is seriously lacking, and this will certainly undermine the school program.

### ***Support from Survey Participants***

When asked to what extent they, as stakeholders, supported and promoted the schools with which they were associated, 50.9% of participants agreed that they supported their school and 19.0% strongly agreed, for a total of 69.9% of stakeholders who support and promote their schools in church and community (see Appendix D, #38). What is surprising is that 23.3% of respondents were neutral about their support and 6.6% did not support and promote their schools. Indeed, it is a matter of concern that 29.9% of stakeholders could not categorically say that they fully supported and promoted their schools.

### ***Support from Pastors***

The person wielding the greatest influence over a church congregation is the pastor of the church. In school constituencies where the pastor shows keen interest in the local school and dedicates his time to promoting Christian education to his congregation, school enrolment tends to go up. The opposite effect is seen when pastoral support for the church school is lacking. When survey participants were asked to give their opinions on whether or not the local pastor promoted the church school from the pulpit, 32.8% of the respondents agreed that he did and 10.7% strongly agreed, for a total of only 43.5%. On the other hand, 24.7% of respondents were unsure of pastoral support, 28.5% believed the pastor was not supportive, and 3.3% didn't know (Appendix D, #39). Since a majority of respondents (56.5%) felt that strong pastoral support for Adventist schools is lacking, and since pastoral leadership in school promotion is crucial for school growth and development, conference leadership must develop a strategy to address this situation.

### ***Support from Church Members***

When asked if members of their churches fully supported their schools, only 49% of participants responded affirmatively (35% agreed and 14% strongly agreed). 24.9% of

respondents could not make up their minds on this issue, 24.1% disagreed, and 2.0% didn't know (see Appendix D, #40). A strong correlation exists between survey respondents' perception of pastoral support (43.5%) and their perception of church members' support (49%) for Adventist education, which suggests the great influence the local pastor has on his local congregation. It would seem safe to assume that the greater the support from the pastor for Christian education, the greater the support of his congregation for Christian education.

### **Marketing Plans and Marketing Strategies**

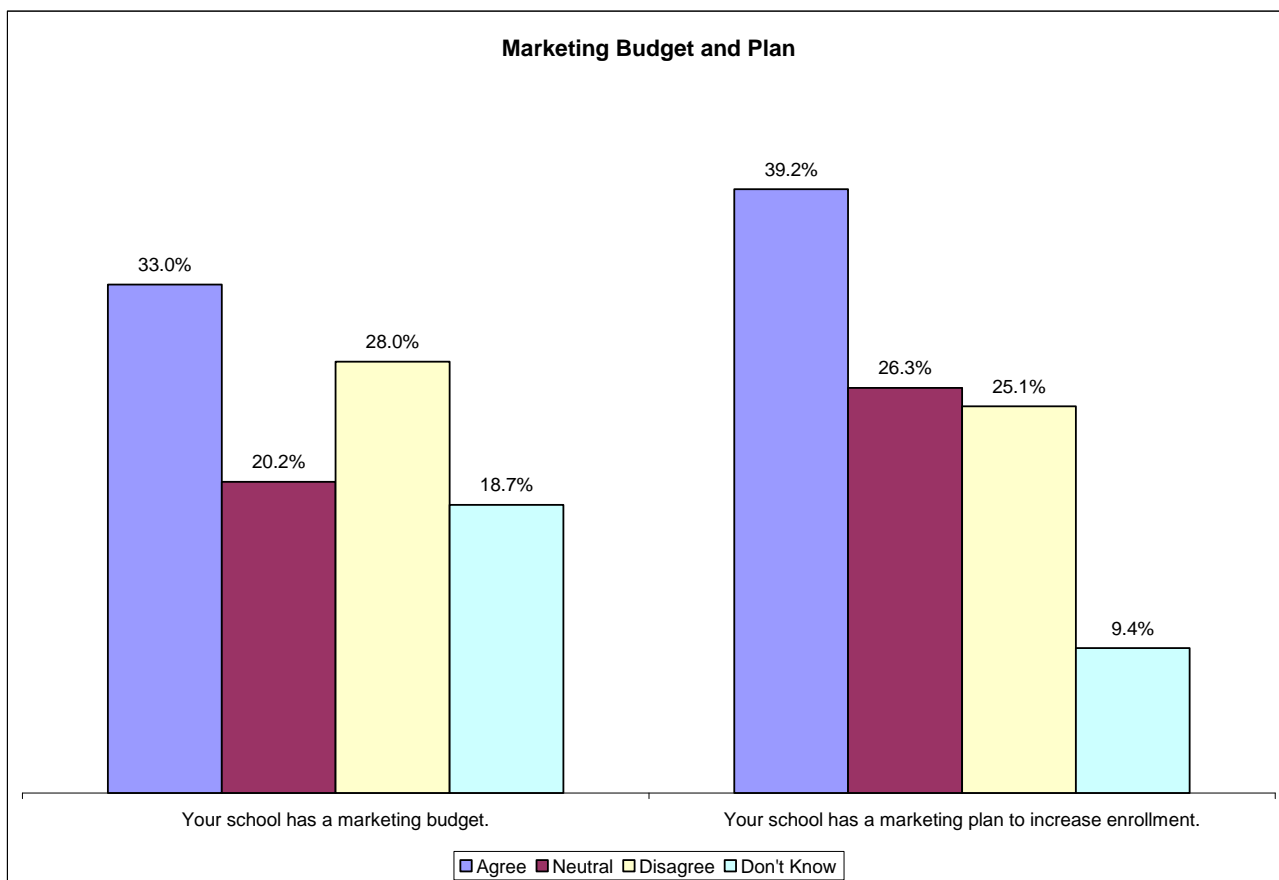
"Marketing means running a first-rate business and letting people know about it" (Phillips & Rasberry, p.1/2). The previous paragraphs examined how survey respondents perceived the support for Adventist education given by different stakeholders. Underlying that support is the belief that the quality of education provided by Adventist schools was worth talking about and sharing with others. Also emphasized in the previous section was the importance of promoting Adventist schools, and a majority of survey respondents affirmed that key stakeholders were involved in marketing their schools through positive word of mouth. Andy Sernovitz describes word of mouth marketing as "...your most important source of new business" and "your most effective marketing strategy" (Sernovitz, p.38). But marketing a product or service must involve more than word of mouth marketing, as important as that may be. This section, then, will explore other aspects of marketing as they relate to Adventist education and declining enrolment.

#### ***Having a Marketing Plan and Budget***

Participants were asked to comment on whether or not their school had a marketing plan to increase enrolment. Figure 8 shows that 39.2% of survey respondents confirmed that their school had a marketing plan to increase school enrolment. In contrast, 26.3%

could not say whether or not their school had a marketing plan, 25.1% believed their schools did not have a plan and 9.4% did not know. This suggests that a majority of the schools do not have a marketing plan that was shared or made known to all stakeholders. Similarly, when asked if their school had a budget set aside for marketing, only 33.0% responded positively, 20.2% were neutral on the matter, 28.0% believed no budget had been set aside, and 18.7% did not know. These results strongly suggest that despite low school enrolment, many Adventist schools do not consider it a priority to have a marketing plan and a marketing budget for their schools.

**Figure 8**



Source: Canada Adventist Enrolment Survey, 2008  
(See Appendix D: 36)

### ***Promotion in Church Bulletins***

Traditionally, the church bulletin has been the preferred means of school promotion. It is used to promote school events, to give information on school registration, and even to announce teaching vacancies and solicit applications. Survey respondents were asked if their schools used the church bulletin, brochures and flyers for marketing, and whether the schools were listed in the local telephone directory. Figure 9 shows that 79% of respondents said that their schools use the church bulletin, brochures and flyers for promotion, and 84% said that their schools are listed in the local telephone directory (See Appendix D, #43).

### ***Promotion in Local Print Media***

Do Adventist schools use the local print media to promote their schools? The use of print media is a good way to let the community know about the good things happening in Adventist schools. Through this means of communication, the public at large can become better acquainted with what makes Adventist schools distinctive. Figure 9 shows that when participants were asked to comment on this issue, 42.4% said they did not use the local newspaper to promote their school. In contrast, only 23.9% said they did, 17.3% did not know and 16.3% gave a neutral response.

### ***Open House Visits***

Stakeholders were asked if their schools conducted open house visits to attract students. This is perhaps the easiest and most popular way to promote a school's program in the community it serves. Parents and interested parties are able to visit the school to take a look at the facilities, to see students' work on display, to ask questions and to assess the suitability of the school for their children. A well put together open house program can influence the decision of parents to send their child to a particular school. When asked to comment on this issue, 63.5% of survey participants said that they promoted their schools

by conducting open house visits. 20.5% were neutral on the matter, 14.6% disagreed and 2.3 % did not know (see Figure 9).

### ***Promotion through Incentives***

On the question of the school providing incentives to attract students, whether by reduced tuition, scholarships or other means, only 43.4% said that their schools had enrolment incentives in place. 26.7% did not give a definite opinion on the matter, 20.4% said their schools had no incentives, and 9.6% did not know (see Figure 9).

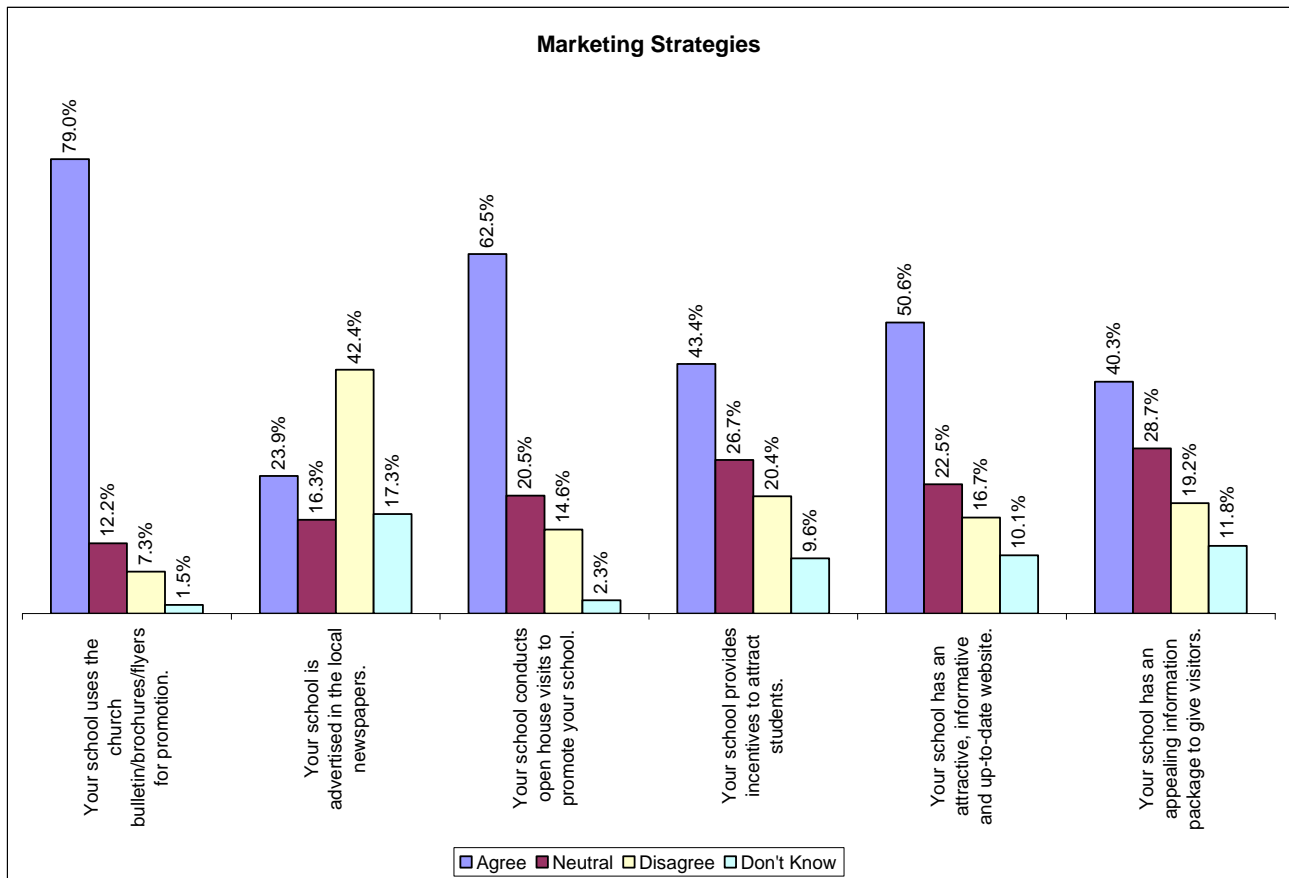
### ***Attractive Websites***

Perhaps one of the easiest ways to promote a school is by having an attractive, informative website. In this age of the instant sharing of information through the Internet, one cannot underestimate the importance of having an informative, up-to-date website. By looking at a school's website, parents can have all the information they need to make an informed decision on enrolling their child in a particular school. When asked if their school had an attractive, informative and up-to-date website, only 50.6% gave an affirmative answer. 22.5% did not give an opinion on the matter, 16.7% said the school did not have a current website and 10.1% did not know (see Figure 9). The fact that half of the respondents could not give a definite, positive response suggests that, from a marketing point of view, this often neglected area needs to be addressed.

### ***An Appealing Information Package***

Having an appealing information package to give to visitors who inquire about a school is another important way to influence parents who are school shopping. Survey participants were asked if their school had an appealing information package to give to visitors. 40.3% agreed that their schools had such a package. In contrast, 28.7 % gave a neutral response, 19.2% disagreed and 11.8% did not know (see Figure 9). This is another area of neglect that can be easily addressed.

**Figure 9**



Source: Canada Adventist School Enrolment Survey, 2008  
(Appendix FD:7, 41, 42, 43, 44, 48, 49)

The following section looks more closely at the variables affecting Adventist school enrolment by linking them to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the Adventist school system. Stakeholders were asked five open-ended questions to elicit their candid opinions on the variables affecting school enrolment and what they see as possible solutions to the enrolment dilemma. A few of these questions may appear repetitive since data from previously asked questions also address some of these issues. Consistency of the responses to similarly asked questions in a different format should provide a sound basis for rational judgment.

## **Survey Open-ended Question 1: Reasons for Not Attending**

Survey respondents gave several reasons in response to the first question: *What in your opinion is the reason for some Adventist parents not sending their children to your school?* These responses have been classified into five categories: tuition, marketing, school plant/location, program/personnel issues and competition. The answers to this question reveal the opportunities and challenges each area presents to the Adventist school system.

### ***Tuition***

High tuition was the number one reason given by 36% of the respondents (see Figure 10) as to why parents did not send their children to the Adventist school in their school district. "Location may be a reason but I think the main problem is that the fees are too high," states one respondent. "The cost is too high. Many parents I know cannot afford to send their children here," says another. "Lack of funds!!! That's why I didn't go!" declares another (see Appendix E, Question 1).

Despite the subsidies given by the province, the local church and the Conference, many parents who would like to have their children educated in a church school cannot afford the tuition. The high cost of tuition as a variable which has a negative impact on enrolment in Adventist schools is supported by Mike Lekic's findings that most Adventists parents would like to see the conference and local church subsidies increased to make Adventist education more affordable (Lekic, 2005, p.101).

### ***Marketing***

19% of survey respondents (see Figure 10), state that poor marketing is the second reason for declining enrolment in the Adventist school system. "I think that the school is not marketed effectively. It is not promoted," declared one respondent.

Respondents indicated that some parents were too close to the church school and therefore saw more imperfections than perfections. In their opinion, bad word of mouth by disgruntled parents damages a school's reputation. As one respondent put it, "Reputation – not willing to forget the past and look to the future." "I feel that some of our parents speak badly of our school in their churches and that we are gaining a bad reputation in the community," wrote another respondent. And yet another commented on "the cycle of negative stories that are circulating about the school from the history of years of incidents" (see Appendix E, Question 1). In the absence of a good school information system and innovative marketing which seeks to allay some parents' apprehensions about the school system, many negative and often erroneous impressions of the school program, policies and practices go unaddressed. Hargreaves and Fulani argued that the success of an organization is linked to the quality of its relationship to the external environment (Hargreaves & Fulani, p.64).

Several survey respondents also felt that the local pastor in some school districts did not support and promote Adventist education. One survey respondent put it this way: "Local church pastors do not support Adventist education; hence do not promote it at their churches. They are supposed to be board members and almost none attend any board meeting. They have no interest in supporting the local school. Some pastors' children don't even attend Adventist schools" (Appendix E, Question 1). Undoubtedly, this lack of pastoral support has a negative impact on school enrolment, since the local pastor is often viewed as a person wielding great influence over his congregation. Phillips and Rasberry note that "if somebody you trust suggests something is meaningful, that is more important than information presented in an impersonal way" (Phillips & Rasberry, 205, p.2/7). Similarly, one can argue that if someone you trust does not support and promote something, it would most likely be considered not worth having.

### ***School Plant/Location***

17% of the survey respondents believe that the school plant and facilities are also tied to declining enrolment (see Figure 10). “Facilities need a big improvement,” complained one respondent. “Located too far and not really very attractive,” observed another (Appendix E, Question 1). Unattractive school buildings, inadequate classroom space, lack of gym facilities, inadequate science labs and libraries, the inconvenient location of some schools and the absence of a school bussing service are all cited as contributing factors to the low enrolment in some Adventist schools. Respondents also felt that multi-grade schools located in the basement of churches would attract only those parents who already have a strong commitment to Adventist education (see Appendix E, Question 1). Lekic also found that many parents believed Adventist school facilities were inadequate for high quality education (Lekic, 2005, pp. 97, 101).

### ***Program/Personnel Issues***

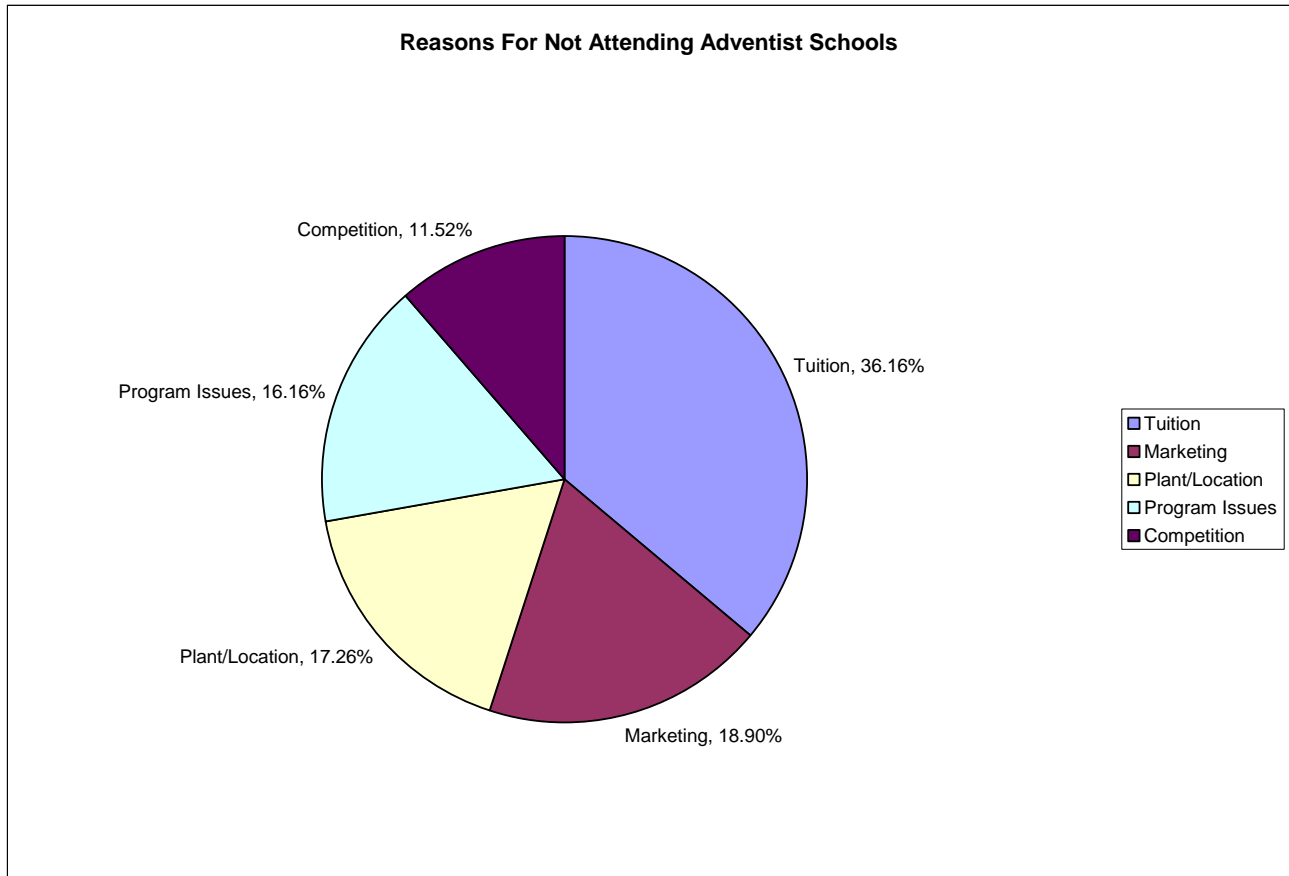
16% of the stakeholders (see Figure 10) viewed the problem of low enrolment from a program perspective. The main reason cited was the perception that Adventist schools do not offer a vigorous academic program. Parents desire a school that emphasizes high academics, but unfortunately, many parents perceive Adventist education as operating on the lower end of the academic totem pole, having a “poor reputation for academics” (Appendix E, Question 1). Other program issues raised have to do with extra-curricular activities, the multi-grade classroom and fewer subject options to choose from at the secondary level. Whereas Lekic found that the majority of his survey respondents had the positive perception that teachers were competent in their subject areas and that the academic program was of high quality, they were dissatisfied with extracurricular activities (Lekic, 2005, p.100).

“Bad experiences” is a personnel-related factor contributing to low enrolment in some schools. A bad experience might have been a conflict with a particular teacher or school administrator in the distant past which left the disgruntled parent with a grudge for the school system, thus giving opportunity for negative word of mouth. In some instances, bad experiences may have arisen because of a lack of confidence in or dissatisfaction with the current administration or a particular teacher (see Appendix E, Question 1).

### ***Competition***

12% of the survey respondents attributed low school enrolment in Adventist schools to competition from the public schools, other faith-based schools and home-schools. They argued that neighboring public schools are free and more conveniently located. Furthermore, Public schools offer a wider selection of options including technical/vocational subjects and have a more rigorous academic program, better facilities and many more resources to draw from. They also argued that some parents want their children to integrate into the mainstream of society and not be confined to a religious school perpetuating a narrow, religious view of the world (Appendix E, Question 1).

**Figure 10**



Source: Responses to Survey Open-ended Question 1, Appendix E

**Summary**

Tuition cost surfaces as the main reason survey respondents gave why many Adventist parents chose not to enroll their children in Adventist schools. This is especially true for middle or low income, single parents. But it is also true that many middle and low income single parents make enormous sacrifices to give their children a Christian education. Similarly, many middle income two-parent families who can afford the tuition choose not to send their children to Adventist schools. This suggests other variables which influence parents' choice of schools. Survey respondents believe that the poor marketing of Adventist education, program and personnel issues, school plant and facilities and their

location, and competition from the public school, home schooling and other faith-based schools have a negative impact on Adventist school enrolment. In developing a marketing strategy to address the low enrolment in Adventist schools, all these variables should be considered.

### **Survey Open-ended Question 2: Strengths**

Survey respondents identified five areas of strengths in response to the question: *What in your opinion is the greatest strength of your school?* These have been classified as: teachers, program, safe environment, spiritual focus, plant and facilities.

#### ***Teachers***

The greatest strength of the Adventist school system, according to 34% of survey respondents, is the quality of its teachers (see Figure 11). “Our teachers and their amazing, total dedication to the school and the students,” declared one respondent. “The faculty and staff that are committed to producing a quality SDA Christian education,” declared another (Appendix E, Question 2). Survey respondents commended teachers for their dedication and the personal interest they showed in the educational, spiritual and social development of their students. Survey respondents also commented on the cohesiveness of faculty and administration resulting in a positive learning experience for students. They talked about teachers possessing “strong spiritual leadership,” who “care for their students and are willing to go the extra mile for them,” especially those students who have “special needs” (Appendix E, Question 2). Survey respondents also cited the low student/teacher ratio in Adventist schools as contributing to the personal interaction that takes place between teacher and student. The positive, interpersonal relationship between teachers and students, and the perception that teachers constitute the greatest strength of the Adventist school system are also supported by Lekic’s research (Lekic, 2005, p.103).

## ***Program***

24% of survey respondents believe that the high quality program their schools offer constitutes the greatest strength of their school (see Figure 11). “The academic program of our school is of high quality compared to the other schools around,” declared one respondent. “The academic program and teachers' commitment,” said another (Appendix E, Question 2). The emphasis on high academics, combined with an emphasis on spiritual values, constitute the two aspects of Adventist education that seem to generate the most discussion.

Adventist educators promote excellence in all areas of school activities, so students are always motivated to do their best. Survey respondents also referred to the strong music programs found in many Adventist schools, which are often used effectively as a bridge of communication between the school and the community through the giving of Christmas concerts and special performances at community programs. The high academic rating given to Adventist schools by stakeholders is also supported by the results of Lekic's parent survey (Lekic, 2005, p. 100).

## ***Safe Environment***

A safe learning environment is identified by 21% of the respondents as the greatest strength of their school (see Figure 11). The Adventist school provides a “safe environment where students can develop and grow and be nurtured in Christian values”; it is a “caring and nurturing environment that strives to provide the best for all students” (Appendix E, Question 2). Contributing to this safe and positive learning environment is the strong parental support which is evident in parent involvement in various school activities, and the commitment of stakeholders to the philosophy and practice of Christian values. The majority of survey respondents to Lekic's survey agreed that Adventist schools provide a safe and orderly environment for their students (Lekic, 2005, p.104).

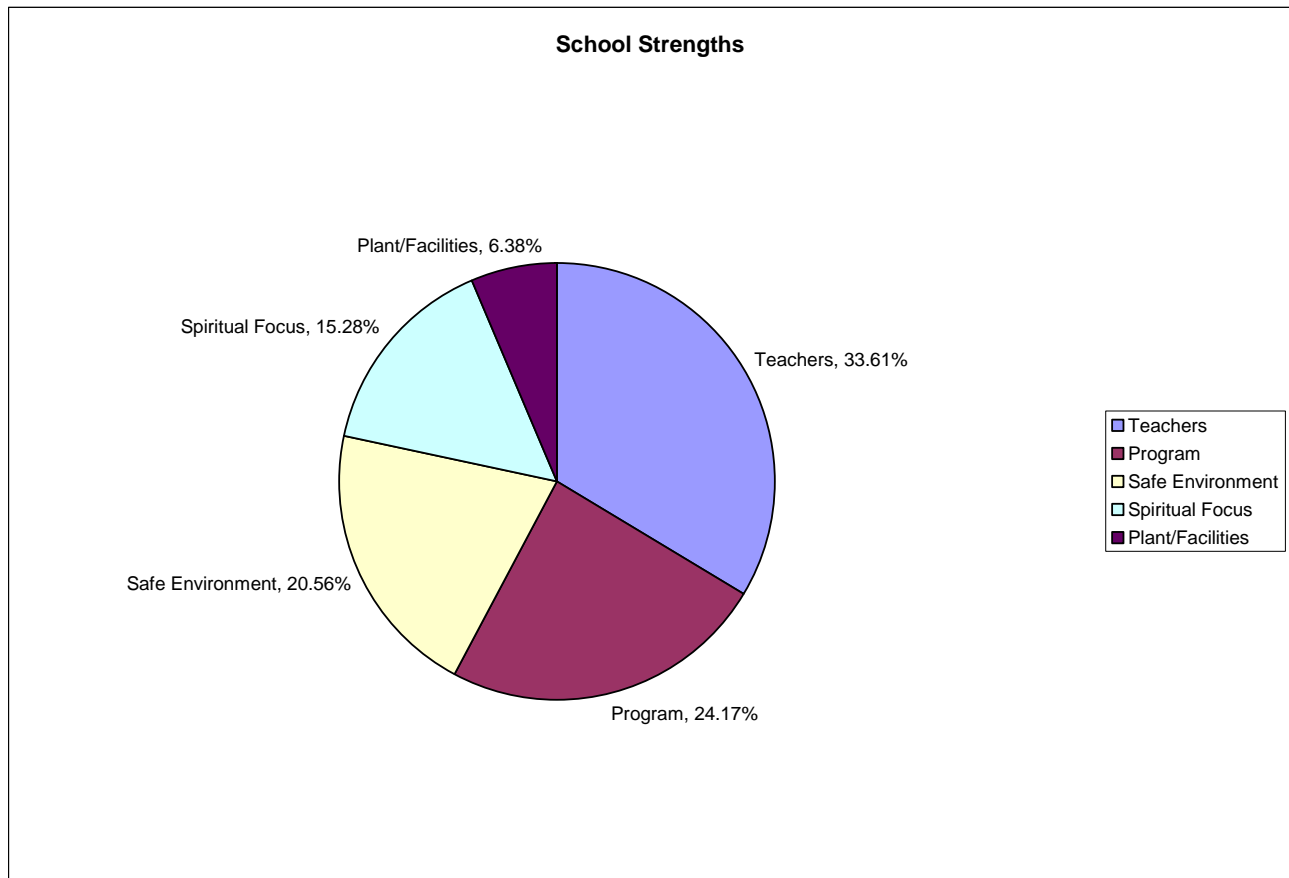
### ***Spiritual Focus***

Spiritual focus is cited by 15% of respondents as the greatest strength of their school (see Figure 11). “The greatest strength is the ‘spiritual development’ of the youth,” declared one respondent. Another said, “Spiritual focus – the students here are very Christ-centred because of our spiritual focus.” “It is Christ-centred. The beliefs and values of the Adventist church are respected at this school and they are taught to the students,” said another (Appendix E, Question 2). Spiritual focus is indeed a focal point of the Adventist school system, and, perhaps, the one main reason many Adventist parents sacrifice to send their children to an Adventist school. This is another area of strength which is supported by Lekic who observed that his survey respondents “had the most positive attitude toward the perception that students are being helped at the school to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ” (Lekic, 2005, p. 99).

### ***Plant and Facilities***

The appearance, size and location of some schools were seen by some respondents as a drawing card for enrolment. “We have a really wonderful building and property,” declared one respondent. Another simply stated, “Location. Appearance” (Appendix E, Question 2). Some Adventist schools are located in rural settings in the midst of nature, thus providing an engaging environment for learning. Since most schools have a capacity to enroll fewer than 100 students, some respondents view the small school as an advantage for greater interaction between teacher and student. The small school provides a “family atmosphere” (Appendix E, Question 2). Only 6% of respondents, however, rated school plant and facilities as a strength.

**Figure 11**



Source: Responses to Survey Open-ended Question 2, Appendix E)

### **Summary**

Based on the response of 360 stakeholders, the greatest strength of the Adventist school system lies in the quality of its teachers. Their commitment, spiritual focus, caring attitude and willingness to go the extra mile to see their students succeed are traits that make them indispensable and much appreciated. Program quality, a safe environment and spiritual focus also featured prominently in the ranking. Only 6% of stakeholders identified plant/facilities as a strength of the Adventist school system. This suggests a need to focus on plant/facilities improvement – image improvement – as a selling point for Adventist education.

### **Survey Open-ended Question 3: Weaknesses**

Survey respondents identified several areas of weakness when they were asked to respond to the question: *What in your opinion is the greatest weakness of your school?*

The areas identified have been classified as: Personnel, Plant, Program, Marketing, Finance and Lack of Support.

#### ***Personnel***

Lack of vision and long range planning by administration and poor communication with parents which resulted in misunderstandings, disagreements and hard feelings were two of the main charges made against the school administration by 26% of respondents (see Figure 12). Respondents also complained about administration's lack of support for teachers and their lack of involvement in after-school programs. They complained that teaching principals are overworked and are incapable of managing their schools effectively when simultaneously carrying a heavy teaching load (see Appendix E, Question 3).

Some respondents cited disagreements between school boards and principals as negatively affecting school growth. Others cited the lack of leadership skills in principals, recognizing that many assume their role without any formal training in school administration. Some principals were also criticized for their inability to effectively discipline students and create a positive learning environment. Some teachers were criticized for being divisive instead of cohesive, for not fostering a team spirit. Survey respondents were upset with those "uncommitted staff who showed little interest in students' advancement or personal struggle" (see Appendix E, Question 3). They complained about low staff morale, poor communication between teachers and parents, teachers who do not set high academic standards for their students, and the lack of professionalism among some teachers (see Appendix E, Question 3).

It is paradoxical that in response to question #2, respondents cited teachers as the greatest strength of their schools, but in response to question #3, they cited personnel as their greatest weakness. How can this contradiction be explained? It seems that, in general, teachers (including principals) are seen as dedicated, caring workers who have the best interest of their students at heart, but in some schools, some teachers do not measure up to the expectations of stakeholders. Where this is the case, there is great dissatisfaction resulting in strained relationships which, directly or indirectly, have a negative impact on enrolment. While stakeholders applaud teachers for their dedicated service to Adventist education, they target specific areas of weaknesses such as administrators' lack of leadership skills or disagreement with specific teachers. Whatever the case, this is an area of concern that should be addressed.

### ***School Plant/Facilities***

Another main area of criticism was leveled against the school's physical plant, its facilities and location. 23% of respondents identified the school plant/facilities and location as a definite weakness in the Adventist school system (see Figure 12). "Our facilities are deteriorating. We are trying to raise money to build a new school," says one respondent. "Transportation is very difficult for the students and their parents and it is difficult to get the parents to volunteer and be involved because we are somewhat out of the way," observed another (see Appendix E, Question 3). Respondents complained that their school was too small, lacked adequate classroom space, and had no gym for physical education classes, no cafeteria and no library. They complained about the unattractive physical appearance of their school buildings and the inappropriateness of having to hold school in the basement of churches, which, in their opinion, contributes to the negative views people have about Adventist education (see Appendix E, Question 3).

## ***Program***

Criticism of the academic program varied. 17% of respondents commented on the low academics and the perception that the public schools provided parents with more opportunities for academic achievements with their wider variety of options and more resources to draw upon (see Figure 12). Examples included special education and French immersion programs which are unfortunately lacking in the Adventist school system. Some also commented that although the low student/teacher ratio provides for more interaction between teacher and students, it does not foster a wide range of student friendships since so few students attend the typical Adventist school. They expressed a desire for higher quality academics and more subject options at the secondary level and more single-grade classrooms at the elementary level since multi-grade classrooms place added stress on teachers with respect to lesson preparation and classroom management, especially if the class included special needs students. Criticism was also leveled against the lack of extra curricular activities, the absence of before and after school programs in many schools, and the lack of emphasis on the arts and sports (see Appendix E, Question 3).

Low enrolment adversely affects school stability, especially for schools not subsidized by the government. But it also affects the school programs in such areas as physical education and music where numbers count.

## ***Marketing***

17% of respondents linked low school enrolment to poor marketing of Adventist education. Low school enrolment creates the perception that Adventist schools are inferior. Stakeholders contended that the small school image presents a negative image to the public, indicating a school with limited subject offerings, few teachers, and multi-grade classes. Low enrolment, they argued, “is a sign of non-growth, a school that is struggling to stay open” (see Appendix E, Question 3).

Stakeholders assert that the lack of a marketing budget and a carefully thought through marketing strategy contribute to the low school enrolment in many of their schools. Effective marketing includes the support of key stakeholders. Schools that do not have the support of key stakeholders will not be able to offer a vibrant and robust program to their constituents because the energy of staff will be spent on outing fires, mending fences and building bridges. Respondents complained that when key stakeholders such as pastors do not support nor promote Adventist education, this jeopardizes the success of the local school.

In their book, *The Breakthrough Imperative*, authors Mark Gottfredson and Steve Schaubert identified two types of stakeholders who sabotage or contribute nothing to a change effort, who have no interest in performance improvement. They called people who actively work to undermine and sabotage change efforts “drillers,” and those who are content to go along for the ride but are not prepared to contribute anything to the change effort “passengers.” They suggest that for any change effort to be successful, organizations must get rid of the “drillers,” and try to convert the “passengers” into “rowers,” who are the champions that “will row the boat alongside you and lead performance improvement throughout the organization” (Gottfredson & Schaubert, 2008, pp. 254-255).

Survey respondents recognized that both “drillers” and “passengers” can be found in the Adventist school system. Action must be taken to get rid of the “drillers” and win the active support of the “passengers” if Adventist schools are to reach the level of performance that will retain current students and attract new ones. This means that Adventist church leadership must find ways to get key stakeholders to become the champions of Adventist education, and to implement a marketing strategy for growth and sustainability.

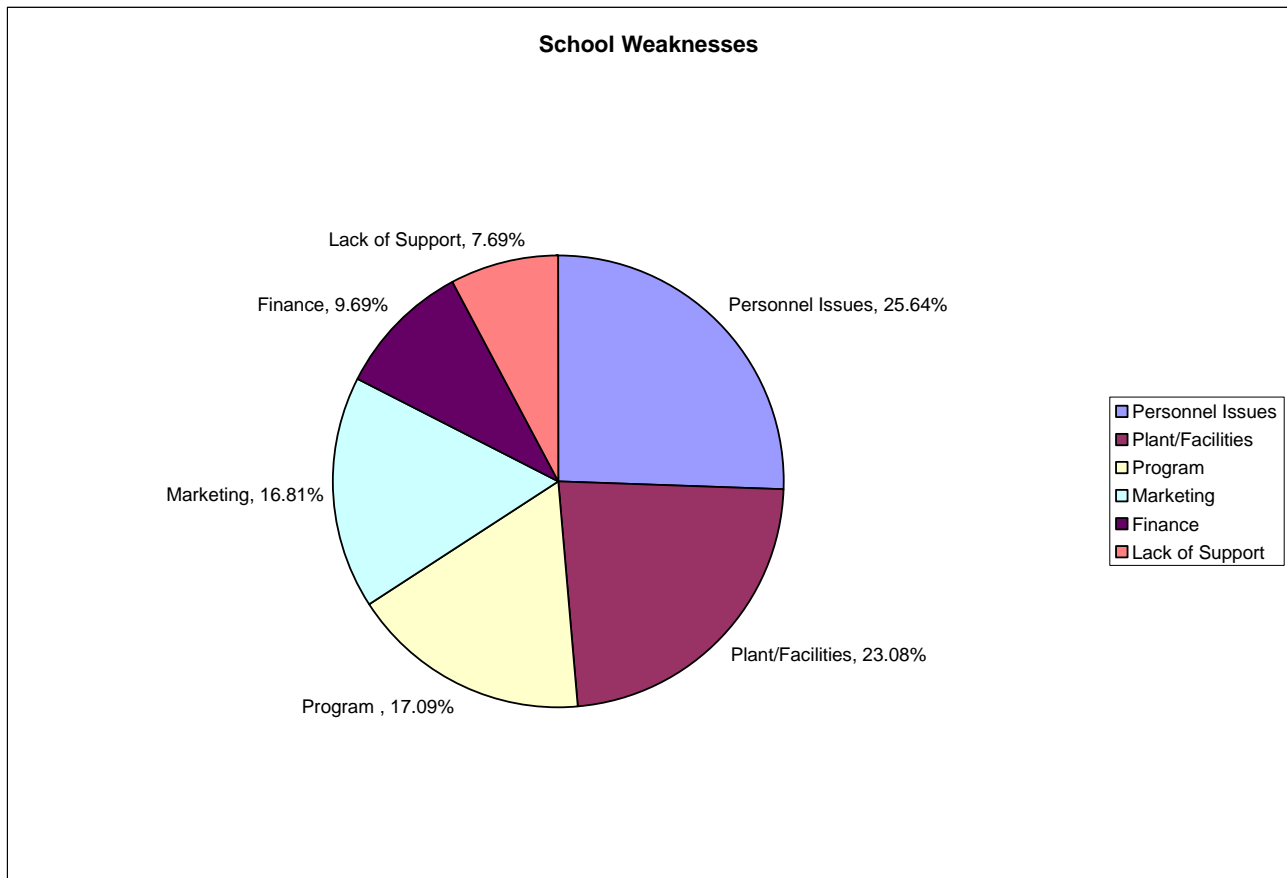
## ***Finance***

Lack of funds to run the school program was cited as a weakness by 10% of respondents (see Figure 12). Funds are needed to renovate and maintain the physical plant, to replace outdated textbooks, to acquire resources such as computer hardware and software, to establish special education programs, to run before and after school programs, to operate a bussing service, to hire teaching assistants to ease the instructional load of teaching principals and multi-grade teachers, to purchase gym equipment and to provide budgets for marketing (see Appendix E, Question 3).

## ***Lack of Support***

8% of respondents complained about the lack of support for their church school, particularly from parents who have issues with the administration and teachers (see Figure 12). They expressed a concern about uncooperative and uncommitted parents as well as uncommitted teachers who set low standards for their students. Some respondents also complained about pastors who showed little or no interest in their schools, and church board members who lacked leadership skills and vision (see Appendix E, Question 3). As previously discussed, all stakeholders must actively support Adventist education if it is to become the school system of first choice for Adventist members and community members who desire a Christian education for their children.

**Figure 12**



Source: Responses to Survey Open-ended Question 3, Appendix E)

**Summary**

As Figure 12 and the previous discussion indicate, survey respondents identified several weaknesses in the Adventist school system. Topping the list were concerns expressed about personnel followed closely by plant and facilities, program and marketing. These weaknesses cover a wide spectrum with each having some negative impact on enrolment. For example, 17% of stakeholders identified the lack of marketing as a weakness in the Adventist school system. Many concerns were raised about pastors not playing their part in promoting Adventist schools from their pulpits or even sending their children to Adventist schools. If this area of weakness goes unaddressed, many

parishioners will not see Adventist education as a priority and will not be willing to make the sacrifices needed to send their children to Adventist schools. In order to arrest and reverse the current declining enrolment trend in the Adventist school system, conference leadership must take decisive action to address the concerns raised by survey respondents.

#### **Survey Open-ended Question 4: Suggestions for Improvement**

Survey respondents made several suggestions in response to the question: *What in your opinion is the most effective way to get more students to enroll in your school?* This question can be considered as the flip side of the previous one, for addressing one simultaneously addresses the other. The responses to this important question may provide the key to the formation of a strategic action plan to put Adventist education at the forefront of private and parochial school education. The challenge of declining enrolment is not unique to the Adventist school system. Many school systems, including the public school system, are facing the same challenge which has resulted, for example, in the downsizing and amalgamation of several public schools in Toronto within the past ten years.

What can be done to attract more students and make the Adventist school system the first choice of Adventists parents and parents in the wider community who desire a faith-based education for their children? Respondents identified five areas of focus to increase school enrolment: marketing, program, tuition, school plant/facilities and personnel.

#### ***Marketing***

63% of respondents listed marketing as the key to enrolment growth for their school (see Figure 13). Stakeholders felt that word of mouth marketing is critical in influencing parental choice of school, for the testimony or recommendation of satisfied parents (customers) wields much more influence in marketing a service than any other marketing

tool. Phillips and Rasberry assert that the success of a business depends not on what the business says about itself, but on what others say about it (Phillips & Rasberry, 2005, p.15). Stakeholders seemed to understand this concept very well, expressing that, though the quality of education offered in the Adventist school system is relatively high, it is not being effectively marketed by stakeholders to attract customers who are shopping for this kind of quality service. They are calling for “positive word of mouth from students, parents and staff.” They emphasize the need for “word of mouth by satisfied parents, and encouragement by pastors and teachers.” They want to “encourage parents to become marketers to friends, neighbours and associates.” They want to see Adventist education being promoted “more actively in the churches” (see Appendix E, Question 4).

Stakeholders see merit in advertising their school through brochures, bulletins, posters and other types of marketing instruments. They certainly believe that school achievement should be celebrated in the local church and community using the print media. They believe the school should become more involved in the community to raise its community profile, and they recommend that schools hire or engage marketing personnel to help them devise short- and long-term marketing plans and strategies. They recommend additional open houses and insist that pastors should be more assertive in promoting Adventist education in their churches. Furthermore, stakeholders suggest that school administrators explore novel ways to provide incentives for parents, such as offering a discount for anyone who gets a new student to enroll in their school (see Appendix E, Question 4).

### ***Program***

17% of respondents felt that expanding their school’s program and enhancing its quality would attract more students (see Figure 13). One respondent captured the sentiment of the respondents in this statement: “If we were more seen as offering a quality

education and striving for academic excellence, more people might be encouraged to send their children.” Respondents contended that parents are interested in high academics, and in having more options such as art, drama, music, home economics and technical subjects. They want programs that cater to their children’s giftedness or special needs such as French immersion and special education. They want more extra curricular activities and sports, especially at the secondary level, and they want their children enrolled in a full K-12 program rather than a K-10. Schools must demonstrate high quality academics by showing that their students’ test scores are higher than those of public school students. Adventist schools must have a competitive advantage over public schools to attract Adventist children from the public schools (see Appendix E, Question 4). Expanded school programs, proof of high academics and good marketing plans would go a long way in solving the school enrolment problem.

### ***Tuition***

8% of respondents believe that lower tuition would boost school enrolment because they see a direct relationship between school enrolment and tuition cost (see Figure 13). “Lowering the cost of attending would be a BIG incentive to parents, especially those who are sending their children to public schools due to financial constraints,” wrote one respondent. Another expressed a similar viewpoint, suggesting that what is needed is “tuition assistance for the parents struggling with the monthly tuition” (see Appendix E, Question 4). Lowering tuition would give low income and single parent families greater access to Adventist education.

It is interesting to note that, though 36% of respondents stated that high tuition was the number one reason parents gave for not enrolling their children in Adventist schools (see Figure 10), only 8% of respondents believed that the best way to increase enrolment is by lowering tuition (see Figure 13). It is logical to expect that these stakeholders would

place lower tuition cost at the top of the list of ways to increase enrolment. Instead, they stated that marketing, followed closely by program enhancement, were the keys to building enrolment (see Figure 13). Why is this so? Stakeholders believe that if Adventist parents who have their children enrolled in other schools fully understood the importance of and truth about Adventist education, many would have a change of heart and enrol their children in Adventist schools. But getting parents to cross over that threshold requires the implementation of a good marketing strategy and some tangible improvements in program quality. One respondent captured the essence of this argument with this response: “For sure, when it comes to my church, promote the importance of Adventist education more. Although many parents can't afford the costs, they still choose to enroll their children in Adventist schools because they realize the importance of this in their children's lives” (see Appendix E, Question 4).

### ***School Plant and Facilities***

Other respondents, 7% of them, are convinced that the answer to the enrolment dilemma in their schools is linked to their school plant and facilities (see Figure 13). This is the case for the respondent who wrote, “Enlarge the existing school or build a new one, we have a lot of inquiries of interest--but we are full from 5-9...” This sentiment is shared by the respondent who stated, “The most effective way to get more students to enrol in our school would be for us to move to a new building which would be more representative of a school. . .” (see Appendix E, Question 4).

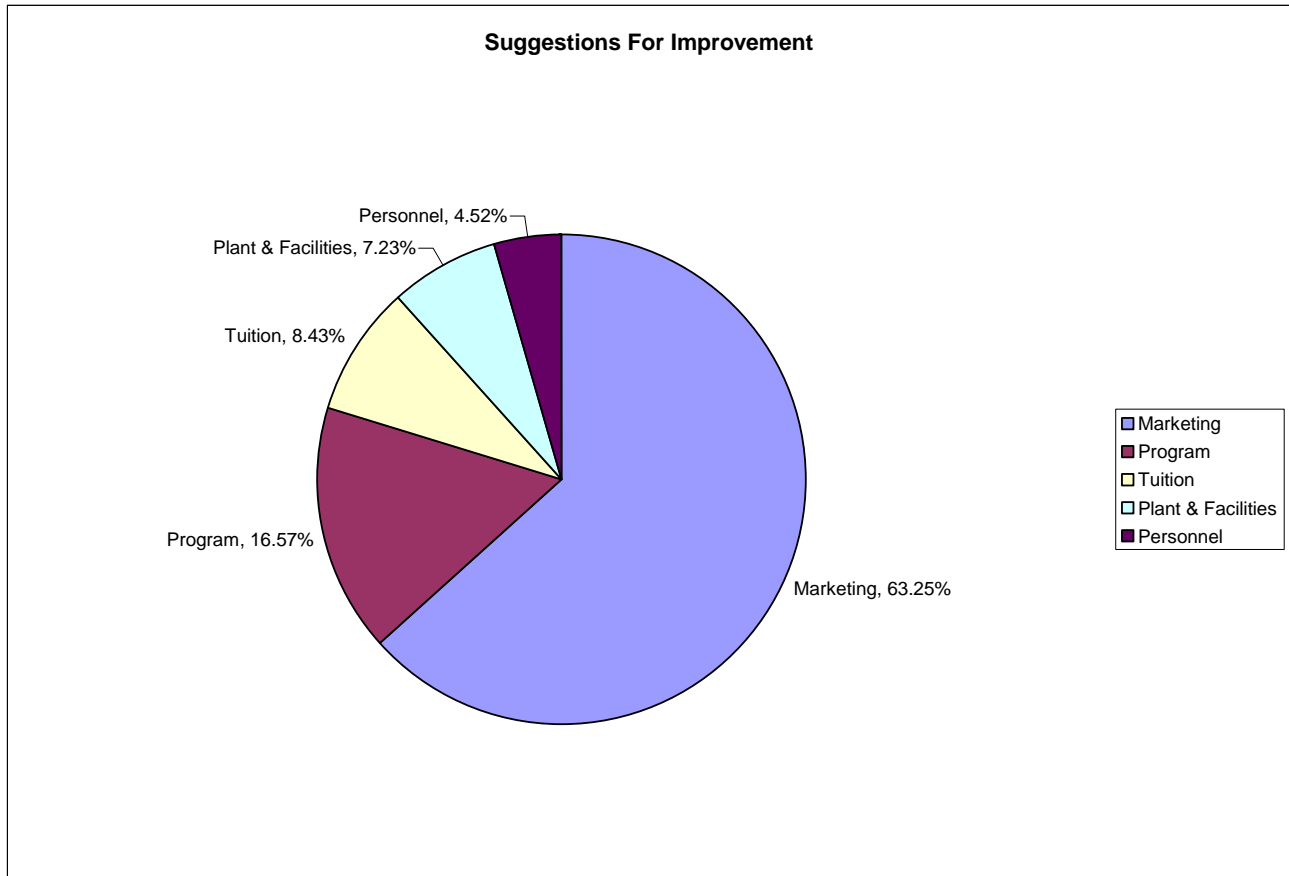
For these respondents, the physical building and its facilities present the greatest challenge for enrolment growth. They argue that students are not attracted to a school that is unappealing, does not have good facilities for learning, or is difficult to get to. Parents want to send their children to schools that are representative and that will make them proud.

It is interesting to note that only 6% of respondents (see Figure 11) saw their school plant and facilities as a drawing card for enrolment, and that only 7% (see Figure 13) attach any significance to this variable for building school enrolment. This suggests that the majority of stakeholders do not consider school plants and facilities as a significant drawback or liability with respect to school enrolment. Another interpretation is that the majority of stakeholders believe that their school plants and facilities are adequate to support a robust educational program.

### ***Personnel***

Only 4% of respondents cited personnel as the key for increasing enrolment (See Figure 13), linking declining enrolment directly to flaws in leadership or issues with specific teachers, board members or pastors. They want their school boards to hire more capable administrators and caring and committed teachers, teachers with a spiritual bent who will work as a team and who are willing to go the extra mile for their students.

**Figure 13**



Source: Responses to Survey Open-ended Question 4, Appendix E)

**Summary**

Stakeholders expressed the view that the development and execution of a good marketing plan is the best solution for long term growth and sustainability for Adventist education. While it is necessary to address other identified shortcomings in the system such as program, plant/facilities, tuition, personnel, and grassroots support for their schools, the fundamental weakness lies in the inability of conferences and school boards to convince the church family and the public at large, through traditional and innovative marketing, that their school system is unique and outstanding.

## **Survey Open-ended Question 5: SDACC/Conference Support**

Stakeholders identified four areas where help can be given in response to this question: *What can the SDACC/Conference do to help your school achieve its enrolment goals?* These areas are: finance, general marketing, specific marketing (by pastors), and personnel.

### ***Finance***

The majority of the respondents, 36% of them, indicated that the most important way the SDACC/Conferences can help the school system grow is to provide more financial help to the schools (see Figure 14). More funding would improve school quality and, consequently, enrolment would grow. More specifically, respondents suggested that additional SDACC/Conference subsidies would:

- Reduce tuition, thus giving access to more students
- Improve school plant and facilities
- Provide seed money for marketing
- Provide incentives such as scholarships
- Facilitate the hiring of teaching assistants and special education teachers
- Provide proper signage for schools
- Upgrade text books, computers and other resources
- Provide seed money to establish new church-based schools
- Assist with curriculum and professional development needs
- Provide specialized training for school administrators
- Support the development of digital education (see Appendix E, Question 5)

### ***General Marketing***

27% of the stakeholders also felt that the SDACC and the conferences should take the initiative in marketing their schools, or providing seed money to schools for marketing purposes as mentioned previously. Suggestions given for SDACC/Conference marketing initiatives include:

- Advertising through newspapers, television and radio
- Hiring a marketing specialist to help schools design and implement their marketing programs
- Conducting surveys in local congregations to determine the needs of parents

- Providing Canada-wide promotional materials for schools to use in churches and in their communities
- Publishing articles on Adventist education
- Making appealing school enrolment packages available to the schools and churches
- Publishing a booklet on how to market Christian education effectively
- Increasing the number of educational days celebrated in churches from one per quarter to four per year
- Considering education as child evangelism and allocating budget accordingly
- Promoting distance education (digital education) as a viable option for educating Adventist children (see Appendix E, Question 5)

### ***Specific Marketing***

12% of respondents indicated their disappointment with pastors for not being more involved in the marketing and promotion of their local schools (see Figure 14). They feel that, because pastors wield a great deal of influence over their congregations, they should be more visible and intentional in the promotion of Adventist education. They are particularly critical of pastors who choose to educate their children in another school system when there is an Adventist school in their church district. They argue that pastors should be assigned specific responsibilities in the local school for students' spiritual and emotional development. Some stakeholders requested that the SDACC and local conferences make pastoral support for Adventist education, including the enrolment of their children in Adventist schools, a mandatory requirement in the employment contract of pastors. Furthermore, they suggested that conferences should provide in-service for pastors on the philosophy and value of Adventist education, and assign pastors with children to churches that operate church schools (see Appendix E, Question 5).

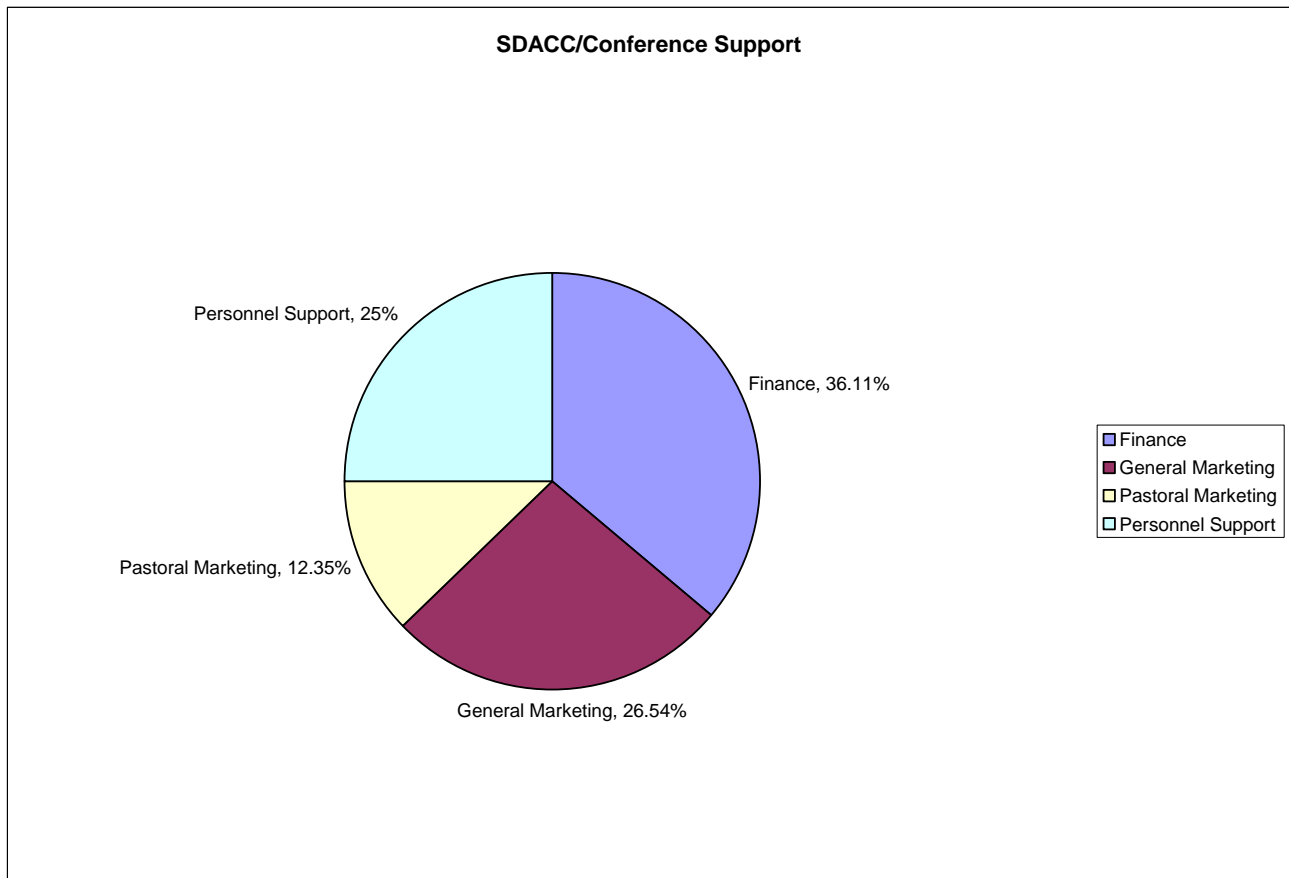
### ***Personnel Support***

25% of stakeholders expressed their appreciation to the SDACC/conferences for the strong support they have given to school administrators, teachers, school board members and non-teaching staff over the past years. They would like that support to continue, they

said, for they believe that the survival and growth of the school system rests upon the continued support of the SDACC and the local conferences.

Stakeholders want the SDACC and conferences to provide professional development opportunities for teachers and school administrators and in-service to school boards to foster collaboration and team spirit and to develop and implement policies on school operation and school governance. Respondents indicated that in some instances, school administrators are to be blamed for the drop in school enrolment. They therefore want local conferences to be more careful and selective in the hiring and promotion of school administrators, ensuring that those placed in positions of authority are educators with sound leadership skills, who are spiritually and academically focused. They want conferences and the SDACC to evaluate the performance of school administrators and teachers on a regular basis (see Appendix E, Question 5).

**Figure 14**



Source: Responses to Survey Open-ended Question 5, Appendix E)

**Summary**

Survey respondents identified four areas in which the SDACC and conferences can help to cultivate a growing and sustainable school system. Two of those areas, accounting for 39% of respondents, have to do with marketing. They believe that having an inclusive marketing strategy, with church pastors playing a key role, will have a positive effect on school enrolment. Of great significance, too, are the financial support required for school operation, staff development, resource acquisition, etc., and the non-financial support so necessary for optimizing individual and organizational performance.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study of declining enrolment in the Canadian Adventist School System, several variables were identified which directly or indirectly impact the enrolment of students in Adventist schools. One of the critical drivers is the ability of a school to deliver a high quality education. 79.6% of survey respondents attested to the high quality education Adventist schools are capable of delivering, and 72.6% believe that students attending Adventist schools do well academically. Not only are Adventist schools adequately equipped and well-positioned to deliver a high quality education to Adventist children and children of other religious persuasions, but they do so in both small, multi-grade schools and larger schools with single-grade classrooms.

Furthermore, survey respondents see their schools as having a great advantage over public schools in that they provide a safe, caring and spiritual environment for their students. Their teachers are dedicated to the task of teaching and are willing to go the extra mile to empower students. Most parents consider the safety of their children and the nurturing of spiritual and moral values in their children as important factors in their choice of school for their children. Adventist schools seem to measure up quite favourably in these two domains.

Some obvious weak areas in Adventist education need to be addressed, however. One such area is the limited number of options available for students at the secondary level. For example, very few technical/vocational subjects, business and fine arts courses are offered. Students wishing to have courses in these areas are forced to find other schools where they are offered.

The most common reason given by parents for not enrolling their child in an Adventist school is the high cost of tuition. A more careful examination of the survey results, however, reveals other factors that may actually have an even greater negative impact on enrolment than tuition costs.

To sustain and promote itself, an organization needs the support of key players, those players who have a direct influence on the success or failure of the organization. The stakeholders in the Adventist school system include the local pastors and church members (since church schools by tradition have been sponsored by the local church), parents, teachers, and students. When these entities work together, the church school receives tremendous benefit and growth takes place. When these entities are at odds, the opposite effect takes place.

The survey results showed that 67.5% of survey respondents believed that parents supported and promoted their school, and 82% believed that teachers supported and promoted their schools. By contrast, less than 50% of survey respondents thought that the pastor and church members supported their schools. From a marketing perspective, the most influential person in the Adventist school system is the local pastor, so it stands to reason that school enrolment in the local Adventist school will be negatively affected if the local pastor fails to give unqualified support for the church school.

In addition to this, the survey revealed that most Adventist schools do not have a marketing plan or budget, do not use the local media to promote their schools, do not offer incentives to attract students, and do not use their websites to give them marketing advantage. In other words, despite the hard evidence of declining support from key stakeholders, most schools are content to do business as usual. They are reluctant to step out of the box with an aggressive marketing plan to let the world around them know what

they have to offer and how they can equip and empower students for successful living in the competitive marketplace.

It is not surprising, then, that though the majority of stakeholders believe that high tuition cost is deemed the most critical factor preventing Adventist children from enrolling in Adventist schools, 63% of them overwhelmingly stated that the enrolment growth of their schools has more to do with effective marketing of their schools than with lower tuition fees. Only 8% of survey respondents felt that the solution to the declining enrolment problem lies in lowering tuition costs.

The emphasis on marketing is also seen with respect to the help stakeholders believe they need from the SDACC and the local conferences. Although 36% of stakeholders would like to get help with finances, 39% of them felt that a marketing effort consisting of a general marketing strategy and what may be termed specific pastoral marketing – the local pastor taking the initiative to promote the church school from the pulpit, through interviews with parents, etc. – is what is needed to reverse the declining enrolment trend and position the Adventist school system for greater growth and sustainability.

## Recommendations

To address the enrolment challenge faced by Adventist schools today, the following recommendations are being proposed after a careful review and analysis of the results of the Canadian Adventist School Enrolment Survey.

1. That local conferences ensure that their schools, large and small, are equipped with up-to-date facilities and resources to support a high quality educational program.
2. That the conference K-12 school boards consider ways and means to expand the secondary school curriculum to include more options such as business, technical/vocational and fine arts courses, and to provide for the special needs of students at both the elementary and secondary levels.
3. That the SDACC and conference K-12 boards ensure that all school administrators get formal training in school administration by enrolling in a school administrator's certificate program.
4. That school boards operating schools which are difficult to access because of location, give study to the operation of a bussing service to facilitate the transportation of students to and from school.
5. That conference leaders take immediate steps to address the issue of pastoral support for Adventist education.
6. That the conferences establish a task force on education to consider re-configuring the financial structure of K-12 schools with a view of making Adventist education more affordable for Adventist parents.
7. That the school boards conduct a demographic study to determine the number of Adventist children currently attending other schools and the reasons for their choice of schools, and that this information be used to find ways to attract those students to Adventist schools.
8. That the conference superintendents of education require schools under their supervision to submit a yearly marketing plan, delineating their short term and long term goals with timelines and implementation strategies.
9. That the SDACC and local conferences support the marketing initiatives of Adventist schools by offering marketing workshops, producing marketing materials and making available marketing consultants to assist them with the development and implementation of their marketing plans.

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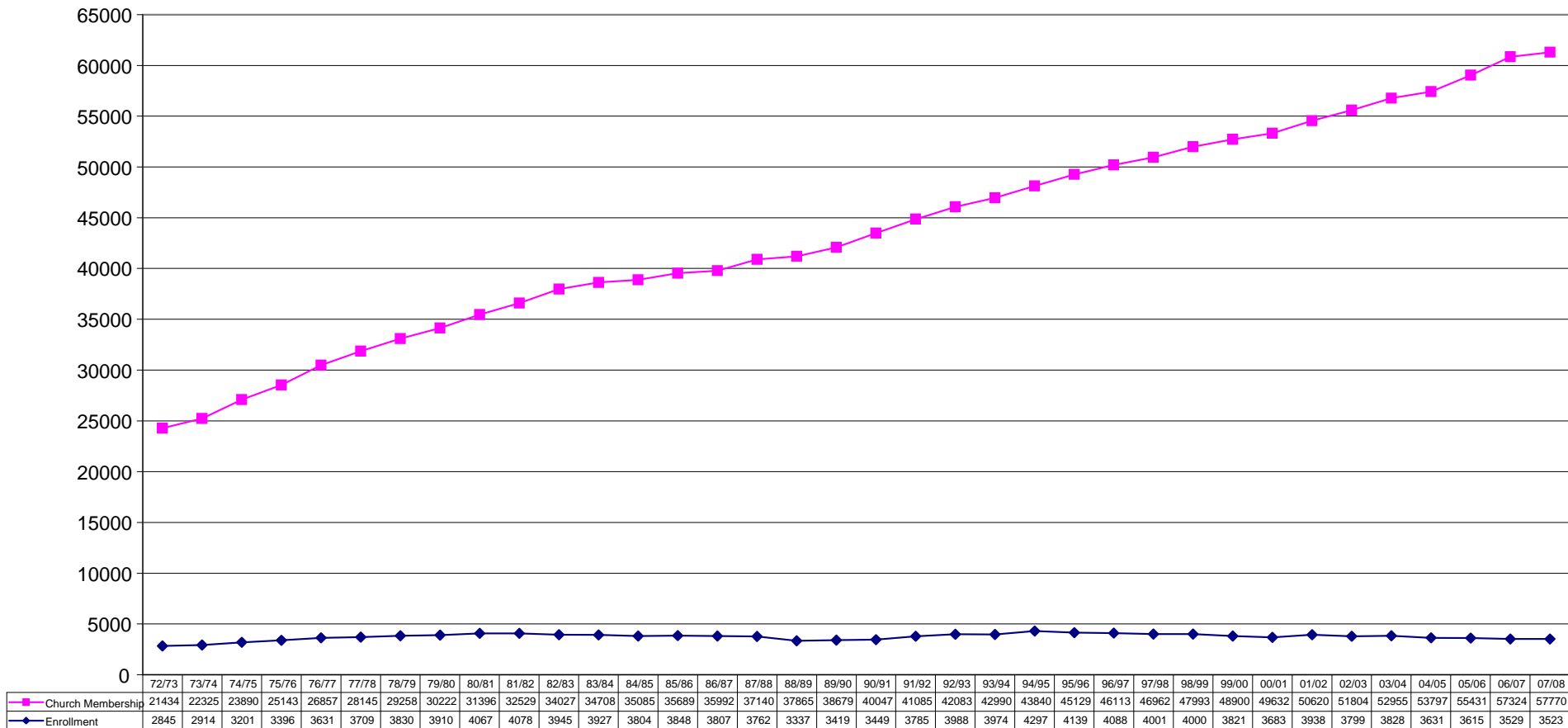
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APPENDIX A

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH MEMBERSHIP/SCHOOL ENROLMENT

# Appendix A

## SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN CANADA CHURCH MEMBERSHIP/SCHOOL ENROLMENT



APPENDIX B  
COMPARING AVERAGE TUITION COSTS IN ADVENTIST  
SCHOOLS IN CANADA

## Appendix B

### Comparing Average Tuition Costs in Adventist Schools in Canada

Conference	Elementary Cost	Secondary Cost	Government Subsidized
British Columbia	\$2,021	\$2,111	Yes
Ontario	\$2,731	\$4,450	No
Quebec	\$4,584	\$4,961	No
Maritimes	\$2,575	\$3,450	No

Source: Compiled from Tuition Information and Fees Forms from the respective conferences.

#### Remarks:

Elementary cost is \$710.00 more in Ontario than British Columbia.

Elementary cost is \$2,563.00 more in Quebec than in British Columbia.

Elementary cost is \$554.00 more in the Maritimes than in British Columbia.

Secondary cost is \$2,339.00 more Ontario than in British Columbia.

Secondary cost is \$2,850 more in Quebec than in British Columbia.

Secondary cost is \$1,339.00 more in the Maritimes than in British Columbia.

APPENDIX C  
LETTERS OF COMMUNICATION

## Appendix C

January 17, 2008

Dear Principal,

Enclosed you will find copies of the Canada Adventist School Enrolment Survey. This survey has been approved by the SDACC Board of Directors for distribution to school administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff, and school board members. The intent of this survey is to determine our current enrolment needs as a system in order to develop appropriate marketing strategies to address those needs to promote growth and sustainability.

This survey is already available online, which is the preferred method of filling it out. Teachers and other participants with email addresses we have on file have been notified to complete the survey online by clicking on the link provided in the email.

However, we are requesting that you distribute the enclosed surveys to all teachers, support staff and board members to ensure that everyone is included in the survey. **Only those who don't have online access, or who would rather do a paper survey should fill them out and return them to you as soon as possible.** The completed surveys should be mailed to the SDACC Office of Education by February 22, 2008.

Please emphasize that we'd rather them do the survey online. Thanks for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Dennis Marshall, Ed.D.  
Director of Education

January 17, 2008

Dear Christian Educators & Other Stakeholders:

Enclosed you will find a survey on school enrolment. This survey has been approved by the SDACC administrative committee and the K-12 board for dissemination to all principals, teachers, support staff and school board members in our school system. The purpose of this survey is to get current information on program quality as it impacts on school enrolment with a view of improving our schools and promoting growth and development.

Please take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to complete this survey as truthfully and carefully as you can. We need to get a true picture of the strengths and weaknesses of our school system in order to address identified needs and implement appropriate marketing strategies to generate future growth and development.

As you will observe, this survey is anonymous, so there is no need to write your name anywhere on this form. All information will be treated confidentially and will not be used for any other purpose than that for which it is intended. We are counting on your support, for your honest responses will be the information we are depending on to make important decisions that will impact the future of Adventist education in Canada.

We would like to have the completed surveys returned to us by February 22, 2008, but will appreciate a quicker response in order to expedite the analysis and implementation strategy. The survey can be completed in a couple of different ways.

1. We have sent an invitation to complete the survey online to the e-mail addresses we had on file.
2. If you did not receive an e-mail, you can go to the SDACC Office of Education website (CAT-net) at <http://catnet.sdacc.org>. Click on the SDACC Office of Education Surveys link on the right hand side on the Home Page then click on '*Canadian Adventist School Enrolment Survey*' and it will take you to the current survey, which you can fill out online.
3. You can complete the enclosed survey and return it to your school principal.

To access the survey online, you will need a password. The password is: sdacc

Thank you for taking time to participate in this survey. We are eagerly looking forward to your responses. A report will be made available to you as soon as we analyse the data we receive. May God's richest blessings be with you during the New Year.

Sincerely,

Dennis Marshall, Ed.D.  
Director of Education

**2<sup>nd</sup> Request: Canada Adventist School Enrolment Survey**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Request – Please respond**

**Date: 1/28/2008**

Dear Christian Educators & Other Stakeholders:

Below you will find a link to a survey on school enrolment. This survey has been approved by the SDACC administrative committee and the K-12 board for dissemination to all principals, teachers, support staff and school board members in our school system. The purpose of this survey is to get current information on program quality as it impacts on school enrolment with a view of improving our schools and promoting growth and development.

Please take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to complete this survey as truthfully and carefully as you can. We need to get a true picture of the strengths and weaknesses of our school system in order to address identified needs and implement appropriate marketing strategies to generate future growth and development.

As you will observe, this survey is anonymous, so there is no need to write your name anywhere on this form. All information will be treated confidentially and will not be used for any other purpose than that for which it is intended. We are counting on your support, for your honest responses will be the information we are depending on to make important decisions that will impact the future of Adventist education in Canada.

We would like to have the completed surveys returned to us by February 22, 2008, but will appreciate a quicker response in order to expedite the analysis and implementation strategy. Here is a link to the survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

The password is: sdacc

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

Thank you for taking time to participate in this survey. We are eagerly looking forward to your responses.

Sincerely,

Dennis Marshall  
Director of Education

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Request: Canadian Adventist School Enrolment Survey**

**Date: 2/11/2008**

Dear Christian Educators & Other Stakeholders:

Below you will find a link to a survey on school enrolment. This survey has been approved by the SDACC administrative committee and the K-12 board for dissemination to all principals, teachers, support staff and school board members in our school system. The purpose of this survey is to get current information on program quality as it impacts on school enrolment with a view of improving our schools and promoting growth and development.

Please take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to complete this survey as truthfully and carefully as you can. We need to get a true picture of the strengths and weaknesses of our school system in order to address identified needs and implement appropriate marketing strategies to generate future growth and development.

As you will observe, this survey is anonymous, so there is no need to write your name anywhere on this form. All information will be treated confidentially and will not be used for any other purpose than that for which it is intended. We are counting on your support, for your honest responses will be the information we are depending on to make important decisions that will impact the future of Adventist education in Canada.

We would like to have the completed surveys returned to us by February 22, 2008, but will appreciate a quicker response in order to expedite the analysis and implementation strategy. Here is a link to the survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

The password is: sdacc

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

Thank you for taking time to participate in this survey. We are eagerly looking forward to your responses.

Sincerely,

Dennis Marshall  
Director of Education

## **Final Request: Canadian Adventist School Enrolment Survey**

**Date: 2/19/2008**

Dear Christian Educators & Other Stakeholders:

Below you will find a link to a survey on school enrolment. This survey has been approved by the SDACC administrative committee and the K-12 board for dissemination to all principals, teachers, support staff and school board members in our school system. The purpose of this survey is to get current information on program quality as it impacts on school enrolment with a view of improving our schools and promoting growth and development.

Please take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to complete this survey as truthfully and carefully as you can. We need to get a true picture of the strengths and weaknesses of our school system in order to address identified needs and implement appropriate marketing strategies to generate future growth and development.

As you will observe, this survey is anonymous, so there is no need to write your name anywhere on this form. All information will be treated confidentially and will not be used for any other purpose than that for which it is intended. We are counting on your support, for your honest responses will be the information we are depending on to make important decisions that will impact the future of Adventist education in Canada.

We would like to have the completed surveys returned to us by February 22, 2008, but will appreciate a quicker response in order to expedite the analysis and implementation strategy. Here is a link to the survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

The password is: sdacc

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

Thank you for taking time to participate in this survey. We are eagerly looking forward to your responses.

Sincerely,

Dennis Marshall  
Director of Education

APPENDIX D

CANADIAN ADVENTIST SCHOOL ENROLMENT SURVEY/  
DISTRIBUTION LIST/RESULTS

# Canadian Adventist School Enrollment Survey

This survey is conducted to determine the current enrollment and enrollment mix in Adventist schools in Canada, the cause(s) for low/declining enrollment, and how best to market Adventist education to give it the competitive edge. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey as carefully and truthfully as possible. Please note that this survey is anonymous; there is no need to write your name on this form.

## General Information (To be completed by everyone)

1. Please indicate which category you are in:

- Principal/Teaching Principal     Teacher     Non-Teaching Staff     Board Member

2. Please indicate your gender:

- Male     Female

3. Please indicate your age:

- under 30     31 – 49 years     50 plus years

4. The province where your school is located is:

- Alberta     New Brunswick/Nova Scotia  
 British Columbia     Ontario  
 Manitoba/Saskatchewan     Quebec

5. Your school is classified as:

- K-8/9     K-10     K-12     9-12

6. How many teachers are at your school?

- 1 – 4 Teachers     5 or More Teachers

## Part 1 (This section to be completed by principals/teaching principals only)

Please complete the following by placing a  in the appropriate box.

1. Does your school receive government funding?     Yes     No

2. How long have you been the principal of this school?

- More than 10 years  
 6 – 10 years  
 1 - 5 years  
 Less than one year

3. Of your student body, what percentage is sponsored or assisted by the Worthy Student Fund?

- 75% - 100%  
 50% - 74%  
 25% - 49%  
 10% - 24%  
 0 – 9%

4. Does your school operate a bussing program?     Yes     No

**Part I Continued...**

**Please answer the following by filling in the blank spaces.**

5. What % of your students live within the following kilometer range?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 60 km and more
- \_\_\_\_\_ 40 km – 59 km
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15 km – 39 km
- \_\_\_\_\_ under 15 km

6. How many students can your school accommodate? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your current enrollment? \_\_\_\_\_

8. What was your last year's closing enrollment? \_\_\_\_\_

9. How would you account for the increase/decrease in this year's enrollment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

10. How many of your students are non-Adventists? \_\_\_\_\_

**Part II (This section is to be completed by principals/teaching principals, teachers, non-teaching staff and board members)**

In the following statements, please place a circle around the number that best applies.

- Circle 5 if you strongly agree*
- Circle 4 if you agree*
- Circle 3 if you are neutral*
- Circle 2 if you disagree*
- Circle 1 if you strongly disagree*
- Circle 0 if you don't know*

Please **CIRCLE ONLY ONE NUMBER** for each statement

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
1. Your school is conveniently located.	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. Your school building is attractive and in good repair.	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Your school is a safe and orderly place for learning.	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. The academic program of your school is of high quality.	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. School facilities are adequate for high quality education.	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. School resources are adequate for high quality education.	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. The school provides a variety of extra curricular activities.	5	4	3	2	1	0
8. Parents are very supportive of the school's program.	5	4	3	2	1	0
9. Tuition cost has a negative impact on your school's enrollment.	5	4	3	2	1	0
10. Students speak well of your school.	5	4	3	2	1	0
11. Students in your school engage in community service projects.	5	4	3	2	1	0

In the following statements, please place a circle around the number that best applies.

*Circle 5 if you strongly agree*

*Circle 4 if you agree*

*Circle 3 if you are neutral*

*Circle 2 if you disagree*

*Circle 1 if you strongly disagree*

*Circle 0 if you don't know*

Please **CIRCLE ONLY ONE NUMBER** for each statement

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
12. Students in your school do well academically.	5	4	3	2	1	0
13. Most graduates from your school go on to college or university.	5	4	3	2	1	0
14. Your school has a high retention rate.	5	4	3	2	1	0
15. Your school is well spoken of in the community	5	4	3	2	1	0
16. Students in your school enjoy participating in religious activities.	5	4	3	2	1	0
17. Students in your school are cooperative and respectful.	5	4	3	2	1	0
18. You are satisfied with the current enrollment in your school.	5	4	3	2	1	0
19. Your school has a marketing plan to increase enrollment.	5	4	3	2	1	0
20. Your school has a marketing budget.	5	4	3	2	1	0
21. Your school has an appealing information package to give visitors.	5	4	3	2	1	0
22. You actively promote your school in the church and community.	5	4	3	2	1	0
23. Your local pastor regularly promotes your school from the pulpit.	5	4	3	2	1	0
24. Members of your church fully support the school program.	5	4	3	2	1	0
25. Your school conducts open house visits to promote your school.	5	4	3	2	1	0
26. Your school is advertised in the local newspapers.	5	4	3	2	1	0
27. Your school is listed in the local telephone directory.	5	4	3	2	1	0
28. Your school uses the church bulletin/brochures/flyers for promotion.	5	4	3	2	1	0
29. Parents help to promote your school through positive word of mouth.	5	4	3	2	1	0
30. School board members help to promote your school through positive word of mouth.	5	4	3	2	1	0
31. Teachers help to promote your school through positive word of mouth.	5	4	3	2	1	0
32. Your school has an attractive, informative and up-to-date website.	5	4	3	2	1	0
33. Your school provides incentives to attract students.	5	4	3	2	1	0

**Part IV (This section is to be completed by principals/teaching principals, teachers, non-teaching staff and board members)**

1. What in your opinion is the main reason why some Adventist parents are not choosing to send their children to your school?

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2. What in your opinion is the greatest strength of your school?

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3. What in your opinion is the greatest weakness of your school?

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4. What in your opinion is the most effective way to get more students to enroll in your school?

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5. What can the SDACC/Conference do to help your school achieve its enrollment goals?

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## Canadian Adventist Enrolment Survey Distribution List

School	# of Teachers	# of Non-Teaching Staff	Board Members
Chinook Winds Adventist Academy	15	4	19
College Heights Christian School	11	8	15
Coralwood Adventist Academy	7	5	20
Higher Ground Christian School	2	1	8
Mamawi Atosketan Native School	9	4	6
Peace Hills Adventist School	3	2	6
South Side Christian School	5	3	7
Sylvan Meadows Adventist School	2	1	8
Woodlands Adventist School	1	0	6
Avalon Adventist Jr. Academy	8	3	10
Bella Coola Adventist School	1	1	10
Cariboo Adventist Academy	11	6	10
Chilliwack Adventist School	2	2	10
Deer Lake SDA School	15	7	18
Fraser Valley Adventist Academy	25	9	14
Lakeview Christian School	6	2	12
North Okanagan Jr. Academy	4	4	10
Okanagan Adventist Academy	12	7	18
Peace Christian School	4	2	10
Pleasant Valley Christian Academy	4	1	7
Robson Valley Jr. Academy	2	1	8
Shuswap SDA School	3	3	10
South Okanagan Adventist Academy	2	0	8
Spring Creek Adventist School	3	0	10
Westbank Adventist School	3	2	10
Curtis-Horne Christian School	2	3	5
Red River Valley Jr. Academy	7	5	13
Seventh-day Adventist Christian School	2	0	9
Adventist Christian School	1	1	8
Perth-Andover SDA School	1	0	3
Sandy Lake Academy	9	1	15
Algoma Adventist Christian School	1	0	4
College Park Elementary School	13	4	24
Crawford Adventist Academy	35	10	47
Crawford Adventist Academy East	3	1	
Grandview Adventist Academy	7	0	14
London Advent Christian Academy	2	0	6
Ottawa SDA School	3	2	14
Peel SDA School	6	3	
St. Thomas SDA School	2	0	4
Windsor Adventist Elementary School	3	0	8
Greaves Adventist Academy	16	1	14
Kingsway College	26	13	17
Parkview Adventist Academy	19	1	6
	<b>318</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>481</b>
<b>TOTAL SURVEYS NEEDED</b>	<b>922</b>		

## Canadian Adventist School Enrolment Survey Results

### 1. Please indicate which category you are in:

Principal/Teaching Principal 10.5% 46

Teacher 34.3% 151

Non-Teaching Staff 10.9% 48

**Board Member 44.3% 195**

*Answered question 440*

*Skipped question 8*

### 2. Please indicate your gender:

Male 43.4% 190

**Female 56.6% 248**

*Answered question 438*

*Skipped question 10*

### 3. Please indicate your age:

under 30 7.1% 31

**31-49 years 55.3% 242**

50 plus years 37.7% 165

*Answered question 438*

*Skipped question 10*

### 4. What province is your school located?

Alberta 22.2% 98

British Columbia 31.5% 139

Manitoba/Saskatchewan 5.4% 24

New Brunswick/Nova Scotia 5.4% 24

**Ontario 32.2% 142**

Quebec 3.2% 14

*Answered question 441*

*Skipped question 7*

### 5. Your school is classified as:

**K-8/9 42.8% 187**

K-10 15.8% 69

K-12 31.6% 138

9-12 9.8% 43

*Answered question 437*

*Skipped question 11*

**6. How many teachers are in your school?**

1-4 teachers 26.9% 118

**5 or more teachers 73.1% 320**

*Answered question 438*

*Skipped question 10*

**7. Does your school receive government funding?**

**Yes 62.5% 25**

No 37.5% 15

*Answered question 40*

*Skipped question 408*

**8. How long have you been the principal of this school?**

Less than one year 20.0% 7

**1-5 years 54.3% 19**

6-10 years 17.1% 6

More than 10 years 8.6% 3

*Answered question 35*

*Skipped question 413*

**9. Of your student body, what percentage is sponsored or assisted by the Worthy Student Fund?**

**0 - 9% 57.1% 20**

10% - 24% 11.4% 4

25% - 49% 28.6% 10

50% - 74% 2.9% 1

75%- 100% 0.0% 0

*Answered question 35*

*Skipped question 413*

**10. What % of your students live within the following kilometer range? (Do not put in percent sign %)**

**under 15km 65.77 2039 31**

15km - 39km 34.04 783 23

40km - 59km 11.69 187 16

60km and more 7.00 91 13

*Answered question 31*

*Skipped question 417*

**11. Does your school operate a bussing program?**

Yes 28.9% 11

**No 71.1% 27**

*Answered question 38*

*Skipped question 410*

**12. How many students can your school accommodate?**

*Answered question 37*

*Skipped question 411*

**13. What is your current enrolment?**

*Answered question 37*

*Skipped question 411*

**14. What was your last year's closing enrolment?**

*Answered question 37*

*Skipped question 411*

**15. How would you account for the increase/decrease in this year's enrolment?**

*Answered question 33*

*Skipped question 415*

**16. How many of your students are non-Adventist?**

*Answered question 35*

*Skipped question 413*

**17. Your school is conveniently located.**

Strongly Agree 30.3% 121

**Agree 40.8% 163**

Neutral 16.5% 66

Disagree 8.8% 35

Strongly Disagree 3.8% 15

Don't Know 0.0% 0

*Answered question 400*

*Skipped question 48*

**18. Your school building is attractive and in good repair.**

Strongly Agree 12.0% 48  
**Agree 43.6% 174**  
Neutral 25.8% 103  
Disagree 15.0% 60  
Strongly Disagree 3.5% 14  
Don't Know 0.0% 0  
*Answered question 399*  
*Skipped question 49*

**19. Your school is a safe and orderly place for learning.**

Strongly Agree 28.5% 113  
**Agree 57.3% 227**  
Neutral 10.6% 42  
Disagree 2.8% 11  
Strongly Disagree 0.8% 3  
Don't Know 0.0% 0  
*Answered question 396*  
*Skipped question 52*

**20. The academic program of your school is of high quality.**

Strongly Agree 27.8% 110  
**Agree 51.8% 205**  
Neutral 15.2% 60  
Disagree 4.5% 18  
Strongly Disagree 0.3% 1  
Don't Know 0.5% 2  
*Answered question 396*  
*Skipped question 52*

**21. School facilities are adequate for high quality education.**

Strongly Agree 14.0% 55  
**Agree 49.6% 195**  
Neutral 19.3% 76  
Disagree 12.2% 48  
Strongly Disagree 3.8% 15  
Don't Know 1.0% 4  
*Answered question 393*  
*Skipped question 55*

**22. School resources are adequate for high quality education.**

Strongly Agree 10.1% 40  
**Agree 46.5% 184**  
Neutral 25.0% 99  
Disagree 14.1% 56  
Strongly Disagree 2.5% 10  
Don't Know 1.8% 7  
*Answered question 396*  
*Skipped question 52*

**23. The school provides a variety of extra curricular activities.**

Strongly Agree 18.1% 71  
**Agree 46.3% 182**  
Neutral 18.8% 74  
Disagree 13.7% 54  
Strongly Disagree 3.1% 12  
Don't Know 0.0% 0  
*Answered question 393*  
*Skipped question 55*

**24. Parents are very supportive of the school's program.**

Strongly Agree 17.0% 67  
**Agree 50.5% 199**  
Neutral 22.6% 89  
Disagree 7.4% 29  
Strongly Disagree 0.5% 2  
Don't Know 2.0% 8  
*Answered question 394*  
*Skipped question 54*

**25. Tuition cost has a negative impact on your school's enrolment.**

Strongly Agree 10.4% 41  
**Agree 26.5% 105**  
Neutral 25.5% 101  
Disagree 24.2% 96  
Strongly Disagree 8.1% 32  
Don't Know 5.3% 21  
*Answered question 396*  
*Skipped question 52*

**26. Students speak well of your school.**

Strongly Agree 13.4% 53  
**Agree 57.2% 226**  
Neutral 21.8% 86  
Disagree 4.6% 18  
Strongly Disagree 0.5% 2  
Don't Know 2.5% 10  
*Answered question 395*  
*Skipped question 53*

**27. Students in your school engage in community service projects.**

Strongly Agree 12.7% 50  
**Agree 53.4% 210**  
Neutral 20.1% 79  
Disagree 7.1% 28  
Strongly Disagree 2.0% 8  
Don't Know 4.6% 18  
*Answered question 393*  
*Skipped question 55*

**28. Students in your school do well academically.**

Strongly Agree 11.1% 44  
**Agree 61.8% 244**  
Neutral 18.5% 73  
Disagree 4.3% 17  
Strongly Disagree 0.3% 1  
Don't Know 4.1% 16  
*Answered question 395*  
*Skipped question 53*

**29. Most graduates from your school go on to college or university.**

Strongly Agree 15.9% 63  
**Agree 44.9% 178**  
Neutral 14.6% 58  
Disagree 4.3% 17  
Strongly Disagree 0.5% 2  
Don't Know 19.7% 78  
*Answered question 396*  
*Skipped question 52*

**30. Your school has a high retention rate.**

Strongly Agree 11.2% 44  
**Agree 51.5% 203**  
Neutral 21.1% 83  
Disagree 9.4% 37  
Strongly Disagree 1.3% 5  
Don't Know 5.6% 22  
*Answered question 394*  
*Skipped question 54*

**31. Your school is well spoken of in the community.**

Strongly Agree 12.2% 48  
**Agree 40.9% 161**  
Neutral 27.9% 110  
Disagree 6.1% 24  
Strongly Disagree 1.0% 4  
Don't Know 11.9% 47  
*Answered question 394*  
*Skipped question 54*

**32. Students in your school enjoy participating in religious activities.**

Strongly Agree 15.1% 60  
**Agree 61.7% 245**  
Neutral 17.4% 69  
Disagree 2.5% 10  
Strongly Disagree 0.3% 1  
Don't Know 3.0% 12  
*Answered question 397*  
*Skipped question 51*

**33. Students in your school are cooperative and respectful.**

Strongly Agree 13.8% 55  
**Agree 64.1% 255**  
Neutral 18.8% 75  
Disagree 1.8% 7  
Strongly Disagree 0.8% 3  
Don't Know 0.8% 3  
*Answered question 398*  
*Skipped question 50*

**34. You are satisfied with the current enrolment in your school.**

Strongly Agree 4.1% 16  
Agree 17.2% 68  
Neutral 15.7% 62  
**Disagree 45.1% 178**  
Strongly Disagree 17.5% 69  
Don't Know 0.5% 2  
*Answered question 395*  
*Skipped question 53*

**35. Your school has a marketing plan to increase enrolment.**

Strongly Agree 6.3% 25  
**Agree 32.9% 130**  
Neutral 26.3% 104  
Disagree 20.0% 79  
Strongly Disagree 5.1% 20  
Don't Know 9.4% 37  
*Answered question 395*  
*Skipped question 53*

**36. Your school has a marketing budget.**

Strongly Agree 4.5% 18  
**Agree 28.5% 113**  
Neutral 20.2% 80  
Disagree 19.9% 79  
Strongly Disagree 8.1% 32  
Don't Know 18.7% 74  
*Answered question 396*  
*Skipped question 52*

**37. Your school has an appealing information package to give visitors.**

Strongly Agree 7.6% 30  
**Agree 32.7% 130**  
Neutral 28.7% 114  
Disagree 14.4% 57  
Strongly Disagree 4.8% 19  
Don't Know 11.8% 47  
*Answered question 397*  
*Skipped question 51*

**38. You actively promote your school in the church and community.**

Strongly Agree 19.0% 75  
**Agree 50.9% 201**  
Neutral 23.3% 92  
Disagree 6.1% 24  
Strongly Disagree 0.5% 2  
Don't Know 0.3% 1  
*Answered question 395*  
*Skipped question 53*

**39. Your local pastor regularly promotes your school from the pulpit.**

Strongly Agree 10.7% 42  
**Agree 32.8% 129**  
Neutral 24.7% 97  
Disagree 18.3% 72  
Strongly Disagree 10.2% 40  
Don't Know 3.3% 13  
*Answered question 393*  
*Skipped question 55*

**40. Members of your church fully support the school program.**

Strongly Agree 14.0% 55  
**Agree 35.0% 138**  
Neutral 24.9% 98  
Disagree 19.8% 78  
Strongly Disagree 4.3% 17  
Don't Know 2.0% 8  
*Answered question 394*  
*Skipped question 54*

**41. Your school conducts open house visits to promote your school.**

Strongly Agree 15.4% 61  
**Agree 47.1% 186**  
Neutral 20.5% 81  
Disagree 11.1% 44  
Strongly Disagree 3.5% 14  
Don't Know 2.3% 9  
*Answered question 395*  
*Skipped question 53*

**42. Your school is advertised in the local newspapers.**

Strongly Agree 4.8% 19  
Agree 19.1% 75  
Neutral 16.3% 64  
**Disagree 28.1% 110**  
Strongly Disagree 14.3% 56  
Don't Know 17.3% 68  
*Answered question 392*  
*Skipped question 56*

**43. Your school is listed in the local telephone directory.**

Strongly Agree 39.2% 155  
**Agree 45.1% 178**  
Neutral 3.5% 14  
Disagree 1.8% 7  
Strongly Disagree 1.3% 5  
Don't Know 9.1% 36  
*Answered question 395*  
*Skipped question 53*

**44. Your school uses the church bulletin/brochures/flyers for promotion.**

Strongly Agree 27.6% 109  
**Agree 51.4% 203**  
Neutral 12.2% 48  
Disagree 5.3% 21  
Strongly Disagree 2.0% 8  
Don't Know 1.5% 6  
*Answered question 395*  
*Skipped question 53*

**45. Parents help to promote your school through positive word of mouth.**

Strongly Agree 18.6% 74  
**Agree 46.3% 184**  
Neutral 21.7% 86  
Disagree 4.3% 17  
Strongly Disagree 1.5% 6  
Don't Know 7.6% 30  
*Answered question 397*  
*Skipped question 51*

**46. School board members help to promote your school through positive word of mouth.**

Strongly Agree 19.3% 76  
**Agree 46.6% 183**  
Neutral 18.6% 73  
Disagree 4.6% 18  
Strongly Disagree 1.3% 5  
Don't Know 9.7% 38  
*Answered question 393*  
*Skipped question 55*

**47. Teachers help to promote your school through positive word of mouth.**

Strongly Agree 27.2% 107  
**Agree 54.2% 213**  
Neutral 11.7% 46  
Disagree 1.8% 7  
Strongly Disagree 0.3% 1  
Don't Know 4.8% 19  
*Answered question 393*  
*Skipped question 55*

**48. Your school has an attractive, informative and up-to-date website.**

Strongly Agree 12.4% 49  
**Agree 38.2% 151**  
Neutral 22.5% 89  
Disagree 11.4% 45  
Strongly Disagree 5.3% 21  
Don't Know 10.1% 40  
*Answered question 395*  
*Skipped question 53*

**49. Your school provides incentives to attract students.**

Strongly Agree 9.1% 36  
**Agree 34.3% 136**  
Neutral 26.7% 106  
Disagree 16.4% 65  
Strongly Disagree 4.0% 16  
Don't Know 9.6% 38  
*Answered question 397*  
*Skipped question 51*

## APPENDIX E

### SAMPLES OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

**Survey Open-ended Question 1, Part III**  
**(Sample answers of 365 responses)**

***What in your opinion is the main reason why some Adventists parents are not choosing to send their children to your school?***

1. They want more course options.
2. Some parents feel they cannot afford it.
3. Smaller size than public schools means less extra-curricular and sports programs...
4. No grade 11 & 12 yet. We are small and don't have the options a bigger school offers.
5. We live in a rural area; transportation is sometimes a problem.
6. They claim it is too expensive.
7. Negative feedback from some parents and high tuition in their opinion.
8. They don't think that public education is a problem and that it should be avoided.
9. They want to home-school.
10. Adventist parents are not sending them because they want to home-school them.
11. The local churches do not support the school. The pastors do not even send their children.
12. Lack of funds!!! That's why I didn't go!
13. I feel that some of our parents speak badly of our school in their churches and that we are gaining a bad reputation in the community.
14. Tuition and in some cases the facilities are not appealing.
15. I believe that the main reason ...is the cost of tuition, and the location of the school.
16. Location, location, location
17. Facilities need a big improvement.
18. Distance. Our district has chosen not to allow our students to ride the school bus. This is difficult for some of the rural parents.
19. Cost. They don't make it a priority. They think the public system has more to offer.
20. -"free" alternative in public system – not nearly enough awareness/promotion in local church.
21. Our school is central to a large area and travelling by our bus is difficult for the younger students.
22. Adventist parents no longer place a high value on Christian education.
23. The cycle of negative stories that are circulating about the school from the history of years of incidents.
24. I think that the school is not market effectively. It is not promoted. ..
25. The cost is too high. Many parents I know cannot afford to send their children here.
26. Location may be a reason, but I think the main problem is that the fees are too high.
27. Not enough choice of subjects; old textbooks; bigger Christian school nearby.
28. There are several other schools in the area...we have a good school program, but it needs to be marketed more effectively...
29. Some SDA parents do not send their children because of a perceived lack of high quality education.
30. Poor reputation for academics.
31. Reputation – not willing to forget the past and look to the future.
32. There are not as many programs as other schools in the area offer.
33. Financial.
34. We are in competition with a local non-denominational Christian school.

35. Located too far and not really very attractive (building).
36. Has a lot to do with administrative and communicating to churches and parents. Need to have plans in place.
37. Many Adventist parents in our community choose home-schooling as their first choice.
38. Pastors no longer actively promote Christian education on a regular basis.
39. They don't see the importance of Christian education. Some pastors do not promote it.
40. Local church pastors do not support Adventist education, hence do not promote it at their churches. They are supposed to be board members and almost none attend any board meeting. They have no interest in supporting the local school. Some pastors' children don't even attend Adventist schools.

**Survey Open-ended Question 2, Part III  
(Sample answers of 360 responses)**

***What in your opinion is the greatest strength of your school?***

1. Caring staff
2. The faculty and staff that are committed to producing a quality SDA Christian education.
3. The staff and caring kids
4. Our great staff of teachers – they are tops...
5. Spiritual focus - the students here are very Christ - centered because of our spiritual focus.
6. Our teachers and their amazing, total dedication to the school and the students.
7. Positive staff. Good leadership with our principal.
8. The academic program and teachers' commitment.
9. Strong program of past years; physical plant and church & community support.
10. "Family" atmosphere, dedicated caring teachers, principal, and students...
11. The parents and Church support. Wonderful Christian teachers who are great role models.
12. The promotion of excellence in all areas of activity.
13. The variety of programs offered here.
14. The cohesive beliefs of faculty and staff regarding Christian education.
15. The close knit feel; it is so small that it feels like a family atmosphere...
16. Quality of teaching staff.
17. The teachers have high expectations of the students.
18. The team spirit amongst the teachers.
19. The strong academic program and its success rate.
20. The music department.
21. Academics, the fact that teachers and administrators care; individualized attention...
22. The Christian family feeling.
23. Providing many extra curricular activities and programs for students to participate in.
24. Location. Appearance.
25. Really good physical plant and property.
26. Family atmosphere, loving teachers.
27. Spiritual focus – the students here are very Christ-centred...
28. It is Christ-centred. The beliefs and values of the Adventist church are respected at this school and they are taught to the students.
29. Positive parent support and involvement.
30. Good school spirit and a sound education.
31. The fact that Jesus is the Jesus is the centre of the school and that the teachers are focused on him.
32. The academic program of our school is of high quality compared to the other schools.
33. The greatest strength is the "spiritual development" of the youth.
34. The teachers go more than the extra mile at this school. They are very devoted to the students of this school.
35. Good interpersonal relationships between most teachers, students and parents.
36. We have a really wonderful building.
37. Spiritual atmosphere.

38. High academic standards.

**Survey Open-ended Question 3, Part III  
(Sample answers of 351 responses)**

***What in your opinion is the greatest weakness of your school?***

1. Lack of money to implement new ideas and for updating playgrounds...
2. The appearance of our building and the playground
3. Lack of strong leadership. We have very qualified leaders, but they seem to be in disagreement about what the school should be and offer.
4. Lack of team spirit among staff.
5. Leadership – principal –pastors
6. Lack of support in the areas of discipline and respect.
7. Teacher has a huge communication problem with students, parents, and church members.
8. Also, teacher is not seen as being committed to the church.
9. Poor teaching skills of two staff. How do we replace them in a 'Christian' way?
10. Our facilities are deteriorating. We are trying to raise money to build a new school
11. Our facilities
12. Not many extra-curricular sports. Not many options like art, drama, etc.
13. I think we are not marketed properly. And we need some more vision.
14. Word of mouth by satisfied parents, and encouragement by pastors and teachers
15. I think that the bussing issue is the greatest downfall for our school.
16. The cost of tuition
17. Space
18. Physical plant – not enough school space.
19. High tuition
20. Facilities and enrolment.
21. Location without bus pickup.
22. Transportation is very difficult for the students and their parents and it is difficult to get the parents to volunteer and be involved because we are somewhat out of the way.
23. Current leadership from principal
24. We use the church basement and this is not attractive to outsiders.
25. Parents who are not committed to our school and its goals,
26. No marketing strategy to Adventists and community.
27. School located in the basement (of the church) ; lack of visibility to the community.
28. Academics
29. Lack of ongoing multi level marketing plan
30. Not sufficient advertising.
31. Most pastors in GTA do not promote Adventist education in their churches or send their own kids.
32. Getting good staff.
33. We lack male teachers and after school programs.
34. Non-Cohesive Boards over the last 20 years.
35. This year I think it is the principal.
36. Lack of constituent support.
37. Lack of conference support in starting up a new school.
38. Too far out of town for convenience.

**Survey Open-ended Questions 4, Part III**  
**(Sample answers of 332 responses)**

***What in your opinion is the most effective way to get more students to enrol in your school?***

1. Exposure...if they were aware of how great this school really is then I believe they would want to be a part of it.
2. Positive word-of-mouth referrals. Promotion of SDA education from church pastors.
3. Follow through on verifiable marketing plan; satisfy the parents of existing student's with concrete advancements in academics.
4. Support from the respective churches especially from our Pastors promoting Christian education.
5. Promotions and advertising.
6. More promotion from church and subsidy from conference.
7. Marketing
8. Promotion of Adventist education in all churches by all pastors...
9. Promote the school for the positive environment it offers...teaching not only the mind but the heart with Christian principles.
10. Advertising on the local radio station or the Lacombe newspaper.
11. Multi level marketing both inside and out side the church and school.
12. Advertisement on radio, Newspaper, interacting with other schools.
13. Through word of mouth from our parents, staff and church family.
14. MORE ADVERTISING!!! I am new to the community and I know that the school has been here for years but most people, when I ask them, have no idea that there is a school there.
15. More promotion of Adventist education from all levels of organization, local pastors. Conference, Union.
16. Increase academic standards and provide a quality SDA Christian program that exceeds the public school standards.
17. Improve quality of program.
18. Offering them a place of the highest education that a grade school can give...
19. Offer more courses to attract students.
20. Lower tuition.
21. To have little or no tuition cost.
22. Reducing the tuition and getting transportation.
23. Lower the enrolment costs.
24. Tuition assistance for parents struggling with the monthly tuition.
25. A better building in a different location with better facilities.
26. Build a new school.
27. More physical space.
28. Offer a full program from junior kindergarten all the way through senior high school in a newer and larger facility.
29. Improve staff quality.
30. Professional and trained teachers of mixed race.
31. Getting and retaining high quality teachers to improve academic standing of the school.
32. Make way for multicultural students by appointing principals and teachers who can bring kids from ethnic groups.

33. Make sure that all staff hired love God and are dedicated to godly discipline.

**Survey Open-ended Question 5, Part III  
(Sample answers of 324 responses)**

***What can the SDACC/Conference do to help your school achieve its enrolment goals?***

1. More funding for advertising and recruitment programs
2. Financial help?
3. The school needs more financial support.
4. Fund marketing ventures
5. They can help with financing to bring the tuition down.
6. Money for facilities.
7. Help the school more financially so that tuition cost is not so high for the parents.
8. Give us a million dollars to build us a new school.
9. Assist schools with more finances so that every child can access a Christian
10. Give us money for more staff & better facilities & programs.
11. All ministers are required to preach Christian education at least once a quarter. Some never even mention it.
12. To have a person come to our school with a marketing background to help our enrolment goals.
13. Financial help marketing.
14. Positive word of mouth from students, parents and staff.
15. Marketing strategies that teachers can implement.
16. Assist with marketing.
17. Give us some seed money to set-up and implement a long term plan for marketing the school or is there a resource person who could be a facilitator to the board, parents, teachers, and principal in guiding us through a marketing plan to increase our school enrolment?
18. First they need to convince those pastors who do not currently have their children enrolled in Christian education to do so.
19. The pastors need to promote Christian education more and encourage the youth to attend our school.
20. Communicate with schools on ideas for specific marketing strategies.
21. The local conference leaders should take an active role in promoting education, and encourage the pastors to aggressively promote Christian education from the pulpit and in sermons.
22. Encourage pastors to promote school.
23. Assign pastors with elementary age children to small churches that have elementary schools.
24. Extra marketing funds.
25. Advertise
26. Help with promotional materials. Continue to support with great teachers.
27. Ensure that all conference employees support and promote Christian education at the church level.
28. Provide more marketing support, ideas to advertise, encourage church members to get more involved with their school.
29. Demand accountability from administration and teachers.
30. Encourage church leaders and pastors to strongly and regularly promote Adventist education.

31. Increase funding for marketing and school improvements

