

## The Significant Role of the School Board when the Children of the Church are not In the School at the Elementary or Academy level

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Traditionally Seventh-day Adventist school boards are composed of very dedicated members committed to Christian education. As a result, their primary focus consists of providing school facilities along with qualified Christian teachers, to meet the needs of the children from the churches.



Usually the central item on the agenda of the School Board meetings is the financial health of the operation. Finances accountability is important, but evidence clearly indicates that although graduates are being well prepared for colleges and universities, hundreds of children from our churches are attending public schools to run the gauntlet of Satan's attacks.

This growing concern among those actively supporting Christian education should prod each school board to evaluate its role in promoting Christian Education. If the board believes that Christian Education is vital because "Education and redemption are one," then the primary item on the agenda of the school board must be the corporate effort to encourage, recruit and ensure that everyone who desires Christian Education be granted such an opportunity.

The staff of the school cannot increase enrolment themselves. The school board should adopt a mandate to address and implement strategies that would involve each member of the church.

Members need to know that studies have shown that students who continue through the denominational system, as opposed to those enrolled in secular institutions, are more likely to remain in the church, accept leadership roles, display greater commitment to the ideals of the church, marry within the church and support the various causes financially. Members need to know that the children in our school system are being prepared not just for service on earth but to be in the kingdom of God.

The school board by its composition and opportunities is well positioned to be that effective instrument of information and influence whereby the enrolment of our church schools may be significantly increased.

If a school board agrees that its primary role is to facilitate or maximize the opportunities for students to

benefit from our Christian school then three questions need to be addressed.

1. Are there any students in the public schools who should be enrolled in the church schools?
2. Why are they not attending?
3. What should be done to make enrolment within our school a reality?

In many churches, surveys have indicated that a considerable number of children are attending secular schools at the elementary and secondary levels. Reasons for not placing the children in an Adventist school often include: Transportation, finance, state or size of facilities, inadequate curriculum, negative report or experience, no sports team, an uncooperative spouse, no interest, preference of public school, not ready for a boarding situation, concern that the preparation may be inadequate for college/university. There are those also, who feel that because they pay tithes then the conference should ensure that enrolment is free. While students have shown that finances may be a popular response cited commitment may really be the issue. This brings us to the third question. "What role can the Board play to address the need to have our children enrolled and the concerns of the parents/guardians of those children?"

The following proposals are submitted for consideration.

1. Embrace the principle that "Education and Redemption are one"
2. Be committed to the goal of ensuring that the primary role of the board is that of facilitating the process whereby every parent can be committed to Christian Education.
3. Implement strategies in partnership with the administration and churches.
4. Actively promote achievements of current students and graduates.
5. Emphasize the benefits of Christian education and the desire to have all children enrolled.
6. Address concerns and any adverse perceptions within congregations. Positive changes should be clearly communicated.
7. Provide opportunities on a regular basis for the promotion of the school.
8. Visit every home where there is a potential student in an effort to recruit that child.

Increase enrolment will be accompanied with its challenges such as accommodation, teaching resources and increased staffing. Those however are "welcomed" problems to have rather than dealing with minuscule growth, stagnated enrolment or declining enrolment that contribute to a negative environment.

The evidence is overwhelming that the market is there and significant growth will be realized as the school board operates in partnership with the will of God.