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ABSTRACT

REASONS SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PARENTS GAVE FOR  
NOT SENDING THEIR CHILDREN TO SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST ELEMENTARY AND  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS

by

Irma C. LaBorde

Chair: Duane M. Covrig

## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

School of Education

Title: REASONS SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PARENTS GAVE FOR NOT  
SENDING THEIR CHILDREN TO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Date completed: April 2007

### Problem

The Seventh-day Adventist elementary and secondary schools in the USA show a continuous enrollment decline. This study's goal is to explore the reasons SDA parents give for why they do not send their children to SDA schools.

### Method

The participants were limited to the church members of the Lake Union Conference. Qualitative methodology was used in this study. Three groups of participants were selected using criterion sampling—non-home-schooling parents, home-

schooling parents, and administrators. Data collection occurred through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and a one-question survey. The interviews were audiotaped. The tapes were transcribed verbatim, coded, and grouped into themes. Analysis and interpretation were verified by some participants, peer reviews, and triangulation.

## Results

Financial issues were the most cited reason for non-attendance. Home schooling was the next great competitor. Home-schooling parents had noticed the lowering of school values and standards, and the strong influential power that some peers had on others. The students' styles of dress, conversations, and demeanor no longer impressed them. Other non-home-schooling parents sent their children to public schools because these institutions have more resources, more qualified teachers, and better facilities. Public schools offered a wider range of subjects, competitive sports and scholarships, extracurricular activities, music, after-school programs, and other free services.

Many SDA teachers work at public schools, and parents claimed that they took better care of their children. SDA academies were located too far away from home, and transportation caused parents to worry about their children's safety. A few parents withdrew their children from SDA schools due to perceived unresolved conflicts.

Changes in student population are affecting SDA schools, and some pastors were not supporting Christian education.

## Conclusion

Many SDA children are deprived of a Christian education due to lack of finance.

Home-schooling parents are diligently controlling their children's educational, spiritual, and moral training. Some non-home-schooling parents see public schools as better than SDA schools. Other non-home-schooling parents want schools to be located in close proximity to their homes. Parents, teachers, pastors, administrators, superintendents, and their staff must work together to educate all SDA children.

Andrews University

School of Education

REASONS SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PARENTS GAVE FOR  
NOT SENDING THEIR CHILDREN TO SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST ELEMENTARY AND  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Irma C. LaBorde

April 2007

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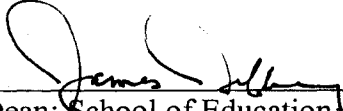
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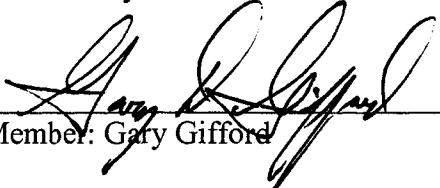
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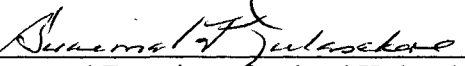
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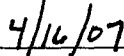
  
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The elementary and secondary schools of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) are experiencing a continuous decline in enrollment. This document examines the reasons SDA parents gave why they do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools. This chapter contains a true story of my experience, as well as the background and purpose of the study. The conceptual framework, the research question, and the significance of the study are also included. It provides the limitation, delimitations, methodology, definition of terms, and organization of the study.

#### **The Story**

The following story took place in the Caribbean, and helps to show my interest in this topic. Located almost at the top of one of the rolling hills of a Caribbean island was the only Seventh-day Adventist elementary and secondary school. It was a large three-story building erected on the landscaped site, and was securely sheltered from the prevailing westerly winds. The edifice was also used as a place of refuge during the hurricane season. At the bottom of that hill was the SDA church building, which was securely surrounded by a barbed wire fence and a concrete wall. West of the school building at the top of the hill was the large enclosed playfield. At the north of the

building, the beautiful folding layers of sedimentary rocks emerged from the landscape. Archeologists often visited the site to take pictures of these curved rocks, wondrously designed by nature, but they were not allowed to dig there.

Iguanas, protected by law, love to climb the geenip trees that surround the boundaries of the property. They jumped from branch to branch and occasionally one of them would fall to the ground. In the schoolyard, wall seats were built under the mangrove and almond trees so that students or visitors could enjoy the shade of the evergreen trees and the refreshing sea breeze. Both sides of the main street were naturally decorated with flowering flamboyant trees. Their branches formed an arch over the street as they touched each other horizontally and vertically. This main street was built to allow the inhabitants to drive around the island. It encircled the hill and provided the school with two entrances.

During final examination sessions, at this school, the students usually sat in groups under trees to do their last-minute revision exercises. Customarily, different teachers were assigned different days for supervision of the examinations. The supervisor was also responsible for conducting corporate worship before the examination sessions started. Many years ago, it was my turn to conduct worship and supervise the examinations. The bell rang. I entered the door and was about to ascend the stairs when the secretary asked me to enter her room for a minute. She gave me a paper on which the names of some students were written, and informed me not to allow them to write the examinations. I was dumb-founded. I stepped quietly out of the room and ascended to the third story where the examinations were held. Two girls from my class were among the students on the list. The students entered the examination hall as their grades were

announced. I decided that I would allow all the students to have worship, and then quietly ask those students whose names were written on the paper to wait downstairs for me.

After the worship session, I went to each of the students and asked him or her to go silently downstairs and wait for me. These students left the room. We (three other teachers and I) distributed the writing papers and the examination questions. When the students began to write, I left another teacher in charge, and I went down to visit the secretary. I asked the secretary for the reason of the students' non-participation in the examination. I was informed that their parents owed money and that no arrangement was made for payment, though their parents were notified. According to the school laws, students were not allowed to write the examinations until arrangements were made to settle their account. Therefore, the School Board had recommended that they be removed from the examination room until those arrangements were made.

I went to my two students, who were sitting under the tree. I told them the reason for their non-participation in the examination and inquired why their parents did not respond to the letter that was sent to them. I discovered that their parents had lost their jobs, and the students claimed that their parents had informed the principal. They were very discouraged.

One of them said, "Teacher, I love my church, but when I am married and have children, I will never, never, ne-e-e-ver send my children to an Adventist school."

"Why?" I asked.

She replied, "To undergo this embarrassment, look where I am [stretching out her arms], no, no, no-o-o-o [shaking her head], not this kind of embarrassment. I just want to

graduate and get out of here.”

The other replied angrily, “Another SDA institution is not going to see my body, not me. They have us sitting under a tree while the others are doing their work, and we spent all night preparing for our examination. This is the first and last SDA school I am going to, and I am not going to recommend anybody to come here if they do not have the money to pay. It has been 13 years now that I have been coming to this school and look what has happened to me.”

The other said, “Please forgive us, teacher, but we just have to tell you how we feel. What the Board has done has affected us and our next generation. They will see. The pastor could plead as long as he liked, but we have nobody to send here.”

I was saddened to hear their remarks but encouraged them to tell their parents to visit the secretary tomorrow so that they could continue their examination. Their parents came and arrangements were made. They were allowed to continue their examination, but the damage had already been done. Later, my two young students got married, but they are now sending their children to non-SDA schools. They have kept their vows. This experience led me to think about other Seventh-day Adventist parents who did not send their children to Seventh-day Adventist schools. I wanted to know the reasons SDA parents gave for not sending their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools. I became interested in hearing other parents’ reasons and stories. This dissertation gave me an opportunity to explore the issues in detail.

### **Background of the Study**

Originally, when Seventh-day Adventists first started SDA schools, Knight

(1983) stated, “Adventist parents distrusted the public system of education because they had concepts of truth and values that were contradicted at times by some of the teachings of the public schools” (p. 29). The parents believed that their children should be educated more directly under the supervision of those of the same faith, and many home schools emerged. SDA believers in Buck’s Bridge, New York, and Battle Creek, Michigan, began to experiment with private elementary schools. The Adventist teachers taught SDA children religious matters and the basic educational concepts (p. 2).

Greenleaf (2005) declared that the “Adventist teachers realized that their schools were to be different from public school—biblically, spiritually, practically, and still remain academically respectable” (p. 91). In those days, the church school study program was centered on nature and the Bible, and was not similar to the public school curriculum, because all the church members were anxiously awaiting the soon return of Jesus.

Within 1 year’s period from 1898-1899, in North America, 15 elementary schools were established (Knight, 1983, p. 165). Greenleaf (2005) noted that the schools were primitive, but in spite of this humble beginning, by 1900, there were 220 elementary church schools in North America (p. 88). The request to open new schools became so great in the early days of Adventist education that the demand for teachers was greater than the supply. Some prospective college students volunteered to interrupt their college study program in order to assist the schools.

Early in SDA educational history, the schools did not adequately prepare their students to enter college, so there was a gap between the elementary and tertiary levels. The educational standards of attainment for college entry at the completion of secondary

levels were not clearly defined. The Church School Movement of 1897 that consisted of E. A. Sutherland, the president of Battle Creek College; Frederick Griggs, a teacher at Battle Creek; P. T. Magan, dean of the college, Bessie DeGraw, a teacher at Walla Walla College with some experience as a public high-school principal; and J. E. Tenney, a faculty member, together decided to provide an academic beginning point for Adventist secondary-school curriculum, and the college determined the college-entry level (Greenleaf, 2005, pp. 85, 86). A curriculum that included agriculture was formulated for the secondary-school levels, and it was also used to prepare students for college entrance. Not only did Conferences in the early 1900s seek to start secondary schools but individual congregations also started to focus on starting small elementary schools. In 1903, the SDA educators agreed that the secondary schools would be the property of the local conferences, and individual churches would be responsible for the operation of the elementary schools.

In 1920, there were 36 Seventh-day Adventist academies in North America (Greenleaf, 2005, p. 226). Three of them were landless, namely, Harlem and Temple academies in New York City, and Boston International Church School. An agricultural program could not be included in their biblically based curriculum since they had no land. These schools focused on preparing students for service. Some of these academies also offered vocational or professional courses and were regarded as training schools. Around the 1940s and 1950s these schools lost their reputations as training schools and emerged into more traditional North American high schools. All the schools, however, “were to serve the ultimate purpose of the church, which was to fulfill the commission to spread the gospel” (p. 213).

From the beginning of educational history, the Seventh-day Adventist denomination has operated schools for the purpose of transmitting its own beliefs to its children. Maxwell and Clarke (1990) stated, “SDA Christian education is one of the most effective and efficient ways in which the church carries out its mission” (p. 13). *The North American Division Educational Code, K-12* (1978, Number 1020), declared that

Seventh-day Adventists conduct their own schools, elementary through university, for the purpose of transmitting to their children their own ideals, beliefs, attitudes, values, habits, and customs. In addition to being patriotic, law-abiding citizens, Seventh-day Adventists want their children to be loyal, conscientious Christians. There is peculiar to the church a body of knowledge, values, and ideals that must be transmitted to the younger generation in order that the church may continue to exist. In this process the Biblical principle of social transmission is recognized: Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children and their children will tell another generation (Joel 1:3).

As the number of SDA schools increased, some variety in these schools unfolded. Presently, each SDA school board and school board members have different philosophies or purposes for their school. For example, there was variability on the inclusion of non-SDA students into SDA schools. Some school board members viewed their school as a mission field, so their enrollment ratio of SDA students to non-SDA students was nearly the same. Other board members, who viewed their school purpose differently, sought a higher ratio of SDA students to non-SDA students. They saw their SDA school as a service to SDA churches. As SDA education has developed in North America, some recent trends caused concerns about SDA education. These trends undergird this study.

Seventh-day Adventist elementary and secondary schools in the United States of America showed a continuous decline in enrollment. Statistics showed that after the mid-1960s Adventist schools were losing numbers. While some of this could be explained by



lower birth rates in North America, the *North American Division Annual Statistical Reports* (2003) showed that the percentage of SDA students in SDA schools was also shrinking (see Tables 2 and 3 in chapter 2). As such, SDA school enrollment trends suggested a change in SDA members' school habits.

Today, although some Seventh-day Adventist parents take advantage of SDA education, more and more SDA students are attending non-SDA schools. Knight (2005) stated that

Adventist education is not keeping up proportionately with the growth of church membership. In 1945, the ratio of students in Adventist schools to church membership was twenty-five per 100. That figure remained constant until 1965. Since that time, the ratio has dropped off precipitously, to fifteen per 100 in 1985 and nine per 100 in 2000. At the same time, more non-Adventist students are enrolling in our schools, and this makes the actual ratio of Adventist students to members closer to five per 100. (p. 9)

While part of this may be explained by the aging population within the SDA church in North America, some of these data support the fact that many SDA parents are not sending their children to SDA schools. Lekic (2005) was concerned about the decline in enrollment and remarked that

educational administrators at all levels of the Adventist Church are seeking ways to stop the declining student-to-member ratios. In early 2001, Paul Brantley of Andrews University was asked by the General Conference Education Department to survey Union Education Directors and selected church organizations around the globe to seek their ideas for making strategic plans for growth in enrollment. The North American Division employed an associate director of education in 2003 whose major responsibility was to coordinate promotion and marketing of Adventist education. (p. 3)

In spite of the above-mentioned efforts that were made, the enrollment continued to decline. One of the assumed reasons for the students' departure from SDA schools was that their parents could no longer afford to pay the increasing tuition fees. Greenleaf (2005) remarked that educators attributed this decline to:

(a) the rising cost of denominational education and (b) a widespread opinion that parents and students alike are more willing than previous generations of Adventists, to view the broader curricular opportunities in public schools as evidence of better education than the narrower offerings in our church sponsored schools. (p. 515)

Furthermore, the declining enrollment trend of SDA schools differed from the trend in public and some private schools. Seltzer Daley Companies (1989) reported that enrollments in SDA elementary and secondary schools were declining dramatically (p. 1). Nevertheless, released statistics from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2003-2004) showed that in public elementary and secondary schools, there has been and would continue to be an increase in the overall U.S. enrollment due to rising immigration and a 25% increase in annual birth rates. The public schools reached about 48 million students in 2004 and were projected to increase to a maximum of 49 million students in 2013 (see Table 1). The question remains, Why are SDA schools not enjoying the same increase in enrollment? Especially, why are more Seventh-day Adventist parents not sending their children to SDA schools?

Some research has been done on enrollment at SDA schools, but, to date, no significant research had focused on SDA parents' reasons for not participating in SDA education. Thus, this study explored the reasons SDA parents gave for why they do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools. This study would add to the knowledge base and help SDA school leaders understand how they could better serve SDA parents in the Lake Union Conference.

### **Rationale for the Study**

The *North American Division Annual Statistical Reports* (1965 to 2005) showed that the church membership of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

has been increasing yearly, whereas the enrollments in many of its church schools have declined or have not kept pace with the membership growth. I explore this data in more detail in chapter 2. It is clear that this decline has caused some concern among Adventist superintendents, principals, educators, and interested church members. The question of how to stop the declining enrollment in Adventist schools is very serious.

The first step in this process was to understand why it is occurring.

Greenleaf (2005) remarked that the Seventh-day Adventist academies in the USA became an endangered species after the 1970s. In 1971, more than 20,000 secondary students were enrolled in North American academies and intermediate schools. In the year 2000, the figure dropped to 14,000, although the church membership had doubled (p. 514). The declining trend of the SDA student population is still occurring despite the fact that some of our schools have provided for students' excellent education through superb and varied facilities and activities.

Different efforts and methods have failed to solve this grave problem, but there has not been any substantial research to explore the reasons that SDA parents of K-12 children give for not choosing to send their children to SDA church schools. This research examines these reasons.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In 1992, Dudley stated that "throughout the North American Division, a number of studies have indicated that fewer than half of the children from Adventist homes were attending Adventist schools" (p. 8). In spite of the fact that the total SDA school enrollment had remained about constant in recent years, the elementary and secondary school enrollments of Seventh-day Adventist children were declining yearly. Once

again, it seemed that non-SDA parents are becoming more interested in SDA schools.

The question posits, What are the reasons why SDA parents are not sending their children to their own schools?

This study documents the reasons SDA parents give as to why they do not send their children to SDA schools. Exploring these reasons would help SDA leaders and school administrators better understand why some SDA parents are reluctant to send their children to SDA schools. The information gathered would provide SDA leaders with better information for educational planning, marketing, and recruiting.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The school choices that parents make affect school enrollment. In the United States of America the Compulsory Education Attendance Law mandated that every school-age child must be enrolled in a school of some type over a range of years (*Court Report*, p. 1, para. 3). The penalty for non-compliance varied among states (Kern, 1973, p. 18). In 1925, however, the Supreme Court gave parents the Constitutional right to send their children to a private school of their choice. Reutter (1981) expressed that this law provided a clause that students could receive equivalent education at non-public schools. In the 1980s, he was unsure if “different statutes in the different states applied to home schooling satisfied the compulsory education requirements” (p. 45). It is now clear that parents have three types of schooling methods: private (parochial or non-parochial), public, or home. Some states checked for the quality of educational instruction, whereas others made no practical check.

Parents have several reasons for choosing their child’s school. Hughes, Wikeley,

and Nash (1994), following Johnson (1990) and David (1993), found that parents of elementary- and secondary-school children, when they chose their schools, often placed more emphasis on factors such as “their child’s happiness, the child’s own wishes, the school’s location, or the school’s reputation for discipline, rather than on factors such as academic performance or examination results” (p. 79).

Hunter (1991) indicated that parents chose schools that were located in close proximity to their home, where the students received good examination grades and were well-disciplined. She also found that parents placed less importance on the denomination of the school, the caring teachers, and the emphasis on the practical area of curriculum (pp. 31-41).

Woods, Bagley, and Glatter (1998) indicated that some parents based their choice on the decision made or accepted for the first child, who had often become the pathfinder for all the subsequent children (p. 118). Some other parents checked out other options before deciding which school was the best. Others sent their children to the schools they went to when they were students. They also reported that some parents did not choose some schools because the schools have negative factors such as poor reputation, poor state of buildings, and drug problems. Other parents remarked that all schools were the same (p. 121). Some other parents expressed transportation concerns were central to their decisions. Woods et al. (1998) commented about the difficulties that many parents encountered with regard to getting their children to and from school. They stated that parents, when they have to choose a school, had concerns about “a lack of public transport or adequate public transport, time involved in traveling long distances, and children traveling long distances on their own” (p. 122). They also found that parents

chose schools that have a good academic achievement rate, good discipline, a degree of sports, and encouragement in arts and music (p. 127). Other reasons for parental choice are reviewed in chapter 2.

### **Research Question**

The one main research question for the present study was: What are the reasons SDA parents give as to why they do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools? Probing questions were generated according to the answers received.

### **Significance of the Study**

Data on the reasons why some SDA parents do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools would help SDA administrators, pastors, and teachers understand potential obstacles to enrollment of SDA children in SDA schools. As a result of the findings, better strategies would be formulated and more students would be supported to attend a SDA school.

This is crucial for the SDA church because Minder (1985) showed that 98% of SDA students who attended SDA church schools from Grades K–12 continued to be faithful Seventh-day Adventists members. Only 61% of SDA children who did not attend SDA schools from Grades K–12 continued to be members of the SDA church. As such, the entire SDA church organization would benefit greatly from the findings of this study. The findings could provide some valuable insights to help SDA churches and schools to unite more in purpose in order to further support the spiritual, academic, and practical education of SDA children and to ensure that education and redemption

are one.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This study was limited in the following ways:

1. It studied only the church members of SDA churches who did not send their children to SDA schools. These parents have their children in home schools, non-SDA private schools, or public schools.
2. The non-SDA members who sent their children to the SDA schools were not included in the study.
3. A one-question survey was used on a small sample of SDA parents and administrators.
4. Statistically speaking, the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population.
5. Only SDA parents and educators were sampled.
6. The research was done within a limited time frame.

### **Methodology**

Qualitative methodology was chosen because it would provide a good description of what actually happens in the schools, and would help administrators to base their ideas on actual situations rather than on imaginary ones. Focus groups, in-depth interviews, and a survey questionnaire were used. The participants were divided into three groups, the non-home-schooling parents, the home-schooling parents, and the administrators. I, as the researcher, saw a need for a deeper exploration into the experiences of these parents whose children were not attending a SDA school. The administrators were

interviewed because parents usually tell them the reasons why they were withdrawing their children from the schools. In-depth interviewing was done because I wanted to gain descriptive information and experiences from my respondents, and to observe gestures, facial expressions, and other non-verbal forms of expressions. The one-question survey on which the study focused was given to each member of the focus groups. These participants were able to give their reason confidentially because they would be discussing the question in a general manner in the group. The other participants did not receive the survey. The other interviews were conducted individually. The criteria for participating in this study are further described in chapter 3.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

**Baby-boomers:** Individuals who were born in the United States from 1946 to 1964.

**Birth rate:** The number of babies born per 1,000 in total population.

**Children's choice of school:** The choice a child makes to attend a school to which the parents agree.

**Church member (Seventh-day Adventist or SDA):** A person who has chosen baptism or profession of faith to establish membership in a SDA church (see Fig. 1).

**Church structure:** The SDA organizational structure is shown in Figure 1.

**Conference:** The territory is usually determined by state boundaries, and governed by administrators elected by representatives from each church within the



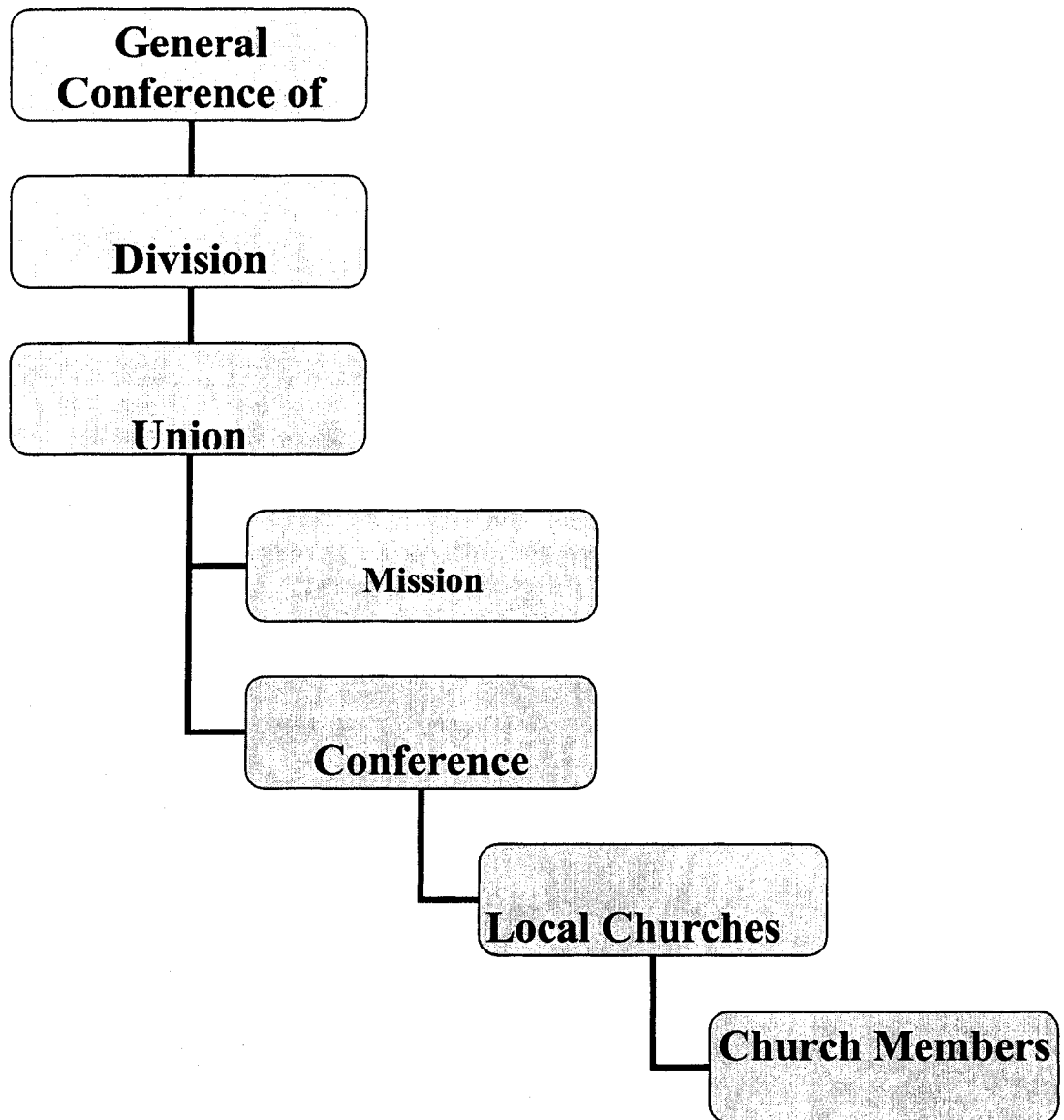


Figure 1: The church structure of the Seventh-day Adventist organization.

geographical parameters of that territory. Each conference is responsible to the Union organization of which it is a part and must administer in harmony with the policies that govern the Union (see Fig. 1).

**Cost of Living:** The amount of money that one spends for living in one's place of residence and for living expenses.

**The Divisions:** They are the second highest level of the SDA organizational church structure (see Fig. 1).

**Elementary school:** A unit of the school system that is operated by the local SDA Conference Educational Department. It offers an organized program for children from Grades K-8 and may be constructed in different ways, such as: Grades K-6, Grades 1-6, Grades K-8, Grades 1-8, or Pre-K-Grade 8. The church must receive permission from the Conference Executive Committee to operate the elementary school.

**Fertility rate:** The number of births per 1,000 women in the childbearing years (normally from the ages of 15 to 44).

**General Conference (GC) of Seventh-day Adventists:** The highest organizational structure of the SDA world church. The administrative headquarters is located in Washington, D.C. (see Fig. 1).

**North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists:** The NAD covers the United States, Canada, and Bermuda. It has nine unions, namely Atlantic, Canadian, Colombia, Lake, Mid-American, North Pacific, Pacific, Southern, and Southwestern unions. The representatives of these unions meet annually with leaders at the North American Division level to review, revise, and create policies for the territory.

**Parental choice:** The decision that a parent or guardian makes about where their child or children will go to school.

**Parent-teacher associations (PTA):** These are local school organizations. Their memberships are comprised of all the parents or guardians of the school children. Each organization generously assists its school financially and otherwise through its various activities. In the SDA community, these organizations are often called Home and School Associations (HSA).

**Sacrifice:** It is the degree to which a family or person is willing to forego certain things in order to devote a portion of its resources to school cost that could otherwise be used for other expenses, savings, or investments (Mitchell, 2001, pp. 86, 87).

**School's image:** The sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of the school or the personal perception of the school that can vary greatly from one person to the other.

**School market:** The choices parents have for schools or educational opportunities for their children.

**School objectives:** The school's goals that are stated in operational and measurable form, for example, *The school enrollment for the next school year must be increased by 15%*, is an objective.

**School's prestige:** The public or personal perception of the school's quality based on its historical reputation of, or potential for, success in preparing students for further personal education or career opportunities (Mitchell, 2001, p. 86).

**Secondary school or academy:** A school with Grades 9–12. This school can be a boarding school or a day school. The term academy is used to describe the secondary

school.

**Unions:** The third highest level of the world church organization of Seventh-day Adventists (see Fig. 1). It is a church organization formed by a group of several local conferences or missions (or fields, sections, districts, or area churches), according to varying modes of organization in different areas of the world—and in turn forms a constituent part of the General Conference in one of its geographical divisions.

The Union Conference organization is similar to that of the local conference, and is governed by a constitution and by-laws. Every 4 years, delegates, who are appointed by the local conferences, elect the president, secretary, treasurer, committees, and departmental secretaries of a union conference. The president of the union conference is a member of the General Conference (GC) of SDA committee. The constituent conferences sustain to the union conference a relationship similar to that of the churches to the conference (*SDA Encyclopedia*, 1976).

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is organized in the following manner: Chapter 1 presents the introduction to the study. It includes the background and rationale of the study, the purpose of the study, conceptual framework, the research question, significance of the study, its limitations and delimitations, definition of terms, and organization of the study.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature related to the reasons parents give for not sending their children to SDA schools.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in this study. Details are given about the nature and design of the research, the population and participants' selection, instrumentation, procedures for data collection, and data analysis processes.

Chapter 4 presents the qualitative data from the interviews, focus groups, and surveys with the non-home-schooling parents—parents who send their children to public schools or another Christian school.

Chapter 5 presents the qualitative data from the interviews with the parents who home school their children.

Chapter 6 presents the qualitative data from interviews with administrators.

Chapter 7 contains the discussion. This chapter is divided into four sections. Section 1 summarizes the findings of chapters 4, 5, and 6, specifically identifying the similarities and differences among the three groups of participants. Section 2 explains how the findings answer the research question. Section 3 consists of suggestions that I have for educators to attract more SDA students to the schools. Section 4 makes suggestions for future research in this area.

The letter of approval from the Andrews University Institutional Review Board suggestion the participants gave to enable more SDA children to gain access to Christian education ,and other correspondence are included in the appendixes.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

As stated in chapter 1, this study examines reasons SDA parents give for why they do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools. To inform that research purpose the literature review in this chapter is divided into three sections. The sections are:

1. SDA education
2. School enrollment trends in the United States and in North American SDA school.
3. Factors that affect SDA enrollment.

The three main sections are further divided into subtopics. The subtopics for the SDA education are: (a) the aims, purposes, and goals of SDA education, and (b) a brief history of SDA education. The subtopics of enrollment trends in the United States are: (a) general trends of public and private schools, and (b) the trends of enrollment in Northern American SDA schools. The subtopics of the factors that affect SDA enrollment are: (a) financial issues, (b) home schooling, (c) parents' and children's choice of schools, (d) school distance and transportation, (e) teacher's attitude, (f) demographics, (g) pastoral issues, and (h) the school's image.

## SDA Education

### The Aims, Purposes, and Goals of SDA Education

The aims, purposes, and goals are outlined in the *North American Division Educational Code K-12*. According to the *North American Educational Code K-12* (1984),

The church operates a school system to ensure that its youth will receive a balanced physical, mental, moral, social, and practical education in harmony with denominational standards and ideals, having God as the source of all moral value and truth. The school is to prepare the youth to become effective witnesses and workers in the world-wide outreach program of the church. The stated interest of the church is in the optimum development of the whole child for both this life and the life hereafter. (p. 23)

It is the major aim of the Seventh-day Adventist educational system that every child and young person, who has connection with the church, be given the opportunity to receive a Seventh-day Adventist Christian education. According to the General Conference educational policy, Stonebrook (n.d.) stated that “no Seventh-day Adventist child in church is to be deprived of the privileges of our school due to lack of finance” (p. 73).

Seventh-day Adventists conduct their own schools, elementary through university, for the purpose of transmitting to their children their own ideals, beliefs, attitudes, values, habits, and customs. *The Lake Union Conference Education Code, K-12* (1992) stated:

These values are fundamental in the aims of Adventist education: material values such as health, economic security, vocational competence; proper utilization and protection of the environment; intellectual values such as truth, structured inquiry, valid judgments; aesthetic values such as appreciation of variety, regard for proportion, sensitivity to harmony; social values such as cooperative effort, supportive interrelationship, individual fulfillment within the group; moral values such as humility, integrity, character; and religious values such as worship, Christian benevolence and sensitivity to holiness. (p. 12)

In addition to being patriotic, law-abiding citizens, Seventh-day Adventists want

their children to be loyal, conscientious Christians (*North American Division Education code, K-12, 1978, c. 1020*). The prime purpose for the existence of the school is to provide the students with a quality education in an atmosphere conducive to the development of the spiritual life of each student (*Andrews Academy Sourcebook, 2004 - 2005, p. 5*). Through the school, the parents are making it possible for their children to uphold and reflect the principles of the church. Seventh-day Adventist parents want their children: (a) to grow up to be honest in all their dealings with others, (b) to believe that they are children of God, created in his image, and that God created the world and everything that is in it, (c) to be in an environment that helps them to develop a relationship with their God, fully understand his unconditional love for them, and daily practice their Christian values, (d) to practice living a continuous prayer life, so that they are better prepared to resist evil, and to always seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matt 6:33), (e) to have God's words before them every moment of the day so they can say like David, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee" (Ps 119:11), and (f) to be given the opportunity to develop their intellect to its maximum potential. All of our SDA Christian schools should provide these opportunities.

In 1943, White recommended that

parents and guardians must place their children in schools in which the teachers will carry them forward from point to point and in which the spiritual atmosphere is a savor of life unto life. Whether or not our youth, who have received wise instruction and training from godly parents, will continue to be sanctified through the truth depends largely upon the influence that, after leaving their homes, they meet among those to whom they look for Christian instructions. In planning for the education of the children outside the home, parents should realize that it is no longer safe to send their children to public schools, and should endeavor to send them to schools where they will obtain an education based on a scriptural foundation. In public schools the children can neither study the Bible nor learn its



principles. In all our churches, there should be schools, and teachers in these schools should be trained to be missionaries, so that they can act well their part in the important work of educating the children of Sabbath-keepers. (pp. 304-306)

Rose (1998) quoted the statement made by a mother when she was asked why she sent her children to the church school,

Some people say we are protecting them from the world—sheltering them. Well, that's right. I don't want them in the world. I want them to go into Christian service. They're like tomato plants in a greenhouse; you have to protect them and nourish them until they grow big and strong, before you put them in the garden. (p. 213)

Lecic (2005) emphasized, "While SDA schools are primarily committed to passing on Christian ideals, they are also concerned with excelling academically. Ideally, Adventist schools are thoroughly Christian and are fully committed to excellence" (p. 14).

The adage which says, "It takes a whole village to rear a child," can be applied to the system that all SDA members should follow in the operation of all their educational institutions. It takes the cooperation of every member in the church to assist other parents in the education of their children. White (1892) stated that "it is essential that every local church, its members, officers and pastors, put forth an earnest effort to promote and help provide for the education of the youth in their midst" (6: 165, 166, 217).

If everyone cooperated, White (1892) suggested that all the youth would be permitted to have the blessings and privileges of an education at our schools that may inspire them to become laborers together with God (6:196, 197). She further advised us that the church has a special work to do in educating and training its children that they

may not, while attending our church schools, or in any other association, be influenced by those of corrupt habits.

Those who attend the public schools often associate with others more neglected than they, those who, aside from the time spent in the school-room, are left to obtain a street education. The hearts of the young are easily impressed and unless their surroundings are of the right character, Satan will use these neglected children to influence those who are more carefully trained. (6:198)

The SDA education system promotes several outcomes for students. One large academy in this Lake Union provides an example of outcomes common to other SDA schools. The *Andrews Academy Sourcebook* (2004-2005) indicated several goals for its young people:

1. Recognize that the harmonious development of their character through the power of the Holy Spirit is the most important aspect of life.
2. Utilize the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White as the primary guides in discovering relevant and unerring principles for directing their lives.
3. Choose to be intelligent, committed Seventh-day Adventist Christians, internalizing a system of values consistent with Adventist beliefs.
4. Understand the mission of the church and accept personal responsibility for spreading the gospel throughout the world.
5. Serve God and mankind unselfishly.
6. Respect authority.
7. Meet appointments regularly and promptly.
8. Accept the responsibility for their own actions and decisions.
9. Have the basic skills necessary for coping with the experiences of everyday life.

10. Develop positive attitudes towards work and a pride in good workmanship.
11. Be able to live in the world as intelligent and responsible consumers.
12. Be able to utilize various techniques for correct oral and written communication.
13. Recognize the importance of the family in Christian life and society.
14. Understand marital and parental roles.
15. Value their health as a sacred trust and adopt concepts and practices that contribute to optimal health including the pursuit of life-long physical activities.
16. Develop an appreciation of the order seen in the universe.
17. Have a wide range of information regarding careers and make tentative choices for their lifework.
18. Respect and seek to understand diverse cultures.
19. Develop a sense of beauty from the Christian perspective.
20. Understand the American democratic way of life and have a commitment to Christian principles of citizenship.
21. Have a variety of cultural experiences and respond with behavior appropriate to these teachings.
22. Desire to pursue knowledge beyond completion of secondary education.
23. Develop positive interpersonal relationship skills.
24. Desire to be pure and peace loving rather than contentious, considerate rather than thoughtless and demanding, reasonable rather than obstinate, straight-forward rather than devious or hypocritical, and merciful rather than severe and heartless (*Andrews Academy Sourcebook, 2004–2005, p. 7*).

### A Brief History of SDA Education

Knight (1983) stated that, in 1850, Adventists who believed that Jesus was coming soon were very troubled about preparing themselves and their children for his soon return. They were also concerned about preparing their children to share the gospel. Early Adventists sought help from James White, the elder of the church. His advice to the believers was that in spite of the fact that Jesus was coming soon, the minds of their children should not be left unimproved (p. 2).

From 1850 to the 1860s, even before the SDA church was officially organized, Adventists attempted to start several schools. In 1853, the first Seventh-day Adventist home school was opened at Aaron Hilliard's home at Buck's Bridge, New York. The teacher was Martha Byington, the daughter of the first president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. In 1854, a home school was opened at Jacksonville, Michigan, and was taught by a church lady. In 1855, Mrs. M. M. Osgood, at Battle Creek, Michigan, initiated another home school. In 1864, another home school was conducted at Elder F. W. Mace's Hillside farm at Amherst, New Hampshire. It was the first school with boarding facilities. Ambrose Coventry also operated a school in Monterey, Allegan County, Michigan, during that year. In 1867, Mrs. Marian Truesdale also established a home school. It was the first SDA school in Wisconsin.

The first denominationally sponsored SDA church school (elementary and secondary) was opened in 1872 by Professor Goodloe Bell in Battle Creek, Michigan. Bell's school is the starting point of the Adventist educational system. In 1883, the first European church school opened in Denmark. This was the first school operated outside of North America. By 1885, the denomination had three schools, five teachers, and 125

students outside North America. By the early 1900s, many other schools sprang up all over the world, in Quebec, Canada; Melbourne, Australia; Buenos Aires; Cape Town; Tokyo; and Beirut, Lebanon (Cadwallender, 1958, pp. 5-9, 21-24). It became part of the Adventist mission to not only start churches but to establish church schools wherever they went. These two roles were seen as one since redemption and education are one and the same.

Adventists believed that, in some instances, God gave the leaders divine messages for the locations of some of their schools. They also built their boarding schools in rural areas so that their students were able to diligently study, away from the noise and distractions of cities. Later, the education department, colleges, and universities were also developed to continue the development of SDA young people even as they became young adults.

The history of SDA education revealed a growing and expanding system of schools. It showed the value that Seventh-day Adventists gave to education. While this value is still evident, enrollment trends in the next section reveal that this value may be waning among some Adventists.

### **General Enrollment Trends**

#### **General Trends in Enrollment of Public and Private Schools**

School enrollment could increase, remain constant, or decline. A portrait of school enrollment trends in public and private schools formed a framework for understanding the importance of this study. It helped to construct the context of SDA school enrollment trends in terms of the general school enrollment trends. Generally, the decline in school enrollment was often a gradual process that occurred over a number of

years. It could be caused by many factors, some of which are under the control of schools and school administrators, but many are not. Brodinsky (1981) reported that the drop in public school enrollment began in the classrooms of American elementary and secondary schools in the fall of 1972, after having a peak enrollment of over 46 million students. The first year's decline was discovered only by statisticians because it fell 1%. The yearly decline continued unnoticed until 1979, when it had a greater drop of 2.4%, and was then noticed by educators (p. 12).

Enrollment trends were changing. Hussar and Gerald (2004) projected that the public schools' enrollment of elementary and secondary schools would reach 48 million in 2003, and it would increase to a maximum of 49.7 million in 2013. In spite of the overall increase in total enrollment, they also mentioned that the enrollment of Pre-K to Grade 8 would decrease from 2002 to 2007, and then increase again from 2008 to 2013. The statistical abstracts of the United States (2003, 2005-2006) entitled *School Enrollment from 1965 to 2013* are reproduced in Table 1. They are the statistical reports of all public and private elementary and secondary students from Grades K-12. In order to obtain the total enrollments for Grades K-12, the number of college students was subtracted from the composite totals.

By examining Table 1, we see that the highest combined total for public and private school enrollments was over 51 million students in 1970, followed by a continuous decline until 1984. An increase in total enrollment occurred in 1985, and continued steadily to 2002. The projected total enrollments will continue to increase until 2013. It was estimated that the total will be about 56,224,000 students.

Table 1

*U.S.A. School Enrollment, Public, and Private: 1965 to 2013*

Year	Total	All Levels		K-8		Grades 9-12	
		Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
1965	48,473	42,173	6,300	30,563	4,900	11,610	1,400
1970	51,267	45,904	5,363	32,568	4,052	13,336	1,311
1975	49,819	44,819	5,000	30,515	3,700	14,304	1,300
1980	46,209	40,878	5,331	27,647	3,992	13,231	1,339
1981	45,544	40,044	5,500	27,280	4,100	12,764	1,400
1982	45,166	39,566	5,600	27,161	4,200	12,405	1,400
1983	44,967	39,252	5,715	26,981	4,315	12,271	1,400
1984	44,876	39,176	5,700	26,905	4,300	12,304	1,400
1985	44,979	39,422	5,557	27,034	4,195	12,388	1,362
1986	45,210	39,758	5,452	27,420	4,116	12,338	1,336
1987	45,488	40,009	5,479	27,933	4,232	12,076	1,247
1988	45,430	40,188	5,242	28,501	4,036	11,687	1,206
1989	45,740	40,542	5,198	29,152	4,035	11,390	1,163
1990	46,450	41,216	5,234	29,878	4,084	11,338	1,150
1991	47,322	42,047	5,275	30,506	4,113	11,541	1,162
1992	48,125	42,803	5,322	31,068	4,175	11,735	1,147

Table 1—Continued.

Year	All Levels			K-8		Grades 9-12	
	Total	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
1993	48,812	43,465	5,347	31,504	4,215	11,961	1,132
1994	49,609	44,111	5,498	31,898	4,335	12,213	1,163
1995	50,503	44,841	5,662	32,341	4,465	12,500	1,197
1996	51,375	45,611	5,764	32,764	4,551	12,847	1,213
1997	51,968	46,127	5,841	33,073	4,623	13,054	1,218
1998	52,476	46,539	5,937	33,346	4,702	13,193	1,235
1999	52,876	46,857	6,019	33,488	4,765	13,369	1,254
2000	53,358	47,203	6,155	33,688	4,868	13,515	1,287
2001	54,007	47,688	6,319	33,952	4,993	13,736	1,326
2002	54,603	48,202	6,401	34,135	5,042	14,067	1,359
2003, proj	54,532	48,213	6,319	33,917	4,935	14,296	1,384
2004, proj	54,594	48,270	6,324	33,686	4,910	14,584	1,414
2005, proj	54,724	48,375	6,349	33,528	4,910	14,847	1,439
2006, proj	54,994	48,575	6,419	33,565	4,963	15,010	1,456
2007, proj	55,103	48,663	6,439	33,603	4,978	15,060	1,461
2008, proj	55,115	48,696	6,419	33,702	5,002	14,994	1,457
2009, proj	55,221	48,741	6,480	33,870	5,030	14,871	1,450
2010, proj	55,352	48,842	6,510	34,097	5,064	14,745	1,446
2011, proj	55,551	49,004	6,547	34,439	5,114	14,565	1,433
2012, proj	55,838	49,248	6,590	34,846	5,171	14,402	1,419
2013, proj	56,224	49,583	6,641	35,268	5,231	14,315	1,410

*Note.* From Statistical Abstract of the United States: The National Data Books (123<sup>rd</sup> & 125<sup>th</sup> eds.). (Tables: 204 and 217 respectively), by US National Center for Educational Statistics, US Census Bureau. [In thousands, 51,267 represents 51,267,000]. Proj = enrollment projected numbers for the year.



The public schools also had their highest enrollment of approximately 46 million students in 1970 and also experienced a yearly decline in enrollment from 1971 to 1984. The schools enjoyed a yearly increase in enrollment from 1985 to 2002. The projected increase in enrollment would also continue until 2013.

The private schools had their highest enrollment of 6,300,000 students in 1965, and their lowest enrollment was in 1975. They then experienced a continuous increase in enrollment from 1976 to 1983, experienced a decline from 1984 to 1990, and again had a yearly increase to 2002. Their projected enrollments also showed that their enrollments would continue to increase yearly.

The public schools from K-8 had their highest enrollment in 1965, and suffered a decline from 1971 to 1984. This was followed by an increase in enrollment from 1985 to 2002. They were projected to have a decline in enrollment from 2003 until 2005, and then there would be an increase until 2013.

The private schools from K-8 experienced a decline from 1966 to 1975, followed by a yearly increase from 1976 to 1984. The enrollment remained constant from 1985 until 1994, and then had a continuous increase until 2002 of 5,042,000 students. Their projected enrollments showed a decline to 2005, but they would again experience an increase from 2006 to 2013.

The public schools from Grades 9 through 12 had their highest enrollment of 14,304,000 students in 1975. The enrollment declined from 1976 to 1983, gradually increased to 12,338,000 students in 1986, declined again from 1987 to 1990, and then increased yearly to 2002. The projected enrollments indicated that the schools would have a yearly increase until 2013.

### Trends of Enrollment in North American SDA Schools

The preceding review of the general enrollment trends in public and private schools formed the setting for understanding SDA enrollment trends in North America. These public and private schools experienced both increase and decline in enrollment, but both had an increase in enrollment from 1990 to 2002. The SDA schools have experienced continuous decline, and furthermore, the organization does not report projected enrollments. Mainda (2001) reported that from 1980 to 2000, there has been a steady decline in enrollment in SDA elementary and secondary schools in Michigan. Kromann (2001), who studied the declining trend, suggested that remedial interventions and marketing strategies should be implemented to stop the decline.

The *Annual Statistical Report of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists* (2003) was used to compose Table 2. This table shows the trends at 5-year intervals from 1946 to 1980, and yearly from 1981 to 2004. It also shows that although the North American Division has experienced steady church membership increases since the 1940s, SDA school enrollment has not kept pace with the membership growth. In the North American Division, the total opening enrollment increased from 36,875 students in 1946 to the highest total of 76,342 students in the 1976-1977 school year. The decline began and steadily continued to the 2004 school-year except for a small increase in the 1991-1992 and 1994-1995 school years.

The opening enrollment for Grades 9-12, with the exception of the 1951-1952 school year, increased steadily until the 1976-1977 school year to 22,534 students—the highest enrollment. There was a continuous decline from 1981-1982 school years to 2004.

Table 2

*North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists School Enrollment and Church Membership, 1946-2004*

School Year	Church Membership	K-8 Opening Enrollment		9-12 Opening Enrollment		Total Opening Enrollment	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1946-1947	220,122	24,543	11.1	12,332	5.6	36,875	16.7
1951-1952	260,185	29,124	11.2	11,169	4.3	40,,293	15.5
1956-1957	299,984	36,617	12.2	13,412	4.5	50,029	16.7
1961-1962	343,664	43,554	12.7	16,950	4.9	60,504	17.6
1966-1967	391,014	47,325	12.1	18,878	4.8	66,203	16.9
1971-1972	454,096	52,216	11.5	20,145	4.4	72,361	15.9
1976-1977	536,649	53,808	10.0	22,534	4.2	76,342	14.2
1981-1982	622,961	54,099	8.7	19,497	3.1	73,596	11.8
1982-1983	642,317	52,780	8.2	18,225	2.8	71,005	11.0
1983-1984	660,253	52,009	7.9	17,977	2.7	69,486	10.6
1984-1985	676,204	50,669	7.5	18,064	2.7	68,733	10.2
1985-1986	689,507	49,975	7.2	17,769	2.6	67,744	9.8
1986-1987	704,515	50,159	7.1	17,565	2.5	67,721	9.6
1987-1988	715,260	50,055	7.0	17,311	2.4	67,366	9.4
1988-1989	727,561	50,609	7.0	16,115	2.2	66,714	9.2

Table 2—Continued.

School Year	Church Membership	K-8 Opening Enrollment		9-12 Opening Enrollment		Total Opening Enrollment	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1989-1990	743,023	50,144	6.7	16,109	2.2	66,253	8.9
1990-1991	760,148	50,207	6.6	15,749	2.1	65,956	8.7
1991-1992	776,848	50,158	6.5	16,009	2.1	66,167	8.6
1992-1993	793,594	—	—	—	—	—	—
1993-1994	807,601	50,464	6.2	15,627	1.9	66,091	8.1
1994-1995	822,150	50,988	6.2	15,958	1.9	66,946	8.1
1995-1996	838,898	50,669	6.0	15,766	1.9	66,435	7.9
1996-1997	858,363	49,745	5.8	15,873	1.9	65,618	7.6
1997-1998	875,811	48,930	5.6	15,917	1.8	64,847	7.4
1998-1999	891,176	48,804	5.5	15,758	1.8	64,562	7.3
1999-2000	914,106	48,250	5.4	15,494	1.7	64,744	7.1
2000-2001	933,935	48,226	5.2	15,613	1.7	63,839	6.9
2001-2002	955,076	48,270	5.1	15,582	1.6	63,850	6.7
2002-2003	974,271	45,750	4.7	15,479	1.6	61,229	6.3
2003-2004	992,046	45,198	4.6	15,344	1.5	60,542	6.1

*Note.* From North American Division Annual Statistical Report (2003, p. 35), by General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. Silver Springs, MA. Percentage shows ratio of membership to students. Dashes indicate that data were not available from data source.

the range of 50,000 students. From the 1996–1997 school year to the 2003–2004 school year, the enrollment continued to decline to 45.2 thousand students. Table 2 indicates the yearly growth of church membership, and the percentage of the number of SDA children who attended church schools to the total church membership. The ratio decreased yearly.

This study focused on the school enrollment. Table 3 shows the enrollment trend. The highest total enrollment was in 1980, with a total of 7,448 students. It began its decline in 1981 and continued until 1992, when the schools had a total enrollment of 5,020 students. Whereas other private schools were enjoying some increase in enrollment during this period, SDA schools had an increase in enrollment only from 1993 to 1995. The decline continued from 1966 to the present, except in 2000, when it gained a small increase over the previous year.

The opening enrollment for Grades 9–12 decreased from 1981 to 1992, ending with a total 1,136 students. An increase in enrollment was experienced from 1993 to 1996, and except in 1999, the decline continued to 2003 when there was an enrollment of only 1,133 students. No further data were available from the data.

The highest enrollment for Grades K–8 occurred in 1980 with a total of 5,663 students. There was a continuous decline in enrollment to 2004 (except in 1992 and 1995 when a very small increase over the previous year's enrollment was experienced). The total number of schools in the Lake Union Conference has also been decreasing. The secondary schools remained within the range of 10 and 8 from 1980 to 2005. The number of elementary schools increased from 1980 to 1984 (137 schools)—

Table 3

*Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Enrollment Reports from 1980-2003*

Year	No. of Elementary Schools	Opening Enrollment K-8	No. of Secondary Schools	Opening Enrollment Grades 9-12	Total Number of Schools	Total Enrollment K-12
1980	131	5,663	10	1,785	141	7,448
1981	133	5,256	10	1,721	143	6,977
1982	134	4,948	10	1,609	144	6,557
1983	134	4,761	10	1,542	144	6,502
1984	137	4,571	10	1,559	147	6,130
1985	124	4,261	9	1,532	133	5,793
1986	131	4,186	9	1,532	140	5,718
1987	134	4,120	8	1,509	142	5,629
1988	123	4,131	8	1,478	131	5,609
1989	115	4,084	8	1,354	123	5,438
1990	114	4,023	8	1,299	122	5,323
1991	117	3,873	8	1,190	125	5,063
1992	114	3,884	8	1,136	122	5,020
1993	111	3,771	8	1,188	119	5,059
1994	104	3,708	8	1,386	112	5,094
1995	106	3,888	8	1,369	114	5,257
1996	105	3,847	8	1,407	113	5,254
1997	104	3,671	8	1,245	112	4,916
1998	101	3,555	8	1,241	109	4,786
1999	103	3,517	8	1,308	111	4,825
2000	103	3,743	8	1,289	111	5,032
2001	—	—	—	—	—	—
2002	—	—	—	—	—	—
2003	105	3,499	8	1,133	113	4,632

*Note.* From *Statistical Reports of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (1980 -2003.)* by General Conference of SDA Executive Committee, Washington DC. Dashes indicate that data were not available from data source.

the highest number on record. In 1985, the number of elementary schools began to decline, and at present the Lake Union Conference has a total of 113 elementary and secondary schools. The enrollments of non-SDA and SDA students of the North American Division are given in Tables 4 and 5. No separate data of SDA students and non-SDA students were recorded before 1996.

In the North American Division, the largest grand total enrollment from 1990 to 2005 was in 1995. The grand total enrollment continued to decline biannually to 2002 and yearly to 2005. In 1997, approximately 29% of the total school enrollment consisted of non-SDA students, and approximately 20% of the yearly enrollment was non-SDA students. The highest enrollment of SDA students was in 1999, and the number continues to decrease to the present

The Lake Union Conference highest grand total enrollment was in 1990, and the decline continues to the present. The highest total enrollment of SDA students was in 1996, and with a small increase in 1998, the enrollment continues to decline. An increase in enrollment of non-SDA students occurred from 1998 to 2001—978 students. In 2003, only 479 non-SDA students were enrolled—the lowest non-SDA enrollment. The academies and elementary schools had their highest enrollment of non-SDA students in 1999.

Table 4

*Enrollment of North American Division Elementary and Secondary Schools (1990–2005)*

Year	Elem. Schools SDA	Elem. Schools Non-SDA	Total Enroll. Elem. Schools	Sec. Schools SDA	Sec. Schools Non-SDA	Total Enroll. Sec. Schools	Total Non-SDA	Total SDA	Grand Total K-12
1990	—	—	52,184	10,979	3,177	14,156	—	—	66,340
1991	—	—	53,948	10,907	3,374	14,281	—	—	68,229
1992	—	—	51,330	11,159	3,228	14,387	—	—	65,717
1993	—	—	53,156	10,820	3,362	14,182	—	—	67,338
1994	—	—	53,442	10,820	3,362	14,182	—	—	67,624
1995	—	—	53,325	12,184	4,470	16,654	—	—	69,979
1996	39,201	11,562	50,763	10,647	3,957	14,604	15,519	49,848	65,367
1997	37,213	12,785	49,998	10,114	6,423	16,537	19,208	47,327	66,535
1998	38,063	10,582	48,645	13,897	2,463	16,360	13,045	51,960	65,005
1999	37,890	12,262	50,152	14,301	1,820	16,121	14,082	52,191	66,273
2000	36,462	11,922	48,384	9,235	5,295	14,530	17,217	45,697	62,914
2001	35,712	12,859	48,571	9,416	6,093	15,509	18,952	45,032	64,084
2002	35,127	11,256	46,383	9,230	4,866	14,096	16,122	44,357	60,479
2003	32,180	12,049	44,229	8,974	6,808	15,782	18,857	41,154	60,011
2004	33,276	11,012	44,288	8,760	6,740	15,500	17,752	42,036	59,788
2005	29,632	13,652	43,284	9,537	4,581	14,118	18,233	39,169	57,401

*Note.* From *North American Division Annual Statistical Reports (1990–2005)*, by General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Springs, MD. Dashes indicate that data were not available from data source. Elem. = Elementary, Sec. = Secondary, and Enroll. = Enrollment.



Table 5

*Lake Union Conference Elementary and Secondary Schools (Academies)  
Enrollments From 1990–2005*

Year	Elem. Schools SDA	Elem. Schools Non- SDA	Total Enroll. Elem. Schools	Sec. Schools SDA	Sec. Schools Non- SDA	Total Enroll. Sec. Schools	Total Non- SDA	Total SDA	Grand Total K-12
1990	—	—	4,275	787	151	938	—	—	5,213
1991	—	—	4,111	768	152	920	—	—	5,031
1992	—	—	3,406	781	172	953	—	—	4,359
1993	—	—	4,083	769	164	933	—	—	5,016
1994	—	—	3,919	770	165	935	—	—	4,930
1995	—	—	3,995	719	223	942	—	—	4,861
1996	3,005	543	3,548	654	244	898	787	3,659	4,446
1997	2,856	517	3,373	689	186	875	703	3,545	4,248
1998	2,909	505	3,414	676	222	898	727	3,585	4,412
1999	2,937	580	3,517	633	268	901	848	3,560	4,408
2000	2,848	572	3,420	711	234	945	806	3,559	4,365
2001	2,674	767	3,441	715	211	926	978	3,389	4,367
2002	2,750	491	3,241	696	94	790	585	3,446	4,031
2003	2,619	441	3,060	798	38	836	479	3,417	3,896
2004	2,472	385	2,857	733	191	924	576	3,205	3,781
2005	2,217	559	2,776	—	—	—	—	—	—

*Note.* From *North American Division Annual Statistical Reports (1990 -2005)*, by General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Springs, MD. Dashes indicate that data were not available from data source. Elem. = Elementary, Sec. = Secondary, and Enroll. = Enrollment.

## **Factors That Affect School Enrollment**

### **Introduction**

This section presents a review of the factors influencing school enrollment decisions of parents. It is divided into the following subsections: (a) financial issues, (b) home schooling, (c) parental and children's school choices, (d) school distance and transportation, (e) teacher's attitude, (f) diverse school's population, (g) pastoral issues, and (h) the school's image.

### **Financial Issues**

SDA funding processes influence school enrollment and are discussed in this section because of their major influence on school enrollment. Public schools receive their revenues for operating schools from the Federal, State, and local governments. The parents of students who attend public schools do not pay tuition fees. Free schooling is available to all community residents if they so choose.

Historically, public funds have not supported the cost of SDA education, but today some schools do receive some public support. Some parents receive reimbursement for the cost of their children's bus fares to attend parochial schools (Randall, 1994, p. 5). SDA schools, like some other private schools, depend heavily on tuition for their school's operation. Shapira and Cookson (1997), American professors of the School Reform Movement who hold international workshops about school issues, stated that "unlike public schools, which are free of charge, private schools charge tuition fees" (p. 144). Tuition fees could place a great burden on some parents if their incomes are not large, "especially on families with a number of school-age children" (p. 144).

In the SDA organization, three main methods are applied to obtain revenue for

school operations, namely, the tuition plan, the temple or second-tithe plan, and the financial plan. The major portion of revenue for the school's operation comes from tuition fees and subsidies provided by host churches. Some additional funds are obtained from gifts/contributions from members, sponsors, the conference's appropriations, fund-raisers, and school services rendered to the community. The gifts that are received from sponsors and constituent churches help to reduce the actual educational cost of each child.

The tuition fees are the payment the parents must pay for the instruction of each child. The other fees that parents are charged in addition to tuition may include application fee, lunch, housing, insurance fees, late registration, transcript fees, music lessons, school supplies, trips, and tours. Parents could pay the total amount of tuition at the beginning of the school's term or year, and receive a discount, or it could be paid in 10 equal billings. Each family would decide the payment policy that best pleased them. In 1903, Frederick Griggs, the Secretary of the General Conference, and a majority of the church leading educators formulated this tuition plan. The salaries of teachers and the operating school expenses were then funded by four sources: tuition fees, gifts from church members, appropriations from the conferences, and the second tithe (Knight, 1983, p. 193).

Another method that other SDA schools use is the temple plan, where all the members of the church return a second tithe. A selected committee distributes the second tithe in proportion to the various church departments' needs. The church is responsible for the payment of the teachers, and all the children of that church are allowed to go to school without paying tuition. The church members are not asked to contribute to any

other funds. They could give voluntary offerings to other projects if they so choose. In 1902, Edward A. Sutherland, the educational director, was the originator of the temple plan when financing Christian education was a central issue. He recommended the adoption of this universal system of education to fund SDA education because “tuition and voluntary gifts could not be relied upon to cover all the costs” (Knight, 1983, p. 193).

The third method is the financial aid plan. There are different branches of financial aid, namely, the family discount; the employee educational assistance; the project assistance; needs-based financial aid; and the government-subsidized lunch program.

A family or guardian, who enrolls two or more children full time at a SDA school, would receive a family discount of a given percentage at the time of enrollment. This percentage is stipulated by the school board, and it varies from school to school.

The employee educational assistance is given to parents who are employed by the SDA denomination. Parents received from 35% to 85% discount of the tuition cost for their children if they are enrolled as full-time students. The percentage varies from school to school.

Project assistance is a three-way matching program. The conference pays a third, the church pays a third, and the school or the parents pays a third. This plan helps families who cannot afford to send their children to school without financial assistance. The parents complete an application form and attach a proof of income to the application form. The church official or committee who is responsible for recommending parents for financial assistance would determine how great the need is and send the information to the school.

For needs-based financial aid, the family must fill out the application form about 6 months before the new school year begins. This aid is granted by the committee according to the amount of money that is available for scholarship funds. A proof of income must be attached to the application form. The parents must have a conference with the treasurer or manager of that committee before this aid is granted.

The reduced-price lunch program aid is sponsored by the Federal government (USAD). Many SDA schools participate in this project. Again, parents complete the application forms, and they are given to the school secretary. According to the regulations that are given, the principal or food service personnel determine who are eligible to receive free lunches or what the lower rate is that each student must pay.

Other funds for the operation of the school are obtained from the systematic tithes and offerings of church members. Each conference specifies a different percentage of tithes generated in its conference during the previous calendar year to be used for educational funding. The Conference donates up to 50% or 65% of each teacher's monthly salary and the remaining percentage comes from the church or school. Doerr and Menendez (1991) remarked that "SDA education is basically a church supported program. In addition to the tuition and fees paid by guardians and their parents, the bulk of the financial support comes from the local churches and supporting organizations" (p. 27).

Tuition increases yearly because of increases in energy costs and the cost of living in the United States. This increase in expenses occurs because more money is needed to purchase the same amount of resources that was purchased in the previous year. The supply cost increases over the previous year's cost, and greater investment is made for

educational resources (Frances, 1990, p. 6). Schools also spend more today for the latest technical equipment, so new technology has caused an increase in expenditures and services. To obtain the extra funds for the school's operation, the easiest method is to raise tuition fees.

From my experience, tuition increases have a negative influence on SDA enrollment. This enrollment decline was predicted by White (1892) who warned that improper increases in tuition would cause a decrease in school enrollment (6:211).

To obtain extra money for the funding of education is a great challenge to educators. Brimley and Garfield (2005) remarked that funding the rapidly increasing cost of education is a serious challenge to Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, because everyone thinks about the cost of education rather than the investment in human capital (p. 123).

Increase in tuition affects enrollment. If tuition fees keep rising and family income does not keep pace with these changes, the burden of paying tuition fees would threaten to further challenge school enrollment in SDA schools. Hirschey and Pappas (1993) remarked that as the cost of education increases, parents choose other alternatives that would appear to provide them with the same values (pp. 172-175).

In our churches, the family income differs. There are some parents who are making great financial sacrifices to send their children to SDA schools. As a private school, Aitken (1993) cited that some parents make great financial sacrifices to allow their children to attend private school while other parents have little or no difficulty in paying the tuition amount (p. 106).

As an organization, we want to increase our school's enrollment. Aitken (1993) suggested that since "schools are committed to enhance access . . . private schools [like

SDA schools] must consider lowering tuition by increasing revenues other than tuition, and rely more on the philanthropic capabilities of the local community, graduates, and parents” (p. 106).

The reason why some families today earn low income is because the opportunity to earn sufficient money in America has decreased. Cornia and Danziger (1997) declared that in the history of the USA, from 1999 to present, the highest proportion of workers is employed and it is harder now to obtain a job (p. 117). Some individuals are employed while others are not. Because societal culture values different people differently, Meares and Garvin (2000) cited the unavailability of jobs, which causes

workers to have to focus on the demands of work rather than on the needs of their families. . . . It tends to bar the way to self-sufficiency. The land of opportunity is a land of opportunity for some, but not all. The rewards from work may have more to do with predetermined factors such as skin color and gender, certain neighborhoods where one lives, and the work chosen by one’s parents. (p. 502)

For a significant portion of families, the only means of staying above the poverty line is to have two earners in the family. “This has pulled mothers of young children into the workplace in record numbers” (Meares & Garvin, 2000, p. 501) because the father’s income is insufficient to balance the budget. Employees now have the opportunity to accept the lowest bidders.

Low-paying jobs have greatly affected single parents. To enable their children to attend private schools, they need jobs that give them adequate wages. Cornia and Danziger (1997)—the former is the director of the World Institute for Development Economics Research in Helsinki, and the latter, professor of Michigan Program on Poverty and Social Welfare Policy—recommended that single parents need at least one-and-a-half average wages to support their family because “one wage alone is not enough,

especially if it is the mother's" (p. 120). Single parents cannot pay the extra cost for after-care services. Catsouphes, Kossek, and Sweet (2006) stated that

single parents may not be able to afford day care services because they are forced to take low-wage jobs. . . . They need real resources for themselves and their children, jobs that pay them a living wage, health-care, child care help, good services including schools and reliable transportation facilities. . . . Poverty drives these people into paid work for long hours each day and their children get very little parental involvement. (p. 53)

Some SDA parents are new immigrants and receive low wages. It is impossible for some of them to pay for SDA tuition. Numerous studies have shown that as new immigrant families enter the United States, they and the visible minorities are far more likely than the general population to earn low living wages (Alberta Public Interest, 2006, p. 2). Catsouphes et al. (2006) stated that "43% of immigrants work at jobs paying less than \$7.50 an hour. Poverty rates are thus considerably higher for immigrant families than for natives" (p. 52). Some female immigrants do housework and live-in jobs, but they earn sub-minimum wages and work around the clock (p. 53). These females are very tired at the end of their week's work. Researchers indicate that those parents who work outside the home, lack time and energy to invest in their own children following their efforts to fulfill workplace demands (Meares & Garvin, 2000, p. 503).

### Home Schooling

Home schooling can be defined as an educational choice of teaching children at home. It emerged from the thoughts of some parents who felt that they could better educate their children at home than the teachers in the schools. After a period of contention and the case of *Perchemlides v. Frizzles* (1978), the court held that independent learning programs need not be equivalent to public school. The home-



school parents continued to pursue their desires to teach their children (Klicka, 1995, p. 14). Klicka, a writer and the Senior Counsel of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), counseled parents about their legal rights and resources. Klicka's research focused on the general population of home schooling. Today, home schooling is protected by the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the Constitution.

Home schooling is increasing and enrollment in traditional public and private schools is affected by it. In 1991, Toch et al. (as cited in Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, & Marlow, 1995, p. 9) said that "home schooling was a fast-growing movement in American education that showed no sign of slackening." In 1995, Klicka reported that about 1 million students are being home schooled nationwide, and the number was increasing. Therefore more parents are choosing to home school their child or children.

Klicka (1995) said, "Anybody should have the right to choose to teach their own children" (p. 26). The primary reason that he gave for home schooling was religious. He reported that 93.8% of home-schooling fathers and 96.4% of home-schooling mothers were born-again Christians who were prepared to make the necessary sacrifice to provide an education for their children (pp. 2, 3). Mayberry et al. (1995), American home school and social researchers, found that the majority of home-parent educators were raised in mainstream religious institutions and quoted Deut 6:6, 7, to explain why they chose home schooling.

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk to them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up.

Their findings could be applied to SDA home-school educators. These parents

believe that God has given them a responsibility, and they are not going to delegate it to others. Mayberry et al. (1995), quoting the words of a home educator said, “It is my responsibility to see that they [my children] grow to be conscientious, responsible, and intelligent people. This is too important a job to be given to someone I don’t even know” (p. 39).

The second reason Klicka (1995) gave was that parents were concerned about the academic and moral declines in the public schools. Some other parents were discontented with the removal of God and religion from the schools. Still others were dissatisfied because there were over 27 million students who had graduated, yet the nation occupied the bottom tier of the academic ladder (p. 3). Klicka (1995) stated, “Home schooling parents simply want the choice to protect their children from becoming one of the nation’s statistics of academic or moral failure” (p. 7).

Some other home-schooling parents do not cite a religious reason for home schooling, but they believe that they have the authority to make the decision to home school their children. Today, these parents have “the right to choose to teach their own children” (Klicka, 1995, p. 7), and many of them are using the given opportunity. Still other home educators do not want their children to be confined to grades, but to work according to their abilities. An early SDA leader, White (1943) had advised the early believers about this practice that occurred among SDA schools when she stated that “the system of confining children rigidly to grades was not wise” (p. 177).

Home educators are primarily White parents and they want to provide their children with an effective learning environment. Mayberry et al. (1995) emphasized that “home schooling is clearly the domain of a largely white population, and 98% of home

schooling parents are white” (p. 30).

Home-schooling parents educate their child or children at home because they have their beliefs, goals/purposes, reasons, and concerns. Mayberry et al. (1995) stated that

home schooling parents feel that little has changed in schools as they see education through the lens of their prior experiences. Schools are remembered as a place where some of them suffered psychological or physical abuse at the hands of disrespectful and mean-spirited teachers and students. These parents’ goal of their home school is to protect their children from incurring similar experiences. Those parents who had fond memories simply want to replicate those satisfying kinds of experiences for their own children. (p. 47)

Mayberry et al. (1995) cited some other reasons why more parents in general practice home schooling. These researchers stated that

Parents are convinced that home schooling is woven into every fabric of family life. . . . For home school parents, playing the primary role in their children’s education is fundamental to their sense of what it means to be a parent. . . . They believe that it was their God-given right to be responsible for their children’s education. . . . Their instruction programs are based on their religious and philosophical orientations. . . . These parents have concerns about their children’s physical safety, academic and moral training, and socialization experiences. . . . Some of them believe that their intimate familiarity with their children’s learning styles and individual talents would allow them to develop educational programs superior to those available to teachers in formal schools. . . . They see themselves being more in tune with and understanding of their children’s unique needs than school teachers. . . .The families’ interactions with fellow home educators provide them with mutual support and encouragement, and families often share their home instruction resources with each other. (pp. 2, 22, 48)

Home schooling is an educational choice today even among SDA parents.

Mayberry et al. (1995) stated that some home educators continue to support public or private education although they lack confidence in these schools (p. 43). In spite of the fact that many families home school their children, the organization expects all to support Christian education.

## Parental and Children's Choices

### Parental Choices

This section discusses how parents' and children's choices affect school enrollment. In the United States, this issue of parental choice in schooling received national attention in 1992, when President Bush provided scholarships to children of poor and middle-class parents that enabled these children's parents to make school choices. Today, the United States, as a democratic country, gives every parent the right to make school choices. Halstead (1994) stated that

parents, in this democratic society have the right to choose the type of education that they want for their children. They have the freedom to select schools that reinforce their traditions and values, and are able to choose among schools that reflect the diversity of values in a pluralistic society. They are able to choose schools that best fit the educational needs of their children. They have the opportunity to select a school of a particular size, curriculum, and/or pedagogical approach to match school experiences and their child's need. (p. 38)

Witte and Walsh (1990) affirmed that where each student goes to school is determined by the family, and Henson (1992) declared that parents are aware and informed of alternative choices of schools, but the school that they finally choose, was based on reasonably well-defined preferences.

Davis (1993), in Albany, New York, found that parents' choice can increase enrollment or cause it to decline. Pearson (1993), an administrator who conducted her own study in northern Minnesota about choice in education, stated, "Choices can drain schools and communities of precious human resources, and the highest motivated and achieving students with the most involved parents" (p. 105). This statement suggests certain types of parents and students tend to exercise their choice more readily.

Parents also have certain concerns which may prevent them from sending their

child or children to a school. Hughes et al. (1994) mentioned that parents' concerns play important roles in the choice of schools. Their research was done in England, using in-depth interviews with parents who were experiencing school reforms and they wanted to know how the families felt about the current changes. For example, some parents were concerned about school standards in general, such as the basic reading and mathematical skills' levels, the proximity of the school, children's happiness, lack of discipline in school, and poor teaching where the teachers were not pushing the children hard enough so that they would be motivated to perform at their maximum potentials (pp. 118, 119). These concerned parents observed their child or children closely, and if their child did not show progress academically, they removed their child from the school. For younger children in the early classes, the parents were concerned about the school's atmosphere and the child's happiness in making choices. SDA parents may have some of these concerns, and may cause them to withdraw their children from Christian schools.

Parents tend to exercise school choice by sending children to school with smaller class sizes. These smaller classes allow the children to have more individual attention. Catherine Clark (2000), the Director of the Texas Center for Educational Research in Austin, stated that most parents preferred to send their children to schools where the teachers have smaller classes and are better able to fit the children's needs. The students are also able to obtain more of the teacher's supervision and attention.

Young and Clinchy (1992) from their research entitled *Choice in Public Education* found that some parents wanted schools that provided before- and aftercare classes for an additional charge, and still others were influenced by specialized programs and staffing at particular schools (p. 85).

Further school choice issues were made by Halstead (1994) who noted that the parents are now focusing on performance issues such as examination results and performance-related issues such as the school's pleasant atmosphere and ethos than on the choices their older parents made long ago (p. 119). This concept may be applied also to the choices that some Seventh-day Adventist parents make. Greenleaf (2005), a SDA historian, stated that SDA parents "tend to place less stress today on spiritual values when deciding where their children would attend school" (p. 515), and more on other issues such as academic quality. He further cited that "academic pursuits have obscured the real reason for Adventist education" (p. 516).

Some younger parents also may have certain beliefs or feelings about SDA schools. These beliefs or feelings about the schools affect enrollment. For example, one parent may believe that sending their child to an Adventist school where most of the students are from Christian homes will help to strengthen the child's faith in the Lord and the child will remain a SDA church member, whereas another parent may believe that it is not very likely that sending their child to an Adventist school where most of the students are from Christian homes will help to strengthen the child's faith in the Lord and the child will still remain a SDA church member. Perloff (1993), an American sociologist, stated that these beliefs are subjectively held and can be ordered along a probability distribution (p. 29).

Woods et al. (1998), similar to Hunter (1991), further found that the parents' choice of school depended on:

1. standard of academic education
2. nearness to home/convenience for travel

3. child's happiness at the school (p. 122).

Some other reasons why parents chose to send their children to SDA schools are summarized by Hughes et al. (1994) as:

1. The child's friends are there.
2. The school is in their community, and they are part of their community.
3. The school has a good reputation.
4. A friend recommended the school.
5. An older child went to the school and received a good educational start.
6. As children, the parents attended that school.
7. Convenient or available transportation made the school their only option.
8. The parents visited the school before making the choice (pp. 82–95).

Woods et al. (1998) further stated that parents chose schools that had a good academic achievement rate, good discipline, a degree of sports, and encouragement in arts and music (p. 127). Halstead (1994), from the research conducted in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in London, found that parents chose secondary schools based on their emphasis on academics. This factor included the range of subjects offered, examination results, the quality of teaching, teachers' expectations of pupils, and homework. Discipline was more important for parents who had boys, and girls' parents were more drawn to single-sex education (pp. 114, 115, 118). Halstead pointed out that parents also chose to send their children with high academic ability to private schools (p. 116).

Some SDA parents chose public schools because public schooling is free,

whereas SDA schooling is costly. When the cost of tuition was compared to the family income, it gave some indication of the financial sacrifice that would be necessary for the family to make the choice of an SDA school. If the median-income family had two or more children, it would be hardly possible to send those children to a private school because the cost would exceed the family's discretionary income (Schneider & Coleman, 1993, p. 148).

Another reason some parents gave for not choosing certain schools was race and socioeconomic class. Sugarman and Kemerer (1999) found that "the number of minority students enrolled in a school had a significant effect on the decision of white parents to enroll their children in that school" (p. 280). They also mentioned that

the racial and socioeconomic composition of the student body has the greatest effect on school choice decisions with white parents choosing schools with low percentages of minority students, and minority parents often seeking schools with high percentages of minority students. (p. 292)

Parents also chose schools according to their different ethnic groups. Halstead (1994) cited that

parents from different ethnic, social and religious groups choose or opt for secondary schools using different criteria. For a number of parents basic "structural" criteria have to be fulfilled in relation to school choice. Some parents, predominantly middle class, will only consider independent schooling. For some Asians and Muslim parents, and those with strong views about the importance of girls, who are being educated away from the distractions of boys, the fact that the school is single-sex appears to be of paramount importance. For some parents of boys, the fact that a school is mixed is of paramount importance. For some Christian parents and some non-religious parents, the fact that the schools are religious has a paramount importance, because such schools are perceived to be well disciplined. (p. 120)

Working parents chose schools where before- and after-school services were provided. When both father and mother were employed outside the home, the parents were also concerned about after-school supervision. Schneider and Coleman (1993)



reported that “availability of adequate after school supervision may be the deciding factor in the decision of many mothers to enter or leave the labor force” (p. 24). The two-parent wage earner family could decide to live on one wage, and the mother could provide supervision for her child, or they could obtain after-school services in the school, at a neighbor’s or relative’s home.

Depending on the income of some families, the parents chose to send their children to after-school classes such as music and art as an alternative for supervision, if after-school services were unavailable (Schneider & Coleman, 1993, p. 26).

Due to lack of family income, some students were left unsupervised after school for some hours. Research has found that single mothers were most likely to leave their children unsupervised for very long hours because they had to enter the labor force from necessity. Stepfather families with working mothers also left their children unsupervised for long hours.

Halstead (1994) gave some other strong reasons that parents cited as to why they chose a school. They are as follows:

1. Denominational reasons
2. Educational reasons (provision of a particular type of work in a particular school)
3. Linguistic reasons
4. Special facilities at a school (for example, provision of midday meals, thus allowing parents to work all day)
5. Medical reasons (p. 23).

### **Children's Choice**

In addition to parental choice factors, children themselves influence school choice. Although very young children may not be given the power of school choice, researchers have confirmed that older children are usually more involved in choice of secondary schools. Alston (1985) discovered that children made the choice about secondary schools, and the school's reputation was a very important factor for their choice at the secondary level (p. 113). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1994) also reported that the children's choice of the school varied according to age. At the age of 11, pupils were at least equal choosers, and at the age of 14 they played a dominant part in decision-making as they were the ones who would be involved in the school programs and extracurricular activities.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1994) suggested that middle-class parents were more likely than working-class ones to press their own choice onto their children when there was a conflict of preferences (p. 22). However, Sugarman and Kemerer (1999) stated that "nearly 60% of all school children in the United States attended schools of their choice, and less than a quarter of U.S. school children attended schools that were picked out for them" (p. 29).

### **School Distance and Transportation**

Other factors influence school enrollment that may or may not be directly related to typical school choice issues. Transportation is one of them. Students who lived more than a mile from some schools received free bus, boat, or train tickets from the principals. In other areas, school buses picked up the children at home or at a junction, and dropped them off after school. Young and Clinchy (1992) remarked that some parents chose

schools far enough from home to ensure that that their children would qualify for busing. Other parents wanted a school close or convenient to their workplace. In 1993, a London researcher reported that parents, who chose to send their children to elementary or secondary schools outside their borough, gave the location of the school as their chief reason for their choice (Hughes, Wikeley, & Nash, 1994, p. 110). Many studies have been done relating to school choices, and one of the main reasons still given today is the proximity of the school and its location.

### Teacher's Attitude

Social scientists agree that an attitude is a learned, enduring, and affective evaluation of an object, a person, entity, or idea that exerts a directive impact on one's behavior. Attitudes are learned from socializing with parents, peers, schools, and mass media through conditioning, modeling behavior of influential personnel, and exposure to novel stimuli (Perloff, 1993, p. 27). Attitudes influence our cognitions and behaviors and color our perception (for or against the referents).

The attitude of the teacher affects the performance of the children. Munn (1993) reported that "when teachers, parents and pupils work together, in a spirit of practical partnership, there were benefits and lasting relationships that were transferable to other aspects of the child's learning and development" (p. 104). Parents and teachers had different attitudes and expectations of students; therefore, forming a partnership was very important. The teacher then shared information with the child and parents, respected them, and was willing to negotiate with them. This triangular relationship allowed them to talk and listen to each other, disagree, give and take on both sides, but they worked together towards a more effective and appropriate education for the child or children.

Teachers' expectations of pupils whose "backgrounds, cultures, and languages they did not understand, have been consistently low" (p. 133). Munn (1993) recommended that teachers would have to change their attitude if they wanted the parents to be partners (p. 144).

Teachers would like parents to be more involved in school activities, but Madsen (1996) stated that "whereas teachers may say they want parents to be involved, they often leave parents with mixed signals" (p. 159). In 1984, from Cutright's survey (as cited in Madsen, 1996) he revealed that "several factors mitigate against [parents'] productive involvement in school, such as lack of time, minimal opportunities for involvement, and indifferent attitudes on the part of the teacher" (p. 158). Epstein's (1986) study revealed that "some teachers did not involve any parent in school activities unless they had problems with their child, and other parents believed that they were excluded from some of the most basic communications such as phone calls, conferences, and school programs (p. 158).

Whenever the principal is encouraging teachers to communicate with parents, he is trying to create an environment where parents and teachers work together. Madsen (1996) stated that within this environment when parents were upset about a teacher's practices, the principal would serve as a sounding board by responding to parents' concerns. In resolving the conflict, the principal satisfied the parents while providing support for his or her teachers. By acting in this manner, he could prevent inappropriate parental involvement (p. 177).

### Diversity in School Population

This section reviews student diversity as it affects school enrollment. This

diversity issue is divided into migration, social, and economic reasons.

### **Migration**

Family migration affects student enrollment. In America, the inhabitants moved from place to place for different reasons. Coons and Sugarman (1979) cited that “parents’ perception concerning the best interest of their children might move families to seek a more promising environment” (p. 107). Many issues may be involved in such migration. Some parents, who became dissatisfied with the fluctuating moral standards, the cultural changes that they presently encountered, and the quality of education in their community, may move to different areas, different states, and even different countries. As such, relocations may afford parents the opportunity to send their children to more recognized and accredited schools.

### **Social and Economic Reasons**

Decline in enrollment could be caused by social changes in social and economic factors. Due to social changes today, married families are producing fewer children than their parents. Others are getting married but are not starting families immediately. It has become more socially acceptable for women to choose either not to marry or to marry later in life, and for couples to choose to remain childless because of economic ups and downs.

More women are also entering the labor force. Cornia and Danziger (1997) stated that

more women, especially married women with children, have entered the labor force in response to the rising financial costs of rearing children, the failure of husbands’ wages to keep pace with inflation, the declining value of family

benefits, and their increased opportunities to work outside the home. (pp. 108, 109)

In America, out-of-wedlock births doubled between “1970 and the end of the 1980s” (p. 108). In 1990, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that the USA had the highest divorce rate (Cornia and Danziger, 1997, p. 108). Therefore, single parenthood has increased tremendously, bringing social changes with significant economic ramification. These researchers also cited that the shift in family structure away from married-couple families to single-families increased poverty, and mother-only families was the greatest factor to increase poverty. It is highly likely that these general trends may also be affecting Adventist families. As noted in the previous finance section, general US economic trends may be influencing where families spend their money. Single-parent families and families with small incomes may be facing what Epstein (1976) noted about hard choices. “With respect to food, clothing and shelter, or tuition, all families must choose for themselves what is most relevant to them” (p. 27).

#### Immigration and Birthrate

An increase in immigration and birthrate have increased school enrollment. The Current Population Survey (2000) stated that the increase in enrollment was due to the increase in births that occurred between 1981 and 1994. This increase was due to a second baby boom—an increase in birth rate in 1980, and an increase in immigration. Researchers in 2002 stated that 65% of the elementary and high-school students had baby boomer parents (p. 1).

In 1999, researchers stated that one-fifth of the elementary or high-school students had at least one foreign parent. The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR, 2002) suggested that the nation's school enrollment would not have increased if it were not for immigration. He projected that immigration would be responsible for 96% of the increase of the school population over the next 50 years. Today, these factors have caused the classrooms to be more ethnically and racially mixed when the statistics are compared to those of 30 years ago.

#### Pastoral Issues

Ham (1987) stated that "the school should be viewed as an extension of the ministry of the church" (p. 67). It was therefore important that the pastor's influences be felt at the school since it was an extension of the church's ministry. The pastors and church officers should encourage the members to support the church schools. White (1940) stated that "it is the responsibility of the pastors, elders, and officers of the church to urge upon the members the necessity of supporting the school" (p. 107). She suggested that if God's people would be faithful in bringing to his treasury the means lent to them, his work would make rapid advancement.

Stephan (1979) remarked that the support of Christian education by the pastor and other church leaders was essential to developing a concept that the church school belonged to the total church (p. 144). From his findings he noticed that when pastors moved to areas that had church schools and supported them, the school's population increased. On the other hand, if the pastors were transferred to areas with church schools but did not support them, the enrollment of the church schools declined. Stephan (1979) cited that "it was almost impossible to involve the total church in Christian education

unless the pastor and other leaders in the church were convinced of its importance and consistently promoted and assisted the church school program” (p. 145).

### A Good School Image

The school’s enrollment is greatly influenced by its good school image. An image is the holistic view a person holds about a school. Kotler and Fox (1985) stated that the image of an institution that an individual held depended on two factors. One factor was largely object-determined. It was based on the parent’s first-hand experience with the school, the reliable sensory data gathered from visiting the school, and the common method everyone used to process the data regardless of their background differences. The second factor was largely person-determined. Some parents finally made decisions about enrolling their children in a school based on: (a) the impressions they have formed of the people who worked in the school, (b) the different degrees of contact they had with the school, and (c) the different perceptions of the school (p. 42).

Schools that did not have a good image to attract parents would soon close. Some of the main characteristics of a good school image are the quality of its output, its effectiveness, reputation, and its caring teachers.

A good school image would be maintained if the school continued to have a good educational quality output. Martin (2003) noted that the public measured the educational quality of a school by the accomplishments of its past graduates or alumni, such as their natural abilities, how much they learned while at the school, how many of them continued on in higher educational pursuits, and how well placed they were in a career. If most of its graduates were successful, the parents’ interest in the school and its products



would increase, and other parents would think seriously of having their children enrolled in the school.

The overall effectiveness of the school helped to increase its image. Edmonds (as cited in Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000) defined an effective school “as one in which there was strong leadership, an orderly, humane climate, frequent monitoring of students’ progress, high expectations and requirements for all students, and a focus on teaching important skills to all students” (p. 367). Stedman’s research (as cited in Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000) included these two other features of an effective school:

1. It paid attention to goals involving cultural pluralism and multicultural education.
2. It placed emphasis on responding to students’ personal problems and developing their social skills.

The teachers of a school that had a good image were unconditionally caring. They were good listeners and listened to their students’ problems. They were receptive to their students’ concerns. They knew their pupils personally and maintained very good teacher/student/parent relationships. They kept their parents well informed about their pupils’ academic success. They provided their students with the best feedback on each assignment they did, and were available for additional help in schoolwork. They also took an interest in the students’ activities outside of school, and were motivated to do what was best for them (Lott, 1998, pp. 1-3). From a 2002 survey done by the North American Division, this caring factor gained the second place in the top 13 ingredients that contribute to a successful SDA school (Osborn, 2005, p. 5).

In order to increase the school's image, the parents must have their expectations met when they visit the schools. There are certain standards and values in a school that parents envision, and they expect to find these qualities when they visit the school. Kotler and Fox (1985) remarked that the perception that a parent has of a school is oriented towards seeing what they expect to see when they visit (pp. 43, 44). If their expectations were not fulfilled, parents formed negative conclusions about the school.

### **Summary**

This chapter has reviewed many factors that guide this study. It examined the purpose and history of why the SDA church runs schools. The SDA organization operates schools so that youths of all ages can have the opportunity to receive a Christian education. Through education, the organization wants to: (a) transmit to their children their beliefs, values, and ideals, (b) train the youth to carry the good news of salvation to all the world, (c) obtain a quality education so that they will be efficient in maintaining their family in this world while they are daily preparing themselves and others to meet Jesus. Schools were developed at all levels to meet SDA children's needs.

The chapter reviewed general enrollment trends to clarify the fact that more and more SDA parents are not participating in SDA education despite a membership increase in SDA churches. There were significant decreases in SDA school enrollment. Finally, factors were reviewed that influence general enrollment and SDA enrollment. These factors included: (a) financial issues, (b) home schooling, (c) public schools as better, (d) parents' and children's choice, (e) teacher's attitude, (f) the diverse school population, (g) pastoral issues, and (h) school's image. This research literature supported the reasons for parents' choices in general. These concepts support possible reasons why SDA

parents may not be sending their children to SDA schools. As such, this literature helped me to formulate a research design that could discover those reasons.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

Qualitative methodology was used in this research. Hamel and Yin (1994) described this methodology as a research tool that allows the researcher to collect detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures (p. 14). According to Corbin and Strauss (1998), qualitative research produces findings that are not arrived at by statistical methods, but dealt specifically with “people’s lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions and feelings, as well as organizational functioning, social movement and cultural phenomenon” (p. 11).

This chapter explains how the data in this study were collected, analyzed, and interpreted using qualitative methodology. This chapter addresses the following subtopics: the research design, population and sample, focus group research and its application to educational issues, data grouping, and interpretations.

#### **Research Design**

Burns (2000) defined research design as “a plan or strategy aimed at enabling answers to be obtained to research questions” (p. 145). Hart (2003) defined research design as the choice of a system of methods, research strategies, and rules that are used in the research to facilitate the collection and analysis of data (p. 28). Given these

definitions of research design, the design of this study had three components—a survey, individual interviews, and focus groups. These components are reviewed here and later explained more fully in the later sections. Mertens (1998) stated that the combination makes a well-established qualitative methodology (p. 826).

The first step in implementing this research design was to obtain the necessary permission from the Andrews University Institutional Review Board to conduct this study. Letters were sent to the Education Superintendent and Ministerial Director of the Lake Union Conference requesting their permission to carry out this research in the constituency. A Lake Union Conference telephone directory was used to select churches that met the church criteria. The permission to conduct the research in the churches was requested from the pastors of the selected SDA churches. In all, 10 pastors consented for research to be done in their churches.

The questionnaire that was used in this research consisted of one open-ended question to allow each participant to give his or her answer in his or her own way (Fink, 1995, p. 32). The question was: What is /are your reason/s why you do not send your child/children to a SDA elementary or secondary school? This survey was hand delivered to the participants who volunteered for the focus groups. They filled out the survey prior to the meeting of the focus group. This allowed the responses to be confidential and uninfluenced by the other members of the focus group. When they met as a group, their conversations would be general instead of specific. Burns (2000) stated that the survey was the most commonly used descriptive method in educational research and gathered data at a particular point in time (p. 566).

Interviews were conducted with 17 non-home-schooling parents, 10 home-schooling parents, and 10 administrators. Merriam (1998) defined an interview “as a conversation with a purpose. The main purpose of the interview was to obtain a special kind of information” from the interviewees (p. 70). I wanted to find out what was “in and on their minds” (Patton, 1990, p. 278), and I asked the participants probing questions to gain an understanding of their perspectives (Patton, 1990, p.196). In this research, individual and face-to-face interviews were conducted that lasted approximately 1 hour. This type of interview allowed each participant to develop a rapport with me, the interviewer, and the participants were comfortable in giving open-ended comments (Weisberg & Kronnick, 1996, p. 126). Burns (2000) stated that with the individual interview, the researcher, among other things, could investigate in more detail an informant’s typifications of persons and events, and the informant could be asked to reflect and comment on events (p. 410).

Focus group research method was also utilized. This method allowed groups of approximately 5 to 10 people to participate in an interview together. The meeting lasted for about 1 to 2 hours and took advantage of group interaction. As such, focus groups are excellent “at helping people bring their thoughts and feelings to the surface, at allowing the interviewer to experience the participants’ reactions to his or her questions, and at giving him or her opportunity to ask follow-up questions” (Campbell, 2000, p. 15). Focus group research is becoming one of the most popular types of qualitative research methods.

## **Population and Sample**

### **Population**

This study was designed to be conducted in the Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (LUC) that consists of five conferences, namely: Illinois, Indiana, Lake Region, Michigan, and Wisconsin conferences. The LUC is one of the nine unions that make up the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. This Union's 503 churches have a total church membership of 78,831 (as of July 19, 2005) that serve a population of 34,807,104 people from different ethnic cultures.

The LUC constituency is comprised of the states of Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and a portion of Minnesota. It has a total of 113 elementary and secondary schools. Andrews University is also located in this Union. There are 84 K-8 schools, 20 junior academies, five day academies, and four senior boarding academies with a total enrollment of 4,700 students. This Union Conference has employed 398 secondary and elementary school teachers.

The Michigan Conference serves the state that has a population of 10,228,663 people (as of February 2005). In this state there are 162 SDA churches and 19 companies. It has a total church membership of 24,927 (as of February 2005). It has a total of 53 schools—50 elementary schools and three academies or secondary schools.

Illinois has a population of 12,748,769 people. The Illinois Conference has 96 SDA churches and 11 companies. There is a total church membership of 12,586 and 16 schools. This Conference has one boarding academy, one day academy, one junior academy, and 13 elementary schools.

Indiana has a population of 6,255,792 people. The Indiana Conference

has 68 churches, seven companies, and 15 schools—14 elementary schools and one academy

The Wisconsin Conference has 69 churches and three companies. The population of Wisconsin is 5,573,880. There are 6,716 SDA church members in Wisconsin, and 16 schools—15 elementary schools and one academy.

The Lake Region Conference has 108 churches and 10 schools. The church membership of 27,541 people serves a population of 34,941,137 people. Lake Region Conference is unique in the Lake Union because it serves all states in the Lake Union area. Historically, as a regional conference, it has primarily served the Afro-American SDA constituency.

### Sample

One hundred and four persons were contacted to participate in the study, out of which 53 individuals accepted the invitation. These 53 participants included 16 non-home-schooling parents that formed three focus groups, 10 administrators who were individually interviewed, 10 home-schooling parents who were individually interviewed, and 17 other non-home-schooling parents who were also interviewed individually but were not participants of the focus groups. Of the 10 administrators, 8 were Caucasians, 1 Afro-American, and 1 Indian. Of the 43 parents, 28 were Caucasians, 8 Afro-Americans, and 7 of mixed race. All parents were between the ages of 35-55.

The plan was that the participants were to be selected from churches with the following characteristics (see Table 6):

1. A church with a small membership (less than 100 members)
2. A church with a medium membership (100 to 500 members)



Table 6

*Sampling Criteria and Characteristics of 53 Respondents*

Church Size And Ethnicity	Church With School	Church Without School	Previously Had a School	Data			Participant's No.
				Focus Group	Survey	Interviews	
<i>Illinois Conference</i>							
Medium	1 Admin					1	7
Large	1 Admin					1	8
	2-NHS					2	32, 33
<i>Indiana Conference</i>							
Medium (mixed)	1 Admin					1	5
Primarily White (Large)	1 Admin					1	9
	4-NHS					4	28-31
<i>Lake Region Conference</i>							
Afro-American	2 Admin					2	4, 10
	1-NHS					1	24
Small (mixed)			2-NHS	2	2		15,16
		3-NHS				3	25-27
Medium		7-NHS		7	7		8-14
<i>Michigan Conference</i>							
Extra-Large (White)	3 Admin					3	1-2-3
	1-NHS					1	23
Hispanic		7-NHS		7	7		1-7
Medium		6-NHS				6	17-22
Primarily White		10-HS				10	1-10
<i>Wisconsin Conference</i>							
Primarily White	1 Admin					1	6

*Note.* HS= Home-schooling parents, NHS= Non-home-schooling parents, Admin= Administrators, Spaces= No participant.

3. A church with a large membership (600 to 900 members)
4. A church with a very large membership (over 1,000 members)
5. A church without a school
6. A church that had a school that no longer exists
7. A racially mixed church
8. An Afro-American church
9. A Hispanic church
10. A primarily White church (see Table 6).

Sampling first began with 10 churches that agreed to data collection. Two churches did not have parents who could participate. However, the ministers of these churches later preferred me to conduct the research in their other churches for they were multichurch pastors. They knew that I would obtain more parent participants from their other churches. Two churches were solicited to obtain a few more participants. One of the churches was recommended by an administrative participant. As such, 14 churches were involved but 13 provided respondents. Eleven of these churches provided respondents. At least one church member from each church category and from each conference participated in the research. Unfortunately, the final sample was less geographically diverse than planned. Most participants came from the local area around where the researcher worked. Although this area had a high concentration of SDA members, it may not have adequately represented the Lake Union Conference.

One of the criteria for choosing administrators for the individual interviews was that each administrator had to be a parent. The reason why I preferred to use parent-administrators was that from my experience parents were more willing to express their

confidential issues with another parent administrator than to a non-parent administrator. Another reason was that I did not want to diverge from the topic—parents reasons, although some single or non-parent administrators do have some very good relationships with their children's parents. The other criteria were:

1. An SDA parent who worked or was working at a SDA school
2. An SDA parent with teaching experiences
3. An SDA parent who had or currently holds administrative responsibilities.

In the selection of administrators, all 10 met the criteria. I selected these administrators through a snow-balling sampling, but the selected administrators came from different size churches and from different conferences. I chose the first prospective interviewee and asked him or her to refer me to another interviewee who was a good subject. I obtained the name and telephone number. I contacted the referred person and all but one were able to participate in the interview. I shared all interviewing procedures with the administrator and made arrangements for the interview. The cycle continued until 10 interviews were done. The interviews occurred at a convenient, comfortable place chosen by the interviewee and lasted about 1 hour.

The criteria for choosing the parent participants of the focus groups were that the parent or guardian had to be:

1. A member of the chosen SDA church
2. Presently sending his or her child or children to a non-SDA school (public or another Christian school)
3. Or one who had no school-age child now but also sent his or children to a non-SDA school within the last 10 years

4. Or one who is home schooling or had home schooled his or her child or children.

The survey contained only one question: What is/are your reason/s why you do not send your child or children to a SDA elementary or secondary school?

Only the focus group participants received the survey that had to be completed at home. They wrote or typed their responses on the survey sheet. They folded and placed the response/s in the envelope provided, sealed it, and returned it to me at the beginning of the focus group meeting. All group participants were reminded the evening before the meeting to bring the survey sheet with them. All the participants brought the sealed envelopes. There were only three focus groups because some of the members did not want to meet in a group due to past experiences and to remain anonymous.

As recommended by Campbell (2000) the focus groups were held in varied geographical locations (pp. 190, 191). Only two conferences participated in the focus group research.

## **Instrumentation**

### **The Survey**

Survey is a research technique used to collect information by asking questions.

“If it were possible to ask people questions, you could gain much information about what they were thinking and why they did things” (Weisberg & Kronnick, 1996, p. 20). These researchers informed us that a survey can be used to address four broad classes of questions:

1. The prevalence of attitudes, beliefs, and behavior
2. Changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behavior over time

3. Differences between groups of people in their attitudes, belief, and behavior
4. Causal proposition about those attitudes, beliefs, and behavior (p. 15).

This study focused more on the fourth area. It sought to find out why the parents behaved in a certain manner—why they did not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools.

The survey was also useful in getting unanticipated answers and it gave the participants the opportunity to state their views in their own words (Fink, 1995, p. 32). I was interested in learning about the reasons parents had for not sending their children to a SDA school. However, I used the open-ended responses because I did not have a very clear idea of the different types of responses they might offer (Campbell, 2000, p. 61). The same individuals who completed the survey question were the same persons who participated in the focus groups.

By allowing respondents to complete the survey at home, it gave each participant “more time to think and allowed him or her to complete the questionnaire at his or her convenience” (Weisberg & Kronnick, 1996, p. 126). The at-home responses protected confidentially. This was a sensitive question and the responses needed to be anonymous. Fink (1995) stated that sensitive questions should be asked in anonymous surveys (p. 17). The survey had instructions/introduction that motivated the participant to complete it. It emphatically asked the respondents to be candid about their opinions and reasons, and all answers would be confidential and anonymous. They were to seal the envelope, and give me the sealed envelope with the response on their arrival at the meeting. No one knew what was written on the answer sheet. The envelopes were kept sealed and later opened at

my home. A number was used on the survey envelope for identification, but all information was kept anonymous and confidential.

The research guides for survey and focus groups were delivered by hand to each participant of the focus groups. The guide contained meeting rules and instructions for completion of forms. Burns (2000) recommended that it “helped to use identifying numbers on the survey after completion instead of using names, and the researcher must mention these facts to the respondent that a number was being used and exactly why it was being used” (p. 585). He also stated that the issues of anonymity and confidentiality were decided before the survey was conducted and the promises that were made not to reveal the information must be kept (Burns, 2000, p. 584).

The responses were read and reread, notes were written in the margins, and units were color coded. The information was placed into units, then categories. The frequencies of categories were also counted. In the margins, I wrote the names of my conceptual referenced authors to the information that matched these authors’ ideas. I simplified my analysis of data and connected my study findings with others’ educational experiences (Piantanida & Garman, 1999, p. 182).

### Individual Interviews

For this research, in-depth individual interviews were done. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) defined the term ‘in-depth’ as “seeking information that is more profound than was usually accessible at the interpersonal relationships” (p. 10). The aim of this in-depth method was to build up and explore the participants’ responses to the questions and to have the participants reconstruct his or her experience within the topic

under study (Seidman, 1991, p. 9). These one-to-one in-depth interviews were helpful because they provided a means of gathering detailed information.

Individual interviews were conducted with 10 administrators, 17 non-home-schooling parents who preferred to discuss the issue with me individually, and 10 home-schooling parents. Interviews offered opportunities to collect a great deal of data on a single respondent's perceptions, values, vocabulary, and personal experiences but they take time (Schensul, LeCompte, Nastasi, & Borgatti, 1999, p. 52). Individual interviews were conducted with single individuals to reduce the effects of peer pressure (Campbell, 2000, p. 191).

I conducted individual interviews because I had a strong concern that the group participation might sway some participants' answers or the participants could become uncomfortable discussing the issue in a group setting (Campbell, 2000, p. 16). Each technique has its advantages and disadvantages, but there are more advantages using interviews in qualitative research than disadvantages. Burns (2000) summarized the advantages as:

1. *Flexibility*: The interviewer observed the subject. Questions could be repeated or their meanings explained in case they were not understood. Greater flexibility was afforded to the respondent in an interview than when a written instrument was used.

2. *Response rate*: The response rate is high, which made the data more representative than data solicited through a mail questionnaire. The response method is useful in obtaining responses from people who would find a written response impossible, such as the elderly, illiterate, and disabled people. Individualized appreciation could be shown to the respondents.

3. *A face-to-face interaction*: This assisted in the establishment of rapport and a higher level of motivation among respondents. Observation of the respondent's non-verbal communication and environment was possible.

4. *Probing*: This was used to elicit more complete responses. The presence of the interviewer reduced the number of "don't know" responses to questions because explanation and clarification were available, and I pressed for additional information when a response seemed incomplete or not entirely relevant. I was able to control the sequence of the items as the respondents could not look ahead and anticipate trends in the enquiries.

Burns (2000) also noted some disadvantages as:

1. Interviews were more expensive and time-consuming than questionnaires.
2. Only a limited number of respondents could be interviewed due to time and financial considerations.
3. Finding a skilled and trained interviewer with interpersonal skills could be difficult.
4. An interviewer effect may result from interaction between the interviewer and respondents. Factors such as age, sex, race, educational level, tone of voice, dress, the social class and attractiveness of the interviewer, and inconsistent use of probes might bias the interview.
5. Respondents might feel that they were 'put on the spot'.
6. Flexibility afforded by unstructured interviews might generate difficulties when attempts were made to categorize and evaluate response (Burns, 2000, pp. 582-585).



The interview question was open-ended to avoid influencing the participants' responses. The question I asked non-home-schooling parents was: What are the reasons why you do not send your child or children to SDA elementary and secondary schools? The question I asked home-schooling parents was: What are the reasons you give for not sending your child or children to SDA schools? The question to the administrators was: What are the reasons SDA parents give as to why they do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools? I asked other prompting questions based on the responses that I received. I was the interviewer, and the responses were audiotaped. The interviews were conducted without an audience "because the interviewee might give the answers that the audience would approve instead of reporting his or her own attitudes" (Burns, 2000, p. 108). The participants' responses were "kept confidential" (p. 112).

Burns (2000) stated that for interviews, anonymity was usually impossible but it could be possible to guarantee confidentiality (p. 584). The names and other identifying materials such as addresses and phone numbers were removed from the interviewee's identification (Burns, 2000, p. 112).

### Focus Group Interviews

The individual interviews are the same as focus groups in their purpose and the questions asked, but the participants of focus groups may function under some peer pressure (Campbell, 2000, p. 191). In 1992, Crabtree and Miller (as cited in Leavy, 2004) stated that the individual interview should be used for greater depth, but the focus group interviews should be used for greater breadth and to expand the study population (p. 267).

A letter was sent to 12 pastors requesting (a) their permission to conduct the research at their churches, and (b) their cooperation in choosing the members of the focus group following the given criteria. Ten pastors gave me the names, addresses—postal and e-mail—of prospective participants. I telephoned about 104 of these prospective participants. The importance of the research, confidentiality, and anonymity were explained to them and their participation was solicited. About half did not want to participate. Of those that who wanted to participate only 16 were willing to be in a focus group , while the others wanted to an individual interview. Later, the time of the meeting and the meeting place were arranged.

This study conducted three focus groups. This technique yielded detailed responses to the research question, revealed the experiences and reasons for parents' behavior, and gave participants a forum to be more explicit about their children's needs (Langford & McDonagh, 2003, pp. 22, 23). Listening to more than one focus group gave a better chance of learning what were the most common feelings and issues among participants. It also evaded the skewed perceptions that might result from a group that had an unusual mix of participants (p. 22).

Rich responses frequently resulted from group interaction, because it had the advantage of getting reactions from a wide range of participants in a relatively short time (Langford & McDonagh, 2003, p. 23). I audiotaped and typed all responses. As such, I was the primary means for data collection and analysis. Identical questions and procedures were used in each group. These group discussions were used as an opportunity to learn about the ways in which participants thought and made decisions (p. 22). Schensul et al. (1999) remarked that group discussions “could reveal much about the

differing beliefs held by participants, what actions should be taken to solve the problem and what different options or actions existed among the participants” (p. 55).

All prompts for the focus group were pilot tested, with a selected sample of 10 persons (see pilot study below). These persons did not participate in the main study. In the main study, I also audiotaped the interviews and transcribed them. All participants were informed and reminded about the process of keeping information confidential and anonymous. Each member of a focus group received a guide and a cover letter that outlined the basic meeting procedures and the rules to be followed. Phone calls and e-mails were sent to all potential participants prior to the meeting. These communications outlined the importance of the study and what would be done with them. My continuous communication with the participants helped us to form a relationship. The participants were reminded of our appointment the evening before the appointed meeting date.

At the meeting, each group member was allowed to speak freely without any fear. Each meeting lasted about 2 hours and was divided into three phases—the initial warm-up, the discussion, and the summary phases. On his or her arrival at the meeting place, each participant filled out the consent form and returned it to me.

During the initial warm-up phase the participants briefly introduced themselves using only their first name. I reminded the participants of the meeting’s primary purpose and the confidentiality that I would maintain in this study.

The discussion phase began when I reviewed the agenda that was given to the participants. The agenda contained the main issue to be discussed. The discussion commenced when I asked the main question. Participants were advised to respond one at

a time. Other probing questions were asked based on the responses that were made. The participants were allowed to query each other and explain themselves to each other.

The last phase of the focus group interview included the review and summary of the discussion as well as a request for any final additional thoughts. The group was asked to complete a feedback sheet and to rate on a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 being the highest evaluation, the degree to which they felt comfortable participating in the discussion, and the degree to which they felt that they were able to express their thoughts. They were also encouraged to provide written comments related to the discussion on the feedback sheets or to orally express comments.

One volunteer of each group performed the member-checking procedure. The member checkers were asked to choose and comment on any item they wished without fear of leaving others blank. They signed at the end of the transcription to confirm that the written statements were accurate. If clarification was needed from comments, contacts were made with the volunteer by phone. This added credibility to the findings.

### **Focus Group Research**

These focus group procedures I used were supported by the following focus group researchers. Leavy (2004) stated that focus group research has existed since 1926 and has often been used by sociologists to collect data. The method was not frequently used until it reemerged in the mid-1980s. Sociologists, psychologists, and social scientists have increased their use of focus groups and “over a hundred empirical articles using focus groups appeared in journals during 1994 alone” (p. 263).

Focus group research technique (as defined in Leavy, 2004) collected data through group interaction on any topic designed by the researcher (pp. 263, 264). This

definition clearly defined three elements of focus groups—it was a research method used to collect data, the source of the data came from the interaction discussions of the group members, and the researcher’s interest was used to direct the group discussion for data collection purposes. It is better than individual interviews for some purposes because “the participants both query each other and explain themselves to each other” (p. 272).

Focus groups were used across a wide variety of different fields such as communication studies (Albrecht, Johnson, & Walther, 1993; Staley, 1990), education (Brotherson & Goldstein, 1992; Flores & Alonzo, 1995; Lederman, 1990), political science (Delli & Williams, 1994), public health (Basch, 1987), and marketing (Greenbaum, 1993, as cited in Leavy, 2004, p. 265). Program development planners use focus groups to learn more about the targets of their programs (e.g., Bryant’s [1990] breast feeding program, that encouraged breast feeding among low-income women).

In 1994, Krueger (as cited in Leavy, 2004) stated that “focus groups have become an important tool in qualitative evaluation research, need assessment, and strategic planning” (p. 266). Focus groups have been an important source of data on fertility and family planning preferences around the world and the spread of HIV (p. 266).

Focus group research methods use both ordinary people and experts to gain more knowledge of issues. Researchers now use focus groups to explain the attitudes and practices of people. Focus group research also “gives a voice to marginal people” (Leavy, 2004, p. 266) and can also be combined with other research methods as I have done in this study.

In 1990, Patton (as cited in Villard, 2003) remarked that in education focus group research was used to gather information for discovery, bench marking, evaluating, and

verifying perceptions, feelings, opinions, and thoughts (p. 1). Williams and Katz (2001) stated that focus groups have been used to achieve various objectives in education such as:

1. The development of learning tools that appeal to students' interests and needs (James, Rienzo, & Frazee, 1997)
2. The evaluation of students' knowledge or attitudes about curriculum issues (Bauchner, Boardman, & Palmer, 1996; Pugsley, 1996)
3. The formulation of new marketing strategies for educational programs (Ashar & Lane, 1993)
4. The enhancement of survey results in education research (Panyan, Hillman, & Liggett, 1997).

In this research, the participants provided a rich source of information about the reasons SDAs did not send their children to SDA schools. I transcribed the interviews. I reviewed and analyzed all the reviews and produced a written report.

### **Data Analysis**

I used the method of qualitative analysis that consisted of unitizing, categorizing, interpreting and synthesizing for data analysis. Patten (2000) proposed that the method of analysis should cover:

1. Who analyzed the data?
2. Which methods of analysis were employed?
3. Which major steps were followed? (p. 93).

I transcribed all taped interviews, and each transcript was carefully read three or four times to identify each unit or theme. I carefully coded my written notes or

comments in margins. The length of the comments varied from a sentence to several short paragraphs. The units and theme answers were numbered to make reference to the data source easier.

I reread each unit, compared them, and looked for patterns. I looked for words that were used to trigger ideas and cause the participants to say repeated responses. I searched for similarity of wordings or recurrent trends. I likewise searched for relationships that enabled me to hold on to qualities that had been emphasized in order to increase accuracy of categorization. The units were categorized and a rationale was written for the process. These categories were later reviewed. I examined possible interrelationships among the categories. Those that appeared to share the same themes were combined in one.

Langford and McDonagh (2003) said that in order to establish an idea of importance, occurrences of mentioning a similar or the same thought could be counted, thus leading to a total for each category (p. 41). This was done to identify the most common themes. The most common responses became the major results of the study.

Langford and McDonagh (2003) also suggested making short notes of the essence of the conversation instead of carrying out an overly extensive data analysis (p. 41). The conversations were summarized by varying the length of detail, and abbreviations and symbols were used for new thoughts (p. 41). These “summaries of the various levels of detail helped me to narrow down the richness of the data into a series of categories and overall conclusions” (Langford & McDonagh, 2003, p. 45). I incorporated the results from the other techniques employed to triangulate the data.

Triangulation, peer review, and member-checking techniques were used to enhance the study's credibility. The triangulation of data, the interaction between the researcher and the participants, and leaving an audit trail helped me to produce believable and trustworthy findings. Rudestam and Newton (2001) defined an audit trail as "keeping a meticulous record of the process of study so that others can recapture steps and reach the same conclusions" (p. 99).

All of the participants' responses were "kept confidential. The name and other identifying information such as addresses and phone numbers were removed after the interview was conducted and a number was reassigned to each participant (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 112).

### **Data Grouping and Interpretation**

As I mentioned before in the data analysis section, data grouping included the data being triangulated, coded, divided into units, and finally categorized into themes. The next step was the interpretation of the data. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) defined interpretation as an attempt to make clear or to make sense of all the data. These data, therefore, as a collection of information, "in some way was confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory in one way or another unclear," and had to be interpreted. The interpretation aimed to bring light, understanding, coherence, or sense to the collected data (p. 153).

To interpret this overwhelming amount of information, I asked myself, How meaningful and important were the different sets of data in answering the research question, and how related were these data sets? Clandinin and Connelly (2000) informed



me that I needed to read and reread all of the data and in some way sort them, so I knew what data I had.

It was the responses to the questions of how meaningful, significant, and important the data were that shaped the interpretation part of my work. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that the researcher must look for the patterns, narrative threads, themes, and tensions within or across an individual's experience in the collected data (p. 112). I did that. I summarized an interpretation of what all the data contained. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also remarked:

The search for patterns, narrative threads, tensions and themes that shape the data into the research story is created by the writers' experiences as they read and reread the data and lay them alongside one another in different ways, as they bring stories of their past experiences and lay them alongside the data, and as they read the data in the context of other research and theoretical works. (p. 133)

I, as the researcher, positioned the data relative to other researchers' streams of thought, research programs, and ideologies (p. 136). I used my conceptual framework and other relevant research literature to position my understanding or streams of thought to make my findings significant. The importance of the data was revealed by the frequency of appearance in the data. The feedback that I received from my participants I also used in the interpretation of the data. I did not overstate or understate my data, or take it out of context. Using the comparison of concepts as a base, I planned my narrative.

As I read other researchers and writers about alternate topics, my mind was open to new possibilities of interweaving the information from the data to form additional knowledge in my written work (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 136).

### **Description of the Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted before the main study started. This helped me to practice, test, and revise my interview questions. Ten college-aged parents participated. The pilot study consisted of 1 mixed focus group, 1 administrator, 1 home schooling parent, and 1 parent who sent her son to another Christian school. The interview with the focus group lasted for 1 1/2 hours, and the interview with the parents and administrators lasted about an hour. Tape recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and then analyzed for emergent themes. My three university colleagues reviewed the pilot study methodology and results, and provided feedback and suggestions.

The pilot study data analysis began with coding, and themes were formulated. One of my colleagues served as my peer review in order to ensure the internal validity of my conclusions. The 11 themes arising from the pilot study included: (a) high cost of tuition, (b) higher quality of public or other Christian schools, (c) home schooling, (d) attitude of teachers, (e) lack of resources at SDA schools, (f) distance and location of school, (g) children's choice, (h) quality of teachers, (i) need for parents' education, (j) parents' concerns, and (k) suggestions for improvement. Of the 11 themes, the cost of tuition was mentioned most frequently, public schools' quality was second, and attitude of teacher was third. The cost of tuition was supported by my colleagues as the greatest hindrance to enrollment in SDA schools. These themes proved valuable in the final coding of my complete study.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS: NON-HOME SCHOOLING PARENTS' RESPONSES

#### **Introduction**

The next three chapters contain the findings of this study. This chapter reviews findings from non-home-schooling parents. Chapter 5 reviews comments from home-schooling parents, and chapter 6 reviews the responses from the administrators. The responses in this section came from the three focus group surveys and interviews. The 16 parents who completed the survey were the same individuals who formed the three focus groups. Seventeen parents had in-depth interviews. The focus group sessions were conducted in the churches. We were permitted to occupy a special room where we were comfortably seated. I went to the homes and offices of the 17 participants according to our arrangements. The parents were all happy to spend the time with me, and they hope that my findings will be utilized.

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section includes the responses parents gave to the main question: "What are the reasons SDA parents give why they do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools?" There are nine themes and they are arranged in descending order of frequency. The themes are: (a) financial reasons, (b) home schooling, (c) public schools' higher quality than SDA schools, (d) SDA schools' loss of distinctive vision, (e) school distance and

transportation, (f) demographics, (g) family structure, (h) attitude of teachers, and (i) pastoral issues. In order to ensure confidentiality, the names of the participants are omitted.

The second section contains the participants' suggestions as to how the conferences, organization, churches, pastors, and members can help SDA parents to send their children to SDA schools. In recounting these reasons, I have chosen to let the respondents' words speak for themselves. I have grouped responses around themes without any comment. I believe this provides more authenticity to these findings. Many more quotes could have been provided but I have limited each section once saturation has occurred.

### **Reason 1: Financial Concerns**

- Parent 21: For most of our families I would say tuition is the main reason.
- Parent 7: I have heard Adventists say that they cannot afford to send their children to the school because of the high tuition expense. Personally, I think if most parents cannot afford to send their children to an Adventist school they send them to a public school, and that will be it. It is a financial problem.
- Parent 18: The reason is that we do not make or earn much money working here. We have to have the basics—food, shelter, and clothing, and then tuition for the children. The tuition is high. When our oldest son was going to school here in America, half of my one pay check per month would be for his tuition [giggle]. So, you know, I do not earn a lot, and we are being charged a lot.
- Parent 1: The only reason I have is a financial reason. My daughter went to SDA school for 6 years. When we came here, they had to go to the public school, because we are studying at a local University. . . . It is expensive and we cannot afford it right now.
- Parent 9: I started to send my children to SDA school and it was pretty expensive. I was not able to keep them in the school. . . . I find that tuition places a financial burden on parents that most parents are not satisfied with.

- Parent 13: I am a single parent with two children, and I am raising them. They are not mine. I know how hard it is as a single parent to return tithe, pay offerings for the running of the church, and pay extra offerings when there is an extra request from the pulpit, and keep bills up to date. It is expensive . . . and I would have to say finance is a very large one.
- Parent 20: My children started to go to the Adventist school where we came from. We used to pay \$50 a month for each child, but here it is more than \$250 per month for each child—five times what we used to pay, so we cannot afford to send them [here].
- Parent 22: It is still expensive with all the financial aid. I had to send our daughters to another public school, because with all the help, with them working, we still could not afford it. They were given special discount for being two and for being an Adventist. The girls would work and it still was more than \$1,000 a month that we had to pay—it is very expensive. My friend who had his child there also with me said that he could not afford it because he did not have the money. So for us, we do not have the money because we are trying to put ourselves through school and we have to operate on a tight budget. . . . I was able to send them to church school before, but I cannot do it here because I do not have the resources to pay for them.
- Parent 1: To send them to a SDA school, it is quite expensive, but we all make sacrifices, so I am not against Christian education. I am 100% for it, but in my case when both parents are here at the local university, it is very tough to send children to Christian schools when you are not sponsored [to go to this university by a group].
- Parent 3: I think our tuition is expensive because it is not subsidized by the government. In a private school the tuition has to be generated in order to pay all the employees, buy all the equipment and defray all other expenses, so I think that is why it is expensive and has become an issue [for parents].
- Parent 18: I know when my son was in the [local Adventist high school], they would do fundraisers for the general fund. As parents, even if you are sending your child to that school and are paying that tuition, you are the first one to contribute to that general fund also. . . . So, besides paying for the tuition you also get solicited for all these fund raisers. . . . I think the additional cost makes it very expensive.
- Parent 21: [An international university student noted], we cannot work legally

here. . . . If we send our kids to our church school, we would have no money. We would not be able to go to school ourselves. When they go to public school they are getting an education and so are we.

- Parent 20: For me, it is too expensive and gas is also getting expensive. . . . I cannot add any more distance, because I would have to commute with my kids.
- Parent 25: The parents are in schools themselves. . . . In trying to keep up with the tuition fees they put their kids in public schools because they just cannot afford to manage the two different payments at the same time.
- Parent 19: It is a financial issue. If you have to make a choice between food, lodging and tuition, which one would you pick? For some people it is that kind of a decision that they must make
- Parent 14: One Tuesday in February 1982, my children were turned away from a SDA school and I used to pay regularly but this month I was late. When I questioned why . . . [the] response to me was: "Bro. X, that's where you are wrong. We have an Adventist school and this meant that it is a school for those who are able to pay their tuition. . . . Every time we turn a child away from the Adventist school because the parents did not have the finance to pay right away, we turn them over to the school of the devil.
- Parent 11: Right now, we do not have the money to send him.
- Parent 12: I am a single parent, and I have money issues.
- Parent 25: In this community, a lot of times I see it as economic difficulty. The parents are students and they cannot afford more Christian education so their children go to public school, because it is free. Many of them come from countries where there is no other choice than the public school system. There are many Adventist kids that are going to the public schools and a lot of it is economics.
- Parent 4: My daughters are not in church school because of economical reasons. Besides, our [church] denominational jobs do not pay us enough money to support our family so that we can patronize our institutions. . . . I cannot afford to keep them in our church school.
- Parent 17: There are several reasons why parents do not send their children to SDA schools. One of them is money. They do not have the money to send their kids to our church schools. I went to Adventist school since I was in kindergarten until I graduated from the university and I know how hard it is when you do not have the money. I think that our leaders do care only for normal kids whose parents can pay and not about the others whose parents cannot easily earn money to pay tuition.

- Parent 16: I think 99% of it is money. There are lots of very, very good Seventh-day Adventists that would love to send their children to Adventist schools. They cannot afford it, and it is out of their price range, too much, too much. A lot more children would not go there because parents do not have the money and they do not want their children to undergo that embarrassment. . . . I would not want my child to be traumatized like that.
- Parent 4: For me, it is too much money for poor people. The people of my country who come to work here are paid minimum wage, and for people with low income they cannot afford that amount of money to send their children to our Christian schools. It is not that we are not interested in SDA education, but, especially for single parents, it is just impossible to send our children or even think about it, because we know that it is impossible.
- Parent 10: I was educated in a public school, and I do not think that it is the best environment for the children I am raising, but right now . . . I go with what I can afford.
- Parent 32: Most of the times, the reason why the parents send their children to public schools is mainly due to finance. When I was growing up my parents had to work two jobs to send us to school . . . and I had to work until one o'clock in the morning. My two brothers left the church because my parents were never at home. They were so busy trying to keep us in church school. For the children who go to public school, I think it is financial. . . . [As a mother] I would have to go to work full time to have our four kids at church school.
- Parent 1: Cost is always an issue, because the masses cannot afford to send their children to our private church schools.
- Parent 16: The big issue is that when you have many kids in a family you cannot afford to send all of them to a SDA school. I would love nothing more than to see all of our children going to a SDA school.
- Parent 7: I think that the cost is the number one reason because many SDA parents cannot afford to send their children to SDA schools. . . . In the USA, public schools from primary up to Grade 12 are free. So it makes a big difference if the parent has to actually pay for the tuition, plus the books, and sometimes the traveling, because most parents do not live near the school. The parents simply cannot afford it.
- Parent 15: I too went for some time to a SDA school. I stopped because of tuition issue.

- Parent 16: I think that most Seventh-day Adventists who do not send their kids to SDA school do so because of cost.
- Parent 8: In this area, many parents, especially those who are Adventists, cannot afford to pay the cost of Adventist education.
- Parent 17: They are probably caught into the American Dream . . . that is to have two or three or four cars, maybe a motor boat, a spacious house in the country, maybe also a house in the city, and all these different material things. The American dream is all about getting material things. You get things with money and so then we get in a conflict between relative values and relative perceived values. As the things that become perceived become more valuable than education—should I send them here or there—the relative value of education goes down, and as the relative value of education goes down, the relative value of things goes up, then education would be seen as a luxury, probably as a form of luxury. There is a value shift and there will also be a shift in the generations behind me.

### **Reason 2: Home Schooling**

- Parent 17: Home schooling is another factor why parents do not send their children to SDA schools.
- Parent 28: Some parents fear that the standard of education will be lowered when the SDA school population is multi-cultured, and they now prefer to teach their children at home.
- Parent 17: The home is the most powerful educational force. . . . When I get the children at 6 years of age it was already too late. They have already been oriented towards knowledge, towards education, towards authority figures, towards books, and learning. Ellen White speaks . . . that parents should be the only teachers of their children until they are 8 or 9 or 10 years of age. . . . If the mother or father is willing and able to do it, is a very good thing. . . . It is becoming quite a movement . . . and home schooling is a preferable option.  
 There are some 15 to 30 families who are doing home schooling here [in this area].
- Parent 7: Parents home school [their children] due to several reasons. Sometimes, parents home school because they are not satisfied with the quality of education and they think that they can provide a better quality. Sometimes, parents home school because it is cheaper in terms of the cost. . . . Parents, when they are faced with a choice between public education that is free and Adventist education that is expensive, choose to home school. These are some of the issues. They believe it is cheaper, it is



better, it is more convenient but this action can cause Adventist education to suffer.

People who home school are more conservative and they really do not have a choice between SDA education and public schools, because they do not consider public school. They have a choice between Adventist education and the home, because they want to know that their children are educated according to the values they hold as important.

Parent 33: My husband home schools our son this year because I thought that he was not ready to go to first grade although he is 5 3/4 years old. I think home schooling is very good in the early years, before they are 7, and before they are ready to sit daily through 8 hours of school. . . . I would recommend parents to send their children to school but do not do it too early and before the children are ready.

Parent 13: Many parents are frustrated with the SDA educational system which is charging an exorbitant amount of money to meet their bill and the frustration of putting them in a public school where they are bombarded by so many things. That leaves them with only one other option—teach them at home, and many parents are doing that today. My oldest daughter was home schooled up to Grade 10 and she wanted to graduate as a normal student to walk down the aisle with other students in a gown, so she went to school in Grade 11. . . . My daughter did very well academically at school because of the one-to-one instructions that she received. When she got to college she was grateful for the Adventist training. She also chose an Adventist college over the reputable government university which is difficult to enter. The university offered her a full scholarship toward her medical field but the SDA university that she decided to attend only offered her a 70% scholarship. She chose to go to the SDA university.

### **Reason 3: Public Schools as Better**

#### Perception of Parents

Parent 7: In my opinion, some SDA parents have the perception that somehow SDA education is inferior. They tend to believe that because it is familiar, or because we are small, or because it is ours, it cannot be as good as what is out there. Parents of this day and age have become competitive about their children. Every parent wants his child to be the best and so that is another reason why some people do not send their children to SDA schools.

Parent 31: I think the standard of our SDA school is about average. I do not think it is anything better.

- Parent 17: Public schools are better because they have more money, better teachers and they offer their pupils more courses.
- Parent 29: Sometimes the parents feel that the public schools are just as adequate and probably above adequate.
- Parent 17: At face value, the schools with the most teachers, the most highly educated teachers look like they are better. When you weigh them at one level, it does look like our church schools lack quality. If you can supply quality, to me that is excellent, because teaching and education to me is not hardware, it is software. It is personal relationships that matter in schools. . . . Somewhere in the book called Adventism, the researchers could not isolate any variable for success outside of the human relationships.
- Parent 29: Christian education pays . . . but parents think only of the earthly glory of the schooling instead of preparing their children for the world here and the world to come.
- Parent 7: I believe that parents have the perception that because it is Adventist it is not good. . . . Parents feel . . . that because some schools have a name they must be better, but that is not necessarily so.
- Parent 13: Many parents feel that they can provide Christian education for their children at home during family worship time . . . and the children do not need to go to a Seventh-day Adventist school . . . that will cost them extra money. . . . [In this area], most of the Adventist teachers are teaching in the government schools anyway.
- Parent 7: Some parents do not like multi-classes. My children were products of multi-classes or multi-roomed schools. I think it has its ups and downs. I could not do it. . . . Some parents feel that their child may not get enough attention and are very nervous about that, and they would not send their children to a school where there are multiple classes in one room. I favor that personally.
- Parent 29: The organization is at fault too, for some people label themselves as the “IRK” within the SDA organization. If they do not perceive the school as good enough for their children, they do not send their children there. They leave the school for the hewers of wood and drawers of water. . . . What I see is that the [false] perception comes from the top.
- Parent 5: The behavior at some of the SDA schools is the same as the public schools.

- Parent 31: I think the teachers at the public schools are more honest than those at our SDA schools, because at our schools it depends on who you are, then your child receives better treatment, a lot, a lot [emphasizing these words]. It depends on your family trend, for example, your grandfather was a pastor, your father is a pastor, etc.—that more attention and care are given to that student than the others.
- Parent 20: I know we have some Adventist teachers in public schools and for me they really are taking better care of my children than those that were in the church school.
- Parent 16: The reason why my husband and I decided to send my child to public school is that we believe that Jesus set the example to be with people of other sorts, children from all different background, children from all religious and economic status and he set the example that way.
- Parent 30: The younger generation does not think that quality is there because of limitation of space in some situations, lack of materials to run the schools properly as perceived from the public sector, and as a result their children are not going to get any appreciable benefit from going to our school. . . . Church schools do not have in place those things that they think enhance the quality programs in church schools.

#### Lack of Resources in SDA Schools Compared to Public Schools

- Parent 17: SDA schools do not have all the resources as the public schools, plus in the public school the education is free. Some of the SDA schools have big beautiful buildings . . . all the beautiful and latest equipment . . . well-kept playground with grass always mowed, but all these things do not produce better students.
- Parent 31: Some of our church schools use old and out-dated books to teach the children. For my daughter, the math textbook was better because the school had a newer book and for my son also, but for some others who went to public school later and [had earlier] used these older books they were somewhat behind in their learning.
- Parent 31: In public schools there are so many children from which you can choose your friends. They offer a lot of different classes too. In the public schools the teachers are more willing to stay after school to help the kids. At the public school here, they roll out a red carpet for any Adventist kid who wants to come over to them because usually they do better. They are nice kids.

- Parent 5: Our SDA education is not worth the money parents pay. The resources are less than in the government. The school goes by what the Conference gives them, but when parents are paying \$500 per month or more for their children to go to school they expect a little more than what is taught in the public school where it is free, but it seems that they get less.
- Parent 17: [Some parents] may just think of an Adventist school as they think of a public school education with a Bible class thrown in. At other times they know what is happening, and the school really is not a good school. There are certainly some Adventist schools out there that are not good schools.  
Some of our SDA schools do offer a poor quality education. . . . A lot of church members say that our schools do not have a good enough education for their children.
- Parent 13: When some parents compare the quality of education that comes from some Adventist schools and what comes from the public schools [the SDA school] ends in a minus. Many a times it is not because the teachers are not dedicated at the SDA schools but because the facilities do not provide a well-balanced atmosphere for the children. Their equipment and their supplies are limited. They may have to share the same teacher so those teachers are overworked. They cannot give their best or too much attention to any one child.
- Parent 14: In some of the schools the teachers are having a teaching problem because the [schools] have a hard time finding qualified teachers to teach certain subjects.
- Parent 33: We also feel that there are not enough teachers with the educational background to have our child challenged if the child is gifted, and we believe the child would be bored in class. We do not understand how a teacher can teach multi-grades and the children get what they need out of the class.
- Parent 13: The other thing is accreditation. When a school does not have state accreditation the parents tend to reject them, and many of them are accredited by the denomination but are not recognized in the public eyes. When the child leaves our school, say after Grade 10, and would like to attend another public school they are questioned which school they attended. If the parents said Seventh-day Adventist, the children are forced to take a test because the principals believe that they are lacking in some courses. I know many students who came from SDA schools believing that they had their high school diploma only to find out that they were short and had to take extra courses to bring their work up to par.

### No Provision for Children With Special Needs

- Parent 21: The SDA schools do not provide for students with special needs.
- Parent 18: Our older son went to Adventist school. With our younger one we started him out at the SDA elementary until he was in third grade and he was discovered to have a learning disability. After home schooling for a while, I wanted to put him back in the SDA elementary school. . . . The answer was, "No, we do not have a staff for him." So I sent him to the public school.
- Parent 18: When my mother-in-law asked me, Why did I not pay the church school extra money and let her grandson attend a SDA school? I replied, "It is not a matter of paying them extra, they do not have the services."
- Parent 31: With my son, he had problems in school with learning. He had never, never been a problem child, he had never caused a problem in the classroom but SDA way of dealing with children who have a harder time learning is to stuff them in the hallway, because he could not concentrate in the classroom. . . . When you can send them to the public school, there, they help the kid. That is the big difference. . . . It is not good, that is not good.

### SDA Schools' Loss of Distinctive Vision

- Parent 7: Parents are becoming concerned that we have lost our unique Adventist focus in Adventist education. They are concerned that Adventist education has become too similar to the public education and they do not see that there is a defining philosophy in our Adventist schools. They are concerned with what is happening on the campuses of our schools in terms of drug abuse and alcohol and every temptation that exists in every school and so forth.
- Parent 17: The SDA schools are not different enough from other schools. They have just a Bible class thrown in, you know, but things are not different from the public schools. So the parents choose not to send their children to SDA school.

SDA schools are not different from public schools. Yeah! Yeah! This is part of the problem of the acculturation of SDA, they want to be like everybody else.

Their kingdom is really in this world and it is definitely shown in the local academy around here. . . . Many of the Board members want the school to participate in competitive sports like everybody else. Why are we here? If Seventh-day Adventists want to be like everybody else we have no reason to exist. We exist for a different type of greatness, it is

contra-cultural. The greatness is to be a servant, it is not popularity. To Adventists today, the greatest is the individual that makes the greatest amount of money—that is not biblical. The problem is, we are no longer contra-cultural but we are now cultural and what the church needs to do is to become contra-cultural.

### The Torch Is Not Passed On

- Parent 30: The younger generation has not caught the vision of the older generation towards Christian education.
- Parent 17: Today, because you were raised as an Adventist does not mean that you are going to do what the church says anymore. It does not mean that we are going to pay tithe. It does not mean we are going to be faithful, or that we are going to send our kids to Adventist schools. There is no such thing as brand loyalty in the majority of the upcoming generation—whether loyalty to the nation or loyalty to the church or loyalty to Christian education.
- Loyalty has been seriously eroded. We need help because the SDA church in the area does not have a theological identity. . . . It used to stand for Christian education, but that was because our forefathers were the people of prophecy, and we should not lose that.
- Parent 33: Some parents have had poor or bad experiences with church schools. . . . They do not want to put their kids through the same experience or they do not want certain religious beliefs stuffed down their kids' throats. They want to steer their child from that. Christian education also is not something that you hear from the pulpit and it is not encouraged. Christian education is not talked about very much, and it is not a subject that I hear that is being discussed.
- Parent 30: The parents themselves are at fault for [the vision not being passed on]. They speak negatively about the operation of the church schools . . . and they do not form a positive attitude towards the church school
- Parent 25: Some parents have decided not to send their kids to SDA schools. I was surprised to realize that there are some church members who think that way. I was speaking to a church member who said . . . that the church has no business educating his child . . . and as long as he is in this country he is going to send his child to public schools. . . . I was shocked because I thought that every church member felt that their child should go to a church school, or their child or children did not go because they could not afford to send their children there. Here is a member that could afford to send many children and who is working for the church, but would not send the child to the church school.

### SDA Education Is Not a Priority

- Parent 30: Christian education is not a first priority in many SDA families.
- Parent 13: A lot of parents see Christian education as a secondary necessity for the children as opposed to a primary necessity.
- Parent 29: Because of the priorities that the parents have and the limited funds the parents think they have, they do not send them to our schools. Public schools are free, and they do not look at the fact that the freedom from funds being paid does not necessarily mean that it would be advantageous to them. It is not that the church school curriculum lacks areas in which the children need to be successful, or is to be addressed that are addressed by the public. . . . They think only of the earthly glory of the schooling instead of preparing their children for the world here and the world to come.
- Parent 30: It is a value system as to whether or not the parents feel responsible for the preparation of their family for heaven or for earth. I really believe it is the order of the priorities that we set that enables us to be able to accomplish our goals—some are sacrificing their all, and that is what they have established as their main priority. . . . It has to come from within—it is a heart thing.
- Parent 29: A lot of people do not want to spend that amount of money on tuition, because they feel that they have other things that they need to have, whether it is house or car or clothes or whatever and . . . we are challenged in different ways. It is not a priority.

### SDA Teachers Work in Public Schools

- Parent 17: Here is a very interesting situation. In some communities of North America, all of the teachers in the public schools are Seventh-day Adventists. Well, obviously this makes it very easy for the parents to send their children to public schools, but in other places where there are only 2 or 3 SDA teachers in the public schools among 36 or more teachers I do not think that the presence of SDA teachers would affect the public teachers significantly. If you have all or 90% of Adventist teachers in the public schools the parents are going to say, “You know, why pay the extra money if they are not teaching the kids anything different and they are all good Adventist teachers?” They are not thinking of the fact that these teachers cannot say certain things or that they cannot do certain things. Others say that if the teachers think that the schools are good, off my kids

will go . . . but I think that it is pretty bad logic. The teachers may be there . . . and it may be a big bad school with Adventist teachers there . . . on a missionary project.

- Parent 30: Because there are SDA teachers in public schools some parents think that it is safer now to send their children to public schools where they do not have to pay. . . . There are guidelines that the teachers have to follow which may not be in the best interest of their child or children . . . and Adventist teachers in public schools is no criteria to determine whether or not to send our children to public school because that is not the undercurrent that is going to maintain the level of the student's moral climate that they need to be guided by. Your children are exposed to so many things in public schools that otherwise hopefully should be absent from the school environment. I would also say again that the curriculum is the big part of it.
- Parent 33: Some SDA parents think that they can send their kids to the public school because SDA teachers are there. It gives them a false sense of security and in spite of the fact that the SDA teacher is there, their child may not be taught by that teacher. They have to take into consideration the other students who are in that class, because the students would have a greater impact on the child than the teacher.
- Parent 14: The biggest problem is that when you have a community of Seventh-day Adventists with many Seventh-day Adventist teachers, and all of those SDA teachers know that they would not be getting as much money if they teach for Seventh-day Adventist organization, so they work at the public schools. The problem right here is that statistics show that 50% of SDA children are in public schools because their parents may be working there, or some other relative of the family is there. Because the atmosphere has so many Adventists, the parents feel safer now to send them to public schools. The parents now say, "Well, they are around a whole lot more SDA teachers so there are not so many programs that are adverse to Adventism." They are now relaxing their guard. They say, "Well, we can bring them up to our level and we can teach them the spiritual part at home."
- Parent 31: Well, there are some good SDA teachers at the public schools. . . . Again, teachers are teachers . . . if they are Adventist or non-Adventist and again it goes back to the goals of the parents.
- Parent 25: Well, in some communities some parents feel more comfortable sending their children to public schools, because they know that a number of teachers who believe the same doctrine are there. . . . They feel that certain principles would guide the teachers—principles of fairness, no obscene language, respect for students, and open communication between



parent and teacher. Those are some of the things that make some parents feel more comfortable.

In other areas, I know instances where members felt good when their children got to a class that was taught by an Adventist teacher. The parents, knowing that the child was in that teacher's class gave them the confidence that the child was in good hands. In the setting, when we say "in good hands" that means that the child will be mentored, the child has a substitute parent when the parent is not around and the teacher is going to give a specific eye on that church member's child. In some areas when the children got to a certain age, they had to leave church school and go to the public schools because many church schools do not offer secondary schooling.

Parent 20: For me, the difference is that in an Adventist school you can openly talk about Jesus. You openly have prayer, you openly discuss these things, you have a religion class, you have a Bible class, it is open. In the public school you do not have that openness and my youngest son that goes to the public school there, their science includes evolution.

There are Christians there in public schools but they are in a different field. I taught in a state school before I came here and they told me right up front: "We know that you are a Christian, we are all Christians here but you cannot talk about it in class." . . . I invited the students to my house and I talked about it there.

#### **Reason 4: School Distance and Transportation**

Parent 15: The schools are too far away.

Parent 7: The other issue is in terms of proximity. We do not have enough Adventist schools for all the parents who would like to send their children to Adventist schools . . . therefore, the distance is prohibitive [when the distance is too far]. . . . It is not just feasible so [the schools] do not get enough children. That is a vicious cycle, because we just do not have enough children who want to attend Adventist schools, and so we cannot have enough schools close to where the families live and that becomes a problem. You have to figure out which came first—the chicken or the egg—is it because they do not have a school close by or because the parents do not want to send their children so they do not have to have a school close by?

Parent 15: My issue is taking children away from home when they are at the high-school level to some place where parents have no jurisdiction, and where the parents cannot be there to bring them up at the very critical years, ages 13, 14, and 15—those teen years when they need to have, I think, direct parental supervision and guidance in what they are doing with their life.

At those ages, they are at the confusing stage of their life and do need parents around. . . . I really believe that the academy and elementary schools should be in the community. They need to be where the parents can supervise and have an input in the rearing of their children.

Parent 19: For some parents it is because some employers are not flexible in allowing the parents time to get their children after school and so parents send them to the school nearest to them. . . . When I was sending my youngest one to our school . . . I kept on worrying about his safety.

Parent 11: Another thing that poses a problem for our parochial schools is that if there is not a school in that person's location the children have to travel a long distance. This causes the parents to infringe on their working time, or they have to provide some extra child care. . . . Today, to commute is very difficult in order to get the children to SDA schools. Many of the parents end up allowing them to live with relatives nearby. That breaks up the family cycle, because the child has to sacrifice his family life to live with a relative. That is not healthy for the family.

Parent 25: Well, you know, some people do not like you to mention Ellen White, but I think we had the counsel that wherever you had a church with six or more kids, you should have a church school. That would enable us to have many schools. Instead of having one school to serve 10 churches we probably would have 10 schools. We should try not to centralize as much, and then the problems could be solved.

### **Reason 5: Diverse School Population**

Parent 17: Due to [migration] . . . people have moved into a world community. They are now in a big world . . . and in a large city situation. . . . These people have moved there because of their children. There are people who stay in a place where they can make lots of money . . . and that too will affect the school.

People are moving all over the place, and . . . I really do not see any way of reversing this trend. . . . Look at the [multi-cultural] locality. To me, migration has caused more trouble. . . . I think we have seen a major shift dealing somewhat with [diversity].

Since people at a distance do not like to send their young ones away so early, it means that if you have Adventist families in that community that feel that way they would choose to develop a day academy on a regular basis; that we have not seen before.

[Diversity] at the elementary level is very different because you have the spatial relationship of Adventists. As more and more Adventists enter the country, they do not have as much money as the natives, and they tend to inhabit the inner city. The school may collapse because if you do

not have the money you cannot pay the tuition. So you can't do both of these two things from demographic shifts in racial populations. The difference is in how much discretionary money they have. It used to be that you could pay a teacher from a minority racial group less money but those days are over. You cannot discriminate racially like that anymore and I am looking at impressions here.

My general impression is, as we would say in Texas, that the Anglo population tended to support the schools because they had more money. Well, back in those days, we had segregated schools. When Adventist education spread in North America, a large proportion of Adventists sent their children to Adventist schools but the schools were still segregated. Since the 1960s, they did not quite get in line with *Brown v the Peacock*. Since the 1960s, Adventist education has been shaky in these areas partly because of the demographic shifts of the population and the socioeconomic levels. Lots of immigrants particularly, which is a very fast-growing section of the church, just do not have the means, and for one reason or the other do not send their children to Adventist schools.

Parent 29: [Diversity] has impacted the church school greatly. It is all on the negative basis. . . . You see what is happening now is that the kind of homes from which many students are coming has diminished the kind of atmosphere that should be at school for purposeful learning to go on. Students are coming from homes, in fact from some Adventist homes too, where proper parental approaches have gone by the wayside. So when the children arrive in school, it is not like in times past where the students have come from a foundational approach and know what is expected of them in the atmosphere of the church school. It is totally different and the current culture has also changed the way in which things operate.

Another point is that there are times when students come in when their value system is not in place, and they tend to inculcate that value on the students within the school setting. Instead of being a positive thing, it becomes negative . . . and, as a result, their behavior pattern deteriorates the rest of the group's pattern.

Parent 25: Today, [a diverse school population] has helped our students and teachers to be more understanding of other people regardless of what their original country is or what color is their skin. It is . . . healthy for our students to be with other foreign students who are just like them. They can learn from other people's culture and learn to be more loving and willing to accept the differences in other people, which would be helpful to them throughout their lifetime.

Well, I imagine you are thinking about the manner in which people are moving around in the country and outside the USA. We have a greater occurrence of multi-culturalism [mixed-population]. In some city areas, that is a part of the weave and fabric of the community. There were some places in Western America, I am sure, where the inhabitants only had one

predominant culture, but when everyone is now moving, you have a neighbor from here today, tomorrow you have another neighbor from another part of the world and so the children show up in school. Diverse school population has created a greater challenge to our teachers, and if the students who come into the classroom have special needs, in addition to coming from another culture, the teachers have a double challenge. Some parents fear that the standard of education will be lowered when the school population is multi-cultured.

### **Reason 6: Family Structure**

- Parent 17: If you take a look at one slice of structure, the number of single parents has affected education everywhere.
- Parent 33: Single parents also may find it difficult to come up with the financing, especially to obtain the added expenses for before- and aftercare, or supervision for their kids before they return home from work. Well, when it comes to the divorced parents, they may not agree where the child should go to school. The child may not be living with one parent and may be shuffled between parents. Eventually, the child may be sent to a public school, because that decision may seem easier.
- Parent 25: I now realize that the types of families affect our schools. . . . One child's father is remarried to another woman from a different ethnic background. . . . The child comes to school 2 days per week from the mother's house and 3 days a week from the father's house. . . . I had never seen that before in my life, and I realized that some kids have many different challenges, and rare problems.
- Some of these kids are coming in from drug homes, from homes where their fathers are in jail, where kids have no supervision, they are on their own—it is just unbelievable—the challenges that young children have today, and are expected to succeed academically. . . . The family structure enables or retards academic progress, and when some parents realize that their children are not doing well, they just decide to send them to public school and whatever happens to the child they do not care very much.
- Parent 17: Single parenting certainly affects what happens at home but it also affects the situation financially, because the parents do not have or work for enough money as when we have two incomes from husbands and wives. If you are a single parent and the school happens to be 20 miles across town, your transportation issues are different from the home that has two parents. The families of today are basically disintegrating and when the families are disintegrating they do not have as much focus on the raising of children. This definitely affects the schools. The family, as I see it, is

becoming less focused. They focus on getting jobs, getting here and getting there, and getting more, and getting more and more. In many cases, the focus of the family no longer seems to be quite so much on spiritual issues.

### **Reason 7: Quality and Attitude of SDA School Teachers**

- Parent 18: I removed my children from our church school due to the attitude of the teacher. The students who go to the church school were mainly Caucasian and they were unkind to my boy. I went to the teacher and the principal, twice or three times, and I chatted but I was not satisfied with their reply. I felt that they were unfair. . . . When I saw their reactions I decided to put them in public school.
- Parent 5: In my case, I have nephews who have been taken out of the SDA Christian schools, because the teachers were not doing a good job. We talked with the principal but he did not know how to handle that situation. . . . It was a teacher-student relationship issue, a clash of character . . . and in my sister's opinion the better choice was to remove them from the school.
- Parent 17: There are also some unfortunate teachers out there in some SDA schools that should not be hired. I had to live through some of them that I would not want to send my children to. . . . If the teacher has a grudge against a particular student, or just a racial issue, or maybe the teacher does not like a particular student . . . those kinds of issues are difficult to deal with. . . . Those issues may happen in the public school too but the public school has more teachers, so things get spread around.
- Parent 6: In my case I had my sisters, who were well off financially, and they were interested in Christian education but they had to take the children from the school because the teachers did not have a Christian character, and my niece fell far behind in her grade level. My sister was very upset, and swore that she would never again have her children back in a SDA school because she expected the environment to be Christian-like. . . . It was a sad situation but it did happen. The sad part about it is that the teacher at the public school gave the student the attention that was needed. . . . They were in the SDA Christian school since Kindergarten. That environment in the SDA school did not help them at all.
- Parent 2: I had to take mine out of school too because the teachers were prejudiced. They were not giving them a chance to develop spiritually or intellectually, and the children were so upset when they had to go to school. . . . They used to cry so much, that we finally had to take them out.

- Parent 31: With my daughter, I sent her to public school to get her away from the other SDA kids.
- Parent 5: The parents had some friction with the class teacher. . . . Her daughter was experiencing social problems with the other kids—the kids were being unkind to her. . . . She removed her child and also sent her son to the public high school because she was dissatisfied with the SDA school here.

### **Reason 8: Pastoral Influences**

- Parent 18: When we were at X, there was always a pitch for Christian education—an awareness I should say. It was advertised in the bulletin even from kindergarten. The date for school registration was also in the announcements all the time, and there was a display of work that the children had done so that church members were aware of the school's activities. Our church now does get a few announcements in the bulletin, but education is not pushed by the pastor.
- Parent 20: I have a friend who is a pastor, their children go to the public school, too, but I do not know the reason why.
- Parent 25: The pastors need to be visible in the school. Sometimes he can play games with the kids, or give the teacher some assistance. Those things work wonders where I have taught. They bind the children to the pastor and the children feel that the pastor is not distant from them. The parents also feel impressed when they hear the news from the children. If the school is so important and the teachers are doing so good every day . . . the pastors should make it their business to be in the school to volunteer to do a Bible class now and then, to play a game with the kids or to assist in whatever way possible, and those activities help the members to see the commitment of the pastor, the priority the school has with him, and that helps them too.

At my first school, the pastor was very visible. He would be at our school early in the morning and he would greet the kids at the door. He would drop by on his way to the bookstore and ask, "Teachers, is there anything that I can get you?" He knew that once we got to the school, that was it, and he would bring back supplies for us. He was always present to support us with any meeting with a parent. He was always there to assist us so we felt that we had the support of a pastor and that made a big difference at our school.

### Summary

The non-home-schooling parents' responses indicated that the most important reason why they do not send their children to Adventist schools is lack of finance. The financial issues are due to low family income, illegibility to work, single-parent homes, and large families. Others see the tuition as very expensive when it is compared with other SDA schools within the USA.

Some parents perceive the public schools as better. Public schools offer more courses, have more resources, better buildings, more teachers and facilities, and extra-curricular activities. They have also made provision for children with special needs. Christian education is not valued, nor is it given first priority in the lives of its members. The schools are losing their vision because they want to be like the other schools.

More and more parents are now practicing home schooling, and this practice affects Adventist education. It reduces enrollment and the school's income, and removes the most caring parents from the system. The distance and transportation also pose a problem, because the children have to travel long distances. Parents, however, would like to have an input in the education of their children.

Diversity or a mixed school population affects the school since some parents fear that the standards of the school will be lowered, and others do not want their children to be influenced by other values. The structure of the home reduces the enrollment of the school. The attitudes of some of our SDA teachers cause some parents to remove their children from SDA schools. Pastors are asked to be visible in the schools and to be a model of Christian education. The non-home-schooling parents gave many suggestions to enable more children to attend SDA schools.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS: HOME-SCHOOLING PARENTS' RESPONSES

#### **Introduction**

In the United States home schooling has experienced rapid growth since the 1980s due to the efforts of the Home School Legal Defense Association. It continued to grow rapidly in the 1990s and shows no sign of slowing down (Klicka, 1995, p. 155). Today, home schooling is legal in all states. Parents have the right to educate their children at home and to choose how, by whom, and where their child or children should be educated.

In my research, parents, who were interviewed, home schooled their children for different reasons. This chapter consists of the responses of 10 home-schooling SDA parents with whom I have conducted in-depth interviews for why they do not send their children to a SDA school. Some of the interviews were conducted in their homes, and others were done at this University when they visited the site. The participants were allowed to choose the meeting place where we would not be disturbed. All of my volunteers were happy to have a discussion with me, and wished me success. In order to maintain confidentiality, the names of the participants have been omitted. Their responses are grouped in thematic categories according to the percentage of responses received from the interviews.



## We Want to Have Control Over Our Children

In this section the home-schooling parents give the reasons why they are not interested in having their children enrolled in SDA schools, and why they want to have control over them. The responses are:

- Parent 6: The reason why we home school is because we want to have control over who our children are around, like who is their mentor. . . . We want to have control over what influences they are getting. . . . We are really blessed here to have a lot of home schoolers, so we have a lot of social interaction.
- I like being able to choose the activities and the people that they are associating with on a day-to-day basis so that their characters can take shape for the kingdom. . . . There was a recent study where they showed on TV that the #1 and #2 influences on children are their peers; teachers are in the third position, and family is in fourth place. We do not like that order and so we really care about our children's education as far as who influences them.
- Parent 3: I like to control their values. I like being with my children, and there are lots of different reasons, but the main one is I like to be the primary influence in their lives. I like to know who is involved in their lives.
- Parent 6: I also home school, because I enjoy being with my children and being the primary mentor in their lives. I like being able to choose their activities they participate in and the people that they are associating with on a daily basis.
- Parent 5: They want them to be able to monitor their spiritual commitment closely and not at arm's length as is sometimes the case when they are off going to school under influences of friendships and other things that we do not know anything about. We have the ability to watch that closely. In the community we heavily invest in our kids, and we believe that our children are the most important thing in life. I suspect that would be very high on the list. I think that there are some other factors.
- Parent 1: I realized that there are many influences that I am sure that I do not want my children to have to deal with at a young age. I thought that they should be a little more mature before they go out to deal with all the influences that they were going to meet and I felt called to do it. I felt that was what God wanted me to do. Everybody that I know home school for different reasons, but the main thread that would run through all of them is the bad influences.

- Parent 4: Well, there is also a concern about the things that are going on at the schools, not so much about the teachers but with the children and what their parents allow them to do and see and talk about. All that occurs at home in the evening comes to school in the morning. Junior-age children are obviously influenced a lot by other children, and that is the concern I know for a lot of people.
- Parent 6: What I would add is that although our children may not be exposed to as many peers with negative influences, our family has known people who have come into our home, who are in the world and are doing things we would never want our children to do. But being exposed to it and seeing how it affects our visitors' lives and how their choices impact what happens to them, they are seeing a lot of things, but they are not seeing them in their peers. We talk a lot with them about what we have seen and what we have experienced and what is going on. They are getting a library of how actions affect what you do.
- Parent 8: One thing that I know about is that very few home-schooling parents have expressed the issue of finance. Most of them are concerned about the TV influences of other children on their children. Not everybody has the same values. Influences from TV can be very detrimental. . . . I feel that the majority of people that I know do home schooling from the standpoint of preventing bad influences from affecting their children.
- Parent 4: Our great concern is the large number of non-Adventist students that are being allowed to come into Adventist schools and what percentage of non-Adventists versus Adventists is OK. I know that there are lots of complaints about that issue, because they are doing school work on a whole in the same class. Not that we should totally be exclusive, but there is a concern about that.
- Parent 8: I had a niece and a nephew who were at "X" SDA school and then they went to "Y" SDA school that was nearby. When they were at "X" SDA school my niece asked my husband to do worship service at school because they were doing father-and-child worship. Her father was not an Adventist anymore so she asked my husband to represent her father. He went and when he returned he said, "I would never, ever, ever, let my children go to that school." It shocked me [laughs]. He said the behavior of the children was bad, the influence of the children from some of the homes was affecting other kids, the teachers also were allowing the kids to misbehave. The behavior, the behavior was not good. I am sure the education is fine. It was just the influences on the other kids were not good at all. You struggle as a parent to raise your kid in a Christian environment and to have them being influenced by a few others. We are fighting a battle.

- Parent 9: I heard about associations, and that is one of my reasons. We do not watch TV a lot in our family, and there are certain things that we believe in that are not necessarily a ritual. Well, I grew up going to church school and much of what other kids spoke about is what they saw on TV. These things I do not want my kids to be involved in. I want to have more influence over what they are learning to value, and when we put them in a group of kids, the leader becomes their role model. They neglect to listen to their parents and adults a lot of times, and that's one of the reasons I heard other people say why they are not sending their kids to a school setting. I do not say that I don't want my kids to associate with other kids, but not on a day-to-day basis. I would like to have a little more control over what they are influenced by and what they hear, if it is right and good.
- Parent 6: We were brought up to strongly support our Adventist schools, and we still do. We still believe in it, but the classrooms and the students that are there are different from what we experienced when we went through there. Part of that is the breakdown of the home and the family, so even though we still have a lot of dedicated teachers, I cannot send them there. I did not intend to keep my children at home. I was not someone who had that vision from the beginning, but it just happened as we saw the influences and things that were affecting the kids. In the schools there were things that we did not want to introduce to our children so early, and the influences were one of the biggest reasons why we decided for them to stay at home. It was not because we are anti-school or are anti-establishment. I appreciate Adventist schools.
- Parent 5: The challenge was that my son found himself in a class—I think he was in fourth grade at the time—where his friends were much unsupervised at home and watched all sorts of things on TV and so on. So my son would come home and tell all the “lyric” stories [the different stories/events that his friends saw on TV during the previous evening] that his buddies were telling him and my wife developed a mind that she became depressed for that year. She felt that she was living in a sewer to send him to school every day. We had that set of issues and it was difficult to know how to deal with it. We did talk to the staff about it, but it did not seem that there was anything anyone could have done about the situation.
- Parent 6: My dad was the principal of the school that I went to. I went all the way through church school but I did not have a TV in our home. I remembered going to school as a kid and everyone in my class was talking about what they saw on TV. I learned a lot of things that I think my parents wished that I had never discovered. So what is on the media and what gets discussed at school—the different trends—whether it is clothing or music or the trends that are out there that they see, the kids get to hear them and

are exposed to that. I do not want them to be exposed to that at this point. They learn very quickly.

Parent 10: I did look at one of the academies for my son to go to school. I kept my options open, and I looked at it every year. Since I am not aware of everything I cannot answer the question fully. The price tag that comes with sending your child to a church school is pretty high for the influences that are involved. What I see happening at the academy, what I have heard happened there through knowledgeable resources; I heard that the influences there are not good. Even if there is a good group of kids there, there are also some that are allowed to stay there regardless of their behavior, because the school wants the tuition money, and they are unwilling to enforce the rules. I have not seen them enforcing the rules. I come in contact with the students, and I do, through Pathfinders and through other events. I am very active within the church, and the kids that go to the Academy do not have the values and morals as before. These are not necessarily issues when they are in schools but when they are not in the school setting. That is not so when I am in charge and around them, but when I show up at the school for functions such as talent shows or things that we are invited to participate in, or activities that other students are inviting my kids to participate in, what I see that goes on there, I am not impressed with the spiritual leading at that point.

Parent 1: Some teachers do not hold the same Christian views as we hold, for example, evolution and creationism. The parents want their children to have a strong foundation in Creation, which they may not get at school.

### **To Form a Relationship With My Children and/or Give Them Special Attention**

Parent 2: I wanted to give them the special attention that they needed and wanted. I thought it was better for them to have a one-to-one relationship with me at the time.

Parent 1: Some parents have children with weaknesses, or they may have dyslexia or some other problem that makes it hard for them to keep up in school with a lot of children. When they are taught at home, the parents are able to tutor their children according to their needs and give them the boost they need.

Parent 2: I have my friends that home school their children because they feel that they can have a better one-on-one relationship with each child, and they supply their children's need. They know their children better than a teacher, who has to learn to know their children, so they want to give their children the individual attention that will make them learn faster.

- Parent 3: Certain things I want to teach them: give them respect and build a good relationship with them. In their teen years they are asking for advice. They are coming to us and wanting to spend time with us. They are not leaving us or casting us aside. It is such a huge blessing that we would not trade it for a million dollars.
- Parent 5: The other complicating factor was that our son had this severe learning disability, and within the context of our school, it is very difficult to get the resources to really deal with him. He is a wonderful career-like, intelligent young man, but he has a very distinct learning difference and learning style, and is extremely gregarious. If there is anything that focuses on cats and relationships, he loves things like that.
- Parent 7: They realize that the time that they have with their children is so short, and I think that is the primary reason of the families I know. They love their children, and they are willing to put aside their careers and their jobs. All the mothers that I know who are home schooling their children have degrees—a college or graduate degrees. They had careers, but the kids came along, and all of a sudden they got to school age. They started to look at the options, and they devoted this stage of their lives for the education of their children. For me, I have just 3 more years with my child, and after those 3 years I would not be able to home school him even if I wanted to.
- Parent 2: We like to use our time also to form a relationship with our kids at home.
- Parent 6: I also do not want them fragmented into peer groups. I want them to find their brothers and sisters as their best friends, and to be connected for life.
- Parent 1: I know others who home school because of health reasons, because their children have health problem and they cannot be in school.
- Parent 4: I like being with them. There are lots of different reasons, but I like to build the strong family ties that home schooling brings.

### **To Instill Our Values in Them—Character Development**

- Parent 3: I think some parents only want to instill their values in their kids so they home school. You have a greater opportunity to use life lessons of what happens every day at home to teach them character development. We have a little joke among home schoolers which goes like this: The quickest way to develop character is for the mother to home school the children, because all of her negatives—everything comes out from you when you have to be with the child all the day long. They know more

about you than you know about yourself so we say this joke: Do you want a reformation, then home school your children.

Parent 4: Well, sometimes it is clear [laughs], because you see the bad things in yourself. It has been the greatest character building in my life because there were just days, especially when I was younger that I wished that they were in school [laughs loudly], but I have learned that whatever God calls you to do, he enables you to do, and my husband and I believed that strongly, that God has called us to do that, and it has been very gratifying to see them choose values that we would want for them and to see how they are so kind and sympathetic, young people that they are.

Parent 7: I want him to have a great sense of purpose—why he is living, what this life is for, prepare himself to live in heaven, and help others prepare for the kingdom. In terms of skills, I am thankful that I can provide for him. I have this goal for him. Since English is not my native language, I want him to be bilingual. I want him to be comfortable with Spanish, and it is wonderful to see how he is interested in studying the language in South America. On his own, he picks up books and reads. He practices to speak with me and other people. That is one of the things I want him to carry with him so that he can communicate with his Spanish relatives and friends.

Parent 1: The Christian mother's job is to prepare the children to live in a world that is worldly and teach them to live there, and instill in their heart a love for God.

Parent 4: The most important thing I want to teach them is to have a daily walk with God, and to spend some quiet time with him. The world is constantly pressing in on us and wants us to conform to its ways. It is only by spending some time with Jesus every day can we gain strength to stand up for him. Another thing, I want them to be bold for Christ, and to stand up against peer pressure because we all have peer pressure no matter what age we are [laughs].

I want them to remember that people and relationships are more important than things and money. We are on a mission, and we need to share what God has blessed us with. We need to have this mission for life—to help those who are not as fortunate as we are, and we have a responsibility to our world.

### **Financial Reasons**

Parent 5: Salaries are tight in our cases and in many home-school families, because many of us are depending on one income. Our commitment is to have our Moms stay at home with the kids. With our commitment it is going to be

tight even with the 35% tuition subsidy that the denomination gives. In the school environment you end up spending a lot of money for a lot of things besides tuition. There are a lot of added fees and trips, and a lot of this, that and the other, plus the materialism . . . so it gets to be a very costly fact to have kids in our church school.

- Parent 3: Certainly, expense is one of them. I think it is financial as opposed to Adventist education. Maybe it is their location, if they are in a rural area it would be expensive to drive 20, 40 or 60 miles a day to take the kids to the school.
- Parent 9: We continued to home school when we arrived here partly for financial reasons, because my husband goes to school.
- Parent 10: It is a price thing. When an academy is charging about \$7,000 a year that is a big chunk of change. I do not think that many parents can afford that. Most people have to work then the mothers are never at home with the children. Families have to realize that it is #1 concern to be a family, and some families have to work to send their children to an elementary school. We have some children in high schools like that too, and it is a big problem.
- Parent 9: Another thing that inhibits people from sending their children to church school is it's quite expensive. You know for our family of three children without any help that would be almost \$1,000 a month, and that's a lot—that's a huge amount of money. I can home school my kids for a whole year, and it will cost me less than what it would cost for church school for a month.
- Parent 2: I've got to be with my children. They went to the Adventist school, and it was part of my pride. I could have asked for help as worthy students. My husband was going to school also and was working. We were doing the best that we could at the time, but financial reason was the big issue [so they finally went to public schools].
- Parent 8: The pressures of the world are a huge factor. Today, both parents work, because they have no money, but originally my mother never worked. . . . I had to go to a public high school because they could not afford to pay tuition. Back then, it was a one-income family. Now it is comfortable to be a two-income family, and people like that. It is very hard to give that up when you have the pressures of the world on you to keep up with every-body else. I think that is a factor and as we get closer to Christ's coming we would be pressured more.

### **The Best We Can Offer for Their Education**

- Parent 7: We home school him, because that seemed to us to be the best method that we could offer him for his education.
- Parent 3: I am a nurse; I could easily be working, but I decided to do home schooling so that I could provide the best environment for my children.
- Parent 7: When we consider all the factors, it is the best we can do for them.
- Parent 4: Nobody knows your children like you do and they remain within your family. You can concentrate on the problem immediately when you see your child misbehaves. You can stop school right there and address the problem right away. You do not have to wait until the end of the class period or the end of the day as it happens at school. It is a lifestyle of learning. It is not just a learning all day long. Whether you are seen with the books or you are learning how to cook or you are driving down the road, you are always counseling your children and it is an awesome responsibility but it gives awesome results. I think we need to take the education of our children seriously.
- Parent 1: There are also scholastic advantages for the children. Another reason that I do home schooling is that my children's talents are so varied. I have one that is reading at college level, and she is only 11 years old. I have another one who is just as good. I would like to expand that talent instead of working on a curriculum with 30 other kids. If that curriculum was too easy for them, there would not be much that I could do about it, whereas at home I can let them excel. I would allow them to read literature that they want to read, let them grow in the area that they want to grow, and exclude this structural specific pattern. For example, my daughter is in fourth grade, but she is doing sixth-grade mathematics. Well, the teacher in school could not do that because she could not have 30 students in a different mathematic level. At home I can do that, and I can have them excel and strengthen their weaknesses as I see them. I pull them up in the areas they are weak in, and I think that this is a great advantage of home schooling.
- Parent 3: I decided to teach him at home, because I was a college expert. I thought that I could certainly educate a kindergartener. I had friends who had kids in kindergarten class that were spending quite a large sum of money for half a day tutoring at school. I thought that I could provide a better or equal help at educating my child on a one-and-one basis and that is how it began.
- One of the things that helped my children to cope was to develop the different talents that they have. They both like to play the piano so they had extra time to practice because they are at home during the day.



They do not have to do it at the end of the day, after school when they are tired, nor after they have completed homework. My son at 11 has his own lawn mowing business that he managed to convince his sisters to help him with and so they have made money. This is their eighth year. They now provide things for themselves that I could not provide for them.

Parent 6: School wastes a lot of time waiting for a teacher to help each child whereas the schooling part of it at home takes less time and so we are able to do a lot more of extracurricular activity with our kids. We have them in a variety of classes with other home schoolers besides what we are doing individually with them at home.

Parent 5 About 60 to 70 families in our community home school their children. It is an informal group, but there are quite a lot of group activities that occur at our recreational times: social advances, graduation ceremonies, book swaps, picnics, and all those kinds of things that do help to create a social environment for our children so that they are not only home schooled in the strictest sense of the term without friendships beyond the family circle. It has been a very, very good thing because there are many non-Adventists that are part of that fellowship as well as Seventh-day Adventists.

We team up to offer a richer way of resources for our children. For example, regularly, there is a full-time curriculum that is going on but a lot of our science classes are taught by physicians or science teachers, who often are home-school parents. They offer these courses, and we pay good money to send our kids to those classes. They participate in those kinds of things, so there is quite a lot of sharing of resources that enriches the home-school environment. Home-schooling parents band together to offer the courses that are available in the school environment like math classes, science labs, etc.

Teaching our children is our responsibility. We are unwilling to yield what we see as our primary watch care, supervision, and training to other people, and I suspect that it would be very high on our list.

### **I Was Influenced**

Parent 8: We had some friends who were home schooling, and I used to bug them and say, "Why are you home schooling?" Then they told me a little about it and then I said to myself, "That sounds like a very neat thing, but I was not totally convinced." For me, I just fell into it. As the kids got older, I read some of the books about home schooling written by Raymond and Dorothy Moore and those books more than anything else convinced me to home school.

Parent 3: I read more and more about home schooling, and Raymond Moore's books fortified me and encouraged me to continue on. I went to some

home-school conventions, and we started to make friends with other families through home schooling. I had no intention of doing it so long.

Parent 10: It was recommended to me by a teacher within our school that it would be better to home school the children.

Parent 5: Our reason does not fit anybody else's paradigm very well. We had never thought about ourselves as home schoolers. We had friends who home schooled their children, and we were not very impressed. It looked like a hippie model of home school, but it was not really doing very much about the educating of one's children, so we did not feel very impressed. We did not feel that it was something that we were emotionally equipped to do, so when we moved here 8 years ago, we put our children in a local SDA elementary school, and they attended there for a year. However, in the process of that year we became very dissatisfied.

It did not have anything to do directly with the school itself, the teachers, the staff members, or the school policies. Everything seemed well organized and dedicated to the Lord, and we had no basic complaint. We had a set of issues, and it was difficult to know how to deal with it. We happened to land at the Fourth of July picnic to which one of our friends invited us and there happened to be a couple of home-school families there. They fell in conversation with my wife and before I knew it, they were inducting us into a more structured model of home schooling than we had seen before, and within a matter of 2 or 3 weeks, we found ourselves signing up for the experiment for the year and have continued it.

Parent 2: I actually went to a private school on Route 140 . . . and they had a home-school program. I found out that they provided school books and a curriculum to follow. There was a teacher who came once every 2 months to evaluate the children, and the principal came every 6 months.

### **Home Schooling Offers a Flexible Program**

Parent 4: Home schooling offers a flexible program. Well, it gives them more flexibility. One friend I have, whose son is very gifted in music—he is just exceptional, and several friends of mine have exceptionally gifted children in music. In this way they can pursue their gifts more. They can develop their skills more, because they have more time for it, and they can participate in orchestras and things like that.

Another friend home schooled because her child was actually in a SDA school and she was not happy there. She was pushed a little faster than the mother thought she was able and it was distressing the child. The mother wanted to give her some time just to be a child. I think that some parents think that some children should start a little later than the accepted

norm. They may home school them for a few years so that they are not pushed into doing things too quickly. They start with them when they feel that they are ready to read rather than when they are 5 or 6.

Another reason we home school is that my daughter is very interested in bird watching, and the best time for birding is spring and fall when the migrations are in full swing and so we take breaks and go on trips. In fact, she is on a trip right now, for May 09, in Arizona, doing bird watching. That would be very difficult to do if she was in school that is in session right now, so we do school in the summer to make up for that.

Another reason is that we have some important holidays that we celebrate as a family, and we take a couple weeks off in the fall to celebrate these holidays.

Parent 6: We really like them to excel in areas that they are passionate about and not be regularly structured in a grade as they go through. At times they will be way ahead in one area and maybe further behind in others, but it comes backwards and forwards.

Parent 6: I appreciate the flexibility in our schedule as our family would like to do service or travel. We can mentor our school experiences around those things and helpfully use them as part of their overall character development.

Parent 7: At the moment our son is concluding his first year of high school. He has already developed some big passions and deep interests that require time. He wants to be a musician. He is a violinist. He practices 2 hours a day, and because he is at home, he is able to devote that time when he is alert and not when he arrives home tired at 4:00 p: m. He is making good progress with the talents that God has given him in great measure, and I am so thankful that we can be stewards to help him to be a good steward of those talents by providing him with the kind of quietness that he needs.

### **There Is No Difference Between Adventist Schools and Public Schools**

Parent 4: There is no difference between Adventist and public schools. I went to a public school because I was not an Adventist until I was 18. I looked at the school that I went to, and I compared it to Adventist schools now. As far as the way the people dress, the influence of the media, and to me they look the same—the school that I went to and the Adventist school of now. If before the Adventist parents did not send their children to public schools because the standards were wrong then, why is it that so many Adventists are now sending their children there? Have the standards changed now? I am concerned about the standards of dress, the music the kids listen to, and the movies they watch. I think it is very, very similar to the things I was doing as a non-Christian teenager, which were considered improper

by Adventists 20 or 30 years ago. Why has that standard changed? I do not think that it should have changed.

I think that the Adventist schools in a lot of ways look very much like everybody else these days, and parents do not see a distinction. I think that is sad, because we should be very different as a people. The distinction has been broken down and has become a blur, so we do not see ourselves as different from regular society. The values and standards we once upheld and the ways that we do things now are not the same, but we should be different from the world.

Parent 10: I feel we need to go back to the basics of our faith, and I feel that today's Adventists, in general, are basically saying, "Don't hurt the kids; they might leave the church. We are not teaching them the true values anymore—the true core values of what we believe." The world has entered our church. The world has definitely entered our church. We no longer care about jewelry, we no longer care about drinking even necessarily, and in a lot of other ways—the way people behave, the dancing, the parties, and the whole thing. We have just lost it as an Adventist faith at this point.

I really feel that we need to just step back and say what is important, and if that means that we do not have enough tuition in the school, let it be so. If it is going to be called an Adventist school, we need to have those values there, and we need to be enforcing those values, because some parents that are paying want those values. If you are going to pay that much money, and you are an Adventist that is sending your children there, you want to be served. Right now, we cannot differentiate between a child that goes to the Adventist school from one that goes to the public school. I really can't, and I think that we should be set aside, not that we should not be going out into the world by any means, but the public should be able to tell that we are Adventists. At this point, the talk, the actions, I do not see any difference. I really don't see any difference in the kids that I come in contact with. I do not think that we should be aggressive in telling and just being a rule to society but I do not think that we are sharing our faith with our children. I think we are too worried about hurting their feelings and that they might leave the church. We do not want the kids to leave the church, so we do not want to get them upset, because they may leave. We are told if you train up a child in the way that he should go, when he is old he would not depart from it. Right now we are not training them and they are flying out the door.

I don't think parents are even willing to stand up for the morals and values when it comes to their kids. They are afraid that their kids are going to hate them, and it is so sad because we are no longer being what God wants us to be in our kids' life. We are parents. What I see happening is that we are afraid to say, "No, I am sorry, you are not going to do this, because it is wrong, and here is why it is wrong." Maybe the parents do not even know, maybe they were hurt when they were younger,

and they do not want to hurt their kids. I really do not know what the queer thing is, but what I have heard my whole life is, “Oh, do not hurt the kids, because they will leave” and at the same time we are not showing our faith; we are really not.

### **Concern About Their Spiritual Well-being**

Parent 5: Looking around the home school community of which we are a part, very high on our list will be concern for their children’s spiritual well-being. We want them to be able to monitor their spiritual commitment closely. The bottom line is, it has something to do with our priorities, and their spirituality is just as important to us. To me, my children’s education is very important, and public school was not even an option. I certainly do not want my children in that environment and to be taught the things that they would be taught in a public school environment. That’s not what we should choose. If we cannot send our kids to church school, then home school should be our other option. So it’s a spiritual priority issue.

Parent 4: The times that we had together to spiritually grow were wonderful. I do not believe that my children’s spiritual growth would have been the same if they were surrounded by peers, the majority of which I believe are not grounded in living a Christ-like life. They would have been surrounded by that influence daily, and the contact with them would have been different in our home. They know the values that we aspire to and how we aspire to certain goals all of our lives. I believe that my children will be leaders in this church, and I believe that they are firmly grounded. They do make mistakes, but I know that they will go out into the world and make it a better place. I believe that this will come about because my husband and I have made that sacrifice to home school our children.

### **We Travel, It Is Our Lifestyle**

Parent 1: I started home schooling because we travel overseas, and because of the different language, I began to home school. When I came back to the United States and I looked around for a school for my children, the reverse culture shock was very serious. So because of my children’s culture shock, I decided to continue home schooling, so that they would have some kind of continuity from over there to over here.

Parent 10: We do it because of our lifestyle. We travel a lot. We do a lot of miscellaneous things, and it fits our schedule much better.

### **To Protect Our Children From Being Hurt Emotionally and Socially**

- Parent 4: My daughter was very advanced in some academic areas, but very deficient in other areas. She was very different from most kids of her age, and I did not want her to be subjected to hurts. I know that because I was also like that when I was young, and it made me the object of much ridicule and many hurtful things. It hurt me socially and emotionally, plus I thought that we can better address the areas that she was deficient in. She enjoyed home schooling so much, that we decided to continue it.
- Parent 4: If I sent them to SDA schools my kids would probably be subjected to a lot of ridicule. They would be thought weird, because I do not want them to participate in some activities.

### **No Church School Was Near**

- Parent 9: We originally started to home school, because there was no church school near to us, and we did not want to send the kids to public school. The church school closest to us was about a 45-minute drive away. I grew up doing that, and it was too hard, so that is the reason why we started home schooling.

### **Freedom of Choice—Another Option of Adventist Education**

- Parent 5: Some families feel that they have a bit of a choice. They could send Mom to work full time to pay for the kids to go to school or you can have Mom at home educating the children. That is the kind of choice some families see themselves making, and as a result they operate their lives that way.
- Parent 3: Each family has an opportunity to choose what is the very best for their child because they know their child best. Every child is not going to flourish in a classroom, and in our graduate group last night there was a child who had a real problem with dyslexia and learning disabilities. He had custom help from his mother and from people with whom she talked with every day. If he had gone in a classroom he would have had all kinds of difficulties and that is what home schooling does for the child. It is the best thing that God has called us to do. Instead of the church saying, "You do not support education, because you home school your children," they can say, "This is another option for Adventist education. You are home schooling your children to be good Adventists, and to be solid foundations in the Adventist service." Do not say that you do not think that home schooling system is good. We are saying that we feel that we have the option to choose, but I find some Adventists to be very defensive.

Today, their attitude against home schooling seems to be changing a little bit, because they see that the kids that are home schooled are coming out OK. They are not being robbed of any kind of socialization. That is the big fear for educators. They feel that they would not be able to socialize. When they see that these kids are well adjusted and accomplish many things, and that they want to be involved in church activities and leadership, then they would say, "This is not a bad thing after all." We should be encouraging families in churches to make a choice.

The kids need to have a home Adventist education, but they do not have the Adventist supportive homes. They do not have parents who think that they could teach their children at home, and some do not have educated parents. I do not think that there is not a place for our Adventist educational system, but I think that home schooling is another option that enables families to have a choice. I think as educators observe more and more the results that families get, because this is all they care about—the results, and how the kids are coming on with home Adventist education. If they can see that home schoolers are successfully succeeding, equally encouraged, and are desirous to work for the church, I think that the opposition barriers that are being built up will come down. The negative responses are mainly from the Adventist elementary and secondary school teachers. They are very defensive and ask, "Why don't you want to send your children to the Adventist church schools?" I say, "I have the power to choose. It is not because I do not like it or that you are doing a bad job, but the response is more positive."

I think as home schooling becomes more generally accepted that the Adventists would not be just saying, "Oh, this is an option." I know Ellen White talked about having schools for children to come and learn, but the home is the best school and more likely than that, Jesus was schooled at home. He was not sent away to a school, so I know that it is a great opportunity to home school. In some areas, you can home school with very few stipulations from the state, so it is great to be able to home school. You do not have to be registered by the state, governed by a teacher, and the kids are more relaxed.

### **Summary**

It is evident from the above quotations that SDA home-schooling parents have many reasons for why they do not send their children to SDA schools. The most important seems to be their concerns about the emulation of the bad influences at school, the values and morals of the children's peers, their spiritual welfare/warfare and character development. They, therefore, want to control the influences that would mold the

development of their children's character. They have decided to protect their children from these evil influences that are prevalent among peers, who are influenced by poor TV programming. Many parents who were dissatisfied with the behavior of our church-school children were influenced by friends and the reading of books to do home schooling.

Other home-schooling parents want to form a closer relationship with their family members, which they hope will endure for a lifetime. Some parents feel that they are academically equipped and could do an equal or better job of educating their children.

Parents who practice home school also want to protect their children from emotional and social hurts. They understand their children's unique demands, because these parents recall their own unique challenges when they were young. Home schooling allows these parents to meet their children's needs even more effectively.

Some home-schooling parents practice home schooling because it is convenient for them. They travel from place to place, and they take their families with them. Other parents with disabled children are forced to conduct home schools because SDA schools do not have the ability and facilities to work with such students. Some parents do home schooling because no Adventist school was nearby. Other parents thought that this method of education is the best they could offer to their children because Jesus was educated at home.

The final quote shows that some parents view home schooling as another form of SDA education and should be welcomed as that. These parents see home schooling as a choice. They have made a decision that they hope should be respected by other SDA educators and members. Parents who engage in home schooling also see it as a flexible



program and not as rigid as the school programs. Some parents, who see the changes in the school program and recognize no difference between the church school and the public school, also do home schooling. Many parents reported that they are criticized by teachers and the principal because they are home schooling their children. They would like the educators to recognize that parents do have a choice in selecting their children's school environment and their children are succeeding academically.

In conclusion, SDA home-schooling parents are interested in controlling who their children associate with, and the activities in which their children participate, all in the hope of helping their children. They are not willing to give to others their sacred responsibility. They are diligently instilling in their children their beliefs and values.

## CHAPTER VI

### FINDINGS: ADMINISTRATORS' RESPONSES

#### **Introduction**

The SDA administrators expect SDA parents to support the schools not only by giving an offering towards education on the Sabbath day but by sending their children to the school where their Adventist values, beliefs, and doctrines would be supplemented. This section contains the responses from in-depth interviews of the 10 administrators. These interviews were conducted in the spacious administrators' offices. Some of the interviews were done when the administrators were on their break sessions, and others were conducted during after-school hours. I also had the opportunity to have a tour of each school site because it was my first visit there. All the administrators were happy to share the information with me.

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section of the chapter gives the administrators responses to the main question, What are the reasons that SDA parents give for why they do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools?

The second section of the chapter is comprised of administrators' suggestions that can help to increase the enrollment of SDA children in our schools.

#### **Reason 1: Financial Responses**

Admin 1: They cannot afford to.

- Admin 2: Well, frequently and foremost is the money issue. I remind parents that Christian education is probably less expensive than public education. The problem here is that we are citizens of this world, and we must pay taxes in the country where we live to support the public education. We still have to pay for the tuition for our own sons and daughters, and thus it has become a difficult time for parents. Parents have the added problem of supporting not only the local public school system, but also the private school system. So first and foremost, it is the money problem for many, many people.
- Admin 3: I think the main reason why SDA parents do not send their children to our schools is financial—money. That is the number one thing I see as a principal that prevents kids from coming. I ask the same question. Why is it that all these Adventists in our community are sending their children to the public school system? The number one reason I've heard is: It is a financial one. Although we have student aid, having these kids in school—it is expensive. If you have two kids, you are talking about \$600 per month to send those children to a Christian school. One child costs \$273, and we have multiple kids and families with three children, who are paying over \$700 and are sacrificing other things to have their children here in school. I think that is a lot of money, and something can be done about it, but I am not sure what the answer is. We had a couple situations here where the parents were qualified for financial aid, but even what they earn could not match, so we could not get enough money for the children to get into the school.
- Admin 5: Some claim that they can only live on their wages, and they do not have any extra.
- Admin 4: Every year the increase in tuition becomes a problem. The first thing I would say is tuition.
- Admin 8: The reasons that parents give is that it costs too much money. Well! It does cost more to come to our school. It costs about \$6,000 a year, but they can go to the public schools, and it is free, including their meals.
- Admin 6: Some say it is too expensive, because they have other bills to pay—a new car and other priorities—so they just cannot afford the extra expenses.
- Admin 7: Usually, the major reason they give is finance. That is what I hear, “It is too expensive.”
- Admin 9: Oftentimes people find that the tuition is so expensive that they do not look into the different avenues that the church offers, and they give up without asking for help.

### Money as a Priority

- Admin 2: Money has become a big problem because what is happening here is that nothing is any longer more important than the color green—if you can see a green dollar bill—that has become our god. That is the one that we serve. We don't serve God as the giver of the green; we serve the green god. Why has the dollar become so important? Well, I guess that all of us want to live at a certain standard. . . . If we cannot live by that standard, something will have to pay the price. . . . Several years ago . . . the father . . . provided for the family and that was normality. Today . . . it is the father and mother who go out and earn the wages for the survival of the home. Why is that so now? Because the cost of living has gotten so much higher, and we feel that we have to have this and we have to have that . . . and then money becomes a very important issue. . . . To educate our children in a SDA setting becomes a lesser priority because we have all these other things that we have to care for first.
- Admin 9: Oftentimes you have to make a personal commitment to Christian education, and sometimes for some parents they cannot imagine squeezing out \$50 a month for Christian education.
- Admin 1: So if we do not have that godly type of attitude or perspective about stewardship, then we see our money as our own. We do not spend money on something that we do not want to spend it on, and one of those things may be a Christian education.

### Reason 2: Home Schooling and Its Effects on SDA Education

- Admin 1: Some parents like to teach their children at home. I had a lot of home-schooling families where I worked before, and parents prefer to teach their children, that is their SDA education. Part of SDA school competition is the home-schooling families, because it does impact on the enrollment of the SDA school.
- Admin 2: Home schooling decreases the enrollment of schools, and the decrease in enrollment causes additional stress to be placed on those families who send their children to school. Those parents have to pay more tuition to make that school operative. The school cannot operate on less funds just because some children do not come. I think, however, there is a time for home schooling and there is a time not for it. . . . My mother felt that growing up in an environment with other children will give us the opportunity to be more effective socially, spiritually, and physically as we grow. There are some occasions where home schooling can be an ideal situation.

We see some definite differences in behaviors, oftentimes at the high-school level, between those who were home schooled and those who attended regular school. . . . They have this particular trait of wandering around, a little bit aimlessly. Often, this behavior is one of the characteristics of the home schooled—not always, but it does occur.

This type of behavior has a lot to do with how that home school was run and what they faced in the coursework. . . . I view home schooling with a mixed feeling, because you can never be sure that it will always be the best thing, but you cannot condemn it, because sometimes it is very, very good for the student.

Admin 3: I have a brother who home schooled his kids all the way through high school. It was not because there was not a school in the area, but they wanted to have control over the curriculum, and what they taught their children. . . . You may only have one or two children, and since you do not have many children, you can have the curriculum completed within a couple of months before the regular school year. The parents just have to focus on their one child. The one thing I question with the home schooling is the social aspect. Some of the kids do not get as much opportunity to learn how to get along with others, to play together, and solve difficulties that they may have together. That is one aspect that I think is lacking in home schooling.

However, a lot of home-schooled children have built a network of families, and they have activities together. They claim that those activities take care of the social issue. Some parents do not like the influences that other children have on others—their home life, their language, or whatever it is that they do not like. To me, that is part of growing up.

Admin 5: We have only one church family that I know who is doing home schooling in my area.

Admin 6: Personally, I think it is a mistake. Why? You can control your tutoring and you can cover a lot of material, but you do not get the diversity as in the classroom, and you do not get the interaction in the activities. When home-schooled children come in contact with a larger group of other children, they do not know how to socially interact. They make enemies instead of friends, and I think if they do not know how to interact it is socially detrimental to a child.

However, we do have a few families here who do home schooling and I think they do a very good job. They find that their children are important to them . . . and some of the parents work from home. One mother is doing a very good job home schooling their children. . . . She is a very wise mother because her children are hyperactive and aggressive. She said that no teacher can handle them right now. . . . There is also the other side of home schooling.

- Admin 7: Although there are not many parents who home school their children in this area, there is a place for it. I think if a parent is able to provide that education for their child, up to a certain point it is good, but I think that the children need the interaction in the school setting. They will excel academically, but socially many times they have difficulty. In other places where I have worked, this is how I have felt, because the kids, who came in the school from home schooling, had difficulty interacting with others.
- Admin 8: Home schooling is a very big issue, but parents' reasons for performing it are sometimes very good. What we take 6 hours to teach our students, if you are in a very small setting, parents can do it in 3. You have lots of time left to go and visit the neighbors, do community service and it could be a good thing. I probably would have wanted to home school my children but it takes a bite out of school enrollment. . . . What I would like to see is more home schooling for the younger children. I worked at a school where they do not teach any formal reading or math until the children were 9 years old. They did gardening and physical activities. The students looked into books; they helped write stories but they did not perform activities like today. At the end of the year, they were working above the third grade level. It did not hurt them to be held back. I think that is the model, and I think we need to do that. If the parents want to home school their children in the younger grades, I think that is closer to Mrs. White's model.
- Admin 9: We have a few parents that do home schooling here. When some of the students come to our school, they are well prepared, and they behave well. In our church, we encourage our home schoolers to participate in our extracurricular activities; for example, when we have our science fair and our Christmas program, we invite them to participate. We get telephone calls from parents who home schooled their children, and are interested in our schools. We do everything to work with the parent and the child when that child is enrolled in our school, in order to get them in their right class. Sometimes they come in and are straggling/trailing a grade. Other times, they may be strong in one area and weak in another area, and the parents are not sure whether they are in the fourth or fifth grade. We work with the students to get them placed correctly.

### **Reason 3: Public Schools Are Better**

- Admin 2: Some parents believe the public schools are better. They would rather have their children in a so-called superior educational environment which they think the public school system has.
- Admin 4: There has been a feeling out there that the public school system

can educate their children just as well as the private school system.

Admin 5: The parents feel that it is cheaper to send their children where they do not have to pay anything. They also feel that our student membership is too small. The public schools have many children, and their child's friends go there, but at our school their child does not have a friend. They also believe that there are more teachers at the public school, and they have a music program. Some others believe that public schools and some other Christian schools have more courses to offer than our church schools, although the parents pay a lot more at the other Christian schools—they pay a higher price. Some parents feel that we do not have enough facilities in the classroom, but in the public schools there are many facilities.

Admin 10: The career people of our church—doctors, lawyers, teachers, and the white collar people—do not send their children to our school. They send them to the public schools, because public schools have music, sports, and extracurricular activities. Playing musical instruments and the business-like manner of the public school's operation all attract them.

Admin 7: There are some reputable public schools. They are called charter schools, and they have their College Prep schools, especially for the older children. SDA parents feel that they do not really need the Adventist setting that much anymore, because the public schools are fine, and the public schools have more extracurricular activities to offer.

Unfortunately, some parents feel that if they send their children to church school that they should be perfect, or that they should not make any mistakes. They think that the public school kids are behaving just as well as and even better than some of the church school kids. I think that many parents believe that it really does not make any difference where the children attend school now.

In our area, parents tend to send their children from our church school to charter schools at the high-school level. At the elementary level, behavior and distance are the dangerous factors, because the elementary public schools here do not have a good reputation in the city. The non-SDA families, who bring their children here at the elementary levels, are delighted and happy once they see the difference in their children's behavior. It is more in the upper grades that they leave us.

Admin 8: Some parents complain that the teachers and the sports program are not as good as public school teachers. The courses we offer are not as academically challenging. We do not offer programs for Special Education, and for the gifted and talented. The parents want their children to be involved in sports. They also complain that our course offerings are too narrow. Here we only offer Spanish 1 and Spanish 2, but in the public

schools the students can choose from Japanese, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Latin. We do offer a smaller range of courses.

If God has given some students the gift of many languages we are really not meeting that student's need, so what do we do, we recommend that they take the languages that we do not offer during the summer at a Community College or that they take these languages through a correspondence school, which is not the best way to learn a foreign language. We do not meet some of their needs. We have students who will excel in mathematics but we have only one math teacher. She cannot teach all the things that are taught at public school. Art, we do not teach that at all, but we have students who are gifted in art . . . but in public schools these art lessons would be free. There are legitimate reasons for parents to consider other options but I think we would do well to recommend that parents supplement the curriculum with outside help.

We ignore the gifted. If Johnny can do his math in 10 minutes, what we do is to give him more problems instead of giving him something totally different and letting him solve them. We do not do much going wider. Now, we are more aware, and we are trying to deal with it, but the public school programs posit these kids and aggressively educate them. They are placed in special programs that meet their academic needs better than we do, and the same happens with kids with challenges. It boils down to what is more important to the parents.

Well, in our small schools you have one science teacher. When I taught in a junior academy, I was the principal, and I taught every freshman and sophomore subject. Here I am quick witted, but I do not know as much about biology as a biology major, but I was teaching biology. I do not know as much about history as a history major, as a math major or as an English major, but in a small school the teachers wear several hats. Even if they wear only a science or a math hat, we expect our teacher to be good in calculus, geometry, and algebra. In public school you would have a geometry teacher, and that's it, an algebra teacher, etc. We have one teacher, so I believe that public school proponents can say the teachers are more qualified. With so many worldly academics, the parents may be right. I think that there are many reasons why parents can choose public schools. It is like you are in your uncle's boat.

In spite of all this opposition you have to ask yourself, "Where do I want my child to be in 10 years? Why did Valuegenesis show us that the child who stays in the church school stays in the church? Whatever reasons we give why we send our children where they are, that's what they would become and that is what we want our children to be. Valuegenesis was not a study of what we wanted to do but a study of what is, and that is a reality, we cannot necessarily say why.

Another issue we have is that we do not have a medical person here. There are children who may be a little diabetic and may quickly go into shock. We do not always have people that are trained on staff to deal



with specific medical problems. I know some children who could not attend our school because of medical reasons. One parent said, "My child is an epileptic and may go into a seizure, and we would feel better if a school nurse was at the school." Some children have fragile physical conditions, and those parents like to know that we have a nurse at the school.

Admin 9: Parents believe that public schools have more to offer, and they can provide the religious upbringing at home. They feel that they can make up the difference in the spiritual area. We had two students here in the past, very fine students, and the parents took them out because they thought that their children needed more enrichment in the music and the art departments, and they could concentrate on religion at home. Some parents like the public schools, because they think that the curriculum is better.

I believe that oftentimes SDA schools do not have all the amenities that public schools can offer in terms of special education. Sometimes there are children who have special needs, but we do not cater to them. The public schools have better athletic programs. Sometimes parents may have a boy in their home that they want to be a part of an athletic team, a music program, or a more developed music program, but we do not cater to them.

Admin 10: Some parents complain that when their children leave the church school and go to the public school, they are academically behind those children who attended only the public school system.

Admin 2: Some parents do not send their children to SDA schools because we do not have as many resources as the public schools. At our secondary school here many different elementary school individuals would come along and say "I just wish that I had some of the resources that you have here." We do share some of these activities and resources with the elementary schools. However, we do not have some of the things that some local college schools have, neither do we have as many things as the public schools at the high-school level, but I have found that we can do an awful lot with the limited things that we have, and God has blessed our activities through those tools that are available to us.

We do not always have to get the most fancy and latest type of equipment in order to give an education. A good education can be given in a very simple manner. We try and get pretty fancy with some of these educational resources, and that is all fine and good, but there is nothing like memorization. There is not anything better than to allow the students to sit down and figure out and study the problem, then solve it. We can do this without all these fancy things that are available to us. It does not take a lot to get a proper education, but if we check the records carefully and find out what kind of test scores come out of the SDA system as related to

the public system, we will find that generally they match very competitively. In fact, the SDA schools would surpass the public school scores and that has to do with the caring attitude of the teacher, the one-on-one relationship, and by and large, I think you will find that students will often respond to a teacher's care. That is the usual type of response that you get from a student, who comes from another SDA environment. Oftentimes, you will get a student to respond to you from a public school situation where the teachers did not really care. I cannot speak for them, I do not know if that is true or false, but in general, I think the care in the public school, in general, is less than the care at the SDA school.

Admin 8: In this society and part of the country, we put our athletes on par with gold. I cannot think of anybody that they are on par with, they are above everybody. I listened to a famous physician, and I cannot think of his name right now, who talked about Michael Jordon, and he said, "Michael Jordon makes millions of dollars and yet, has he found a cure for cancer? Has he found the cure for the common cold? Has he found a way to heat homes more economically? Yet, we almost revere him, we would fight for a piece of his clothing, we would pay an exorbitant amount of money to see him play." Boys that are good at athletics are more popular, so parents push their children to excel in sports. Adventist schools are not competitive in sports and the school is rejected because we do not compete. We have boys who are in fourth and fifth grades here in our school who are saying, "My God, I want to go to a public school so that I can be in the basketball team, the swim team, the football team, the golf team, or the soccer team," and parents promote that idea.

I do not think that parents see the pitfalls of embracing competitive athletics. . . . I do not think parents think about it, and students think the same way. . . . Young people only think about the present enjoyment of sports and the money. . . . Our society is geared around sports—everything is a competition. Our students compete for grades, for class offices, and they are involved in sports. Individual sports do not seem to be a popular team spring [incentive or motivator] for them.

When students participate in sports, they get breaks on their assignments and they get money for college. We have Adventist colleges that also give athletic scholarships, so where is the difference?

### Christian Education Is Not Given First Priority

Admin 1: Some parents do not place Christian education as a first priority. I know some families who will buy a new car, or buy a larger house, make large purchases, and still they do not have money to provide a Christian education for their child.

- Admin 2: There are some who say that money is the problem, but they have to take care of the new boat and the new house before they take care of their children's education. These parents have their priorities out of focus, so some use money as a smoke screen, when in reality it is not money at all. If the parents have to have this and that, then they have to work for it, and then money becomes a very important issue. There is when they begin to find that to educate their children in a SDA setting becomes a lesser priority, because they have all these other things that they have to care for.
- Admin 6: It is a priority issue. If the child is more important to them than a new toy or a new TV, the child's needs become the priority, and education will be considered first. Well, the parents do not see that Christian education is important. They have other places to put their money. It is a new generation whose parents say, "I need this, and I need that, and we cannot spend that amount of money for church school, we need it for other things, and the children can go to school free anyway." When we sent our children to school, we first put money aside for their education, but today the children are placed in the leftover position. So if money is not left over, they do not go to church school, or if other people want them to go, they can pay for them. Parents are no longer too willing to make sacrifices for Christian education.
- Admin 7: It is a matter of priority. Some parents do not realize how important it is for their children to get that Christian foundation. I think that we are dealing with a lot of immigrants, and they are trying to live the American dreams. They place their priorities on material things, and all the gadgets they can give their children. Parents also get pressured from their kids, too, because their children want everything that they see. I think, in an effort to make life better for the children, parents spend their money on material things that are not important, and that is where some of them miss the mark. Sometimes they can do better financially than they are doing. Their children should not have these expensive telephones and all these video games and expensive technical systems. Christian education should have a higher priority than these things. Some of the parents do not even attend programs that are planned for them. Christian education is not a priority for them, and it becomes difficult for them to attend these meetings.
- Admin 8: It is a matter of priority. Some families are too proud to ask for help and then that is a priority issue. Interestingly enough, some of the families in some church schools that are getting tuition support for their children, their children are driving nicer cars than the teacher, the principal, or the business manager, and their children will have cell phones, pagers, and the latest electronic equipment, but their parents cannot afford tuition. So sometimes, it is a matter of priority. Most of the times, it really is. Parents do not value Christian education.

- Admin 1: The parents have to buy into Christian education, and no matter how in the world we provide support, if they do not buy into the need of Christian education, if they do not value it, then there is nothing we can do. Some of it is a mind-set, not valuing Christian education enough to figure out how to meet their other expenses.
- Admin 6: Some parents think it is not important to be in a Christian school. Their children can get a free equal education in the public school and going to church once a week is good enough.

### Spiritual Issues

- Admin 9: There is not a commitment to Christian education [even though they are Seventh-day Adventists] and it has to be a ministry where you meet them [the parent] and talk to them about the values of Christian education.
- Admin 1: Our money is a sacred trust from God. . . . If parents do not have that godly type of attitude about stewardship . . . they would not spend money on something that they do not want to spend it on, and one of those things may be Christian education.
- Admin 4: I believe that the parents do have a spiritual problem. If we go back a number of years and look, we understood the philosophy of education in such a way that I felt great to be a Christian. Education is a major part of Christianity, and Ellen White wrote that education and redemption are one. I would say that it is a spiritual problem, simply because so many parents do not see the difference between public and a Christian education. Christian education is not only a preparation for this life. Many times, I have seen parents placing great emphasis on this life, but our philosophy of education states that it involves our eternity, and all the other mental faculties. I believe that we should go back and be as committed as our forefathers were in the area of Christian education. If we do this, all of our children would be in a Christian school. Yes, the tuition is a problem but I have been here since 1985. The tuition in 1985 was \$35.00 per month and even today our tuition is \$190 per month, so it is not just the tuition.

There were times when the parents said that the kids did not perform well on standardized tests. Well, we had children who scored on the upper percentile. We had students who worked on dual programs, and one of our students who graduated from high school also graduated from a junior college before graduating from high school. So that is not the problem. Many of our students, many of them score very high on the ACT and SAT tests but our student body every year is decreasing. So to me, there is a spiritual problem, and truly we need to go back to what

motivated us in the past. If we start with the spiritual aspect we would find that more parents would send their children to our school.

I would say it is a spiritual problem because even without the gymnasium we can work around that. When I was at "X," we worked around that, we took our students to the YMCA. As much as we would like to have a gymnasium, that is not the problem. Tuition is not the problem. I firmly believe that once we are able to sit down together and have the Holy Spirit to guide us, have us look at our priorities again that would, in essence, be the number one factor in helping us to have all of our children in the school. To me, it is a spiritual problem. Matthew 6:33 says, Seek you first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. I believe that with all my heart.

#### **Reason 4: School Distance and Transportation**

- Admin 1: We only have a few children who travel far distances. It is important for churches that are far out of the way with no available school system to start a church school. It is not possible for parents to travel daily for 2 or 1 1/2 hours, one way to transport their child to school. If there are just a few children from the area, the best thing to do is to start a church school.
- Admin 5: Transportation is not a problem here, because the parents do carpooling. However, we have a family who wants transportation for their child to come to school here next year. They may have transportation problem, but we are already looking to solve that problem. Transportation is not a big issue so far.
- Admin 7: The transportation to and from the school is a problem especially here in the city. The children have to commute. It takes a lot of time, because there is a lot of traffic here, and the people are so spread out all over the area. Some parents bring their children here. We do not provide any transportation. We thought about that, but even if we had a van to go around picking up kids, it would take several hours because of the distances the members live away from the school. We encourage parents to carpool as much as possible.
- Admin 8: There is usually someone who would ask how our children would get to school, but there is somebody who would be always willing to carpool. We have a teacher this year that drives a van and she brings seven of the students, so it is not really a problem for us.
- Admin 9: Transportation is not a problem here, but again if the parents choose to send their children to the public school, the school bus collects them, and brings them back home. They get all the extra things that we do not have and for those parents it is an easier way.

### **Reason 5: The Teacher's Attitude**

Admin 2: There are obviously times when students do not attend a SDA school because of a teacher or teacher's attitude. It happens that parents believe that it is not possible that their child can get or obtain an education under the tutelage of a certain teacher or a set of teachers. Sometimes, it is only one person, because there may be one teacher in 17 or 20 that a parent may not feel comfortable with, but all the rest they are comfortable with. Because of that one person the parents would extract their child from the church school and take the student to a school where things are considerably different—a totally different environment that has no spiritual relationship at all. We have to be very, very careful about those kinds of things, because parents continue to mention the past as they talk about the child's development.

Admin 2: Well, to change a teacher's attitude is a two-way street. It could be very well that the parent is right, and it could be that the parent is wrong. Sometimes the best of teachers can have a bad attitude on certain days and certain periods of time. Some parents say, "Why are you so different now?" Well, something has happened in the home or some situation has caused the change to develop the way it is now. Can you leave the child at our school and work through the problem? It may not be in the best interest to have the child right there and work through the problem. It may be better to have that particular child in another school setting, especially at the high-school age. It may be better that the child be absolutely out of the home and in a boarding academy setting, so that they would not have that interface with their parents on a daily basis.

### **Parents' Attitude Towards Teachers**

Admin 8: In public school, there is a little bit of a bustle between the parents and the teacher but in church school we do not necessarily have that bustle. The teacher goes to church, and the parent goes to the same church. The teacher knows the parents, and recognizes them by their faces. The parents know the teacher and they have the teachers' home phone number, so the parents know the teacher very well. This does not happen in a public school. When there is a conflict, on one hand, they are so familiar that they can pack it up, and fix it. But there is the saying that familiarity breeds contempt. To some extent, if the teacher does have a problem or personality clash which cannot be solved, the younger parents of today are not going to put up with it. They would say, "We had to put up with this kind of attitude when we were going to school, and we are not doing it again," and later they pull the child out of school.

I know that Adventist teachers work very hard, and for the most part they are very dedicated. . . . Our teachers do not have the break that

other teachers have. Our teachers work longer hours than public school teachers and they have more responsibilities. They are living in a fish bowl. If they have a thin line where they wore the wedding ring all through the summer, there are people who would look at that, criticize that, and they are considered as not that good Christian anymore. Parents criticize them about those kinds of things. Adventists teachers are humans. A lot of times they cannot make a mistake. I have in my file a letter where a parent wrote, "A teacher said Johnny had trouble concentrating." The parent was outraged. They pulled their child out and then wrote, "Johnny is in a gifted and talented program. His teacher said that he could concentrate for hours on end. Therefore, your teacher is no good and should be replaced." Our teachers have very little insulation.

Admin 9: We have to convince parents that Christian education is very important, that is, we have to mentor to their child's eternal life, and to their salvation. We have to make Christian education so drastically different that they would believe that the only way to get a Christian education is to come to a Christian school, and that they cannot do it at home and alone. They would not expect that 6 1/2 hours at a public school would not affect their children. I believe that when they see their children begin to change negatively, and if the change exceeds that of the parents' expectation, they will accept that there is a negative change in their children, and then they would come back to the church school. But if they become complacent in their attitude as far as, "Well, this is OK!" they would become relaxed about it, and they would not make the change to Christian education.

### **Reason 6: Family Structures**

Admin 6: I am not worrying so much about the non-Seventh-day Adventists. I am worrying about the people in the church, whose children are not here. We have very few young families here, but we have grandparents here. Their children are not in the church, and their grandchildren are not coming to our school. Grandparents want their grandchildren to come to church school but their children married spouses outside of the church, and their spouses say, "No way! Why should we send our children to church school?" So again, if we do not keep our families whole, and do our best to let them marry spouses within the church then we will not have the children here, because the parents are not together. The Bible speaks about being unequally yoked. This applies also in business and in marriage, and we see the results. When one parent is a Christian and the other is not, it is going to cause trouble. Those children are all mixed up, and to get those children into the school, you probably won't. The churches are falling apart because they are not meeting the members' needs. If they were meeting the family's needs, we would have a good base to build on.

Admin 8: Most of the time our school is a battle ground. Dad may say to Mom, “If you want the child/children in that school, it is fine, but you have to pay for them on your own.” It is an excuse to withhold money. Sometimes it is a battle ground when a divorce is possible. The partners use anything. . . I am new here, but another thing I do as a principal, I make sure that no one is in the black—If Mom has custody, I ensure that Dad knows about the progress of his child, and when there is a program I make sure that both parents are informed and invited. When there is picture taking I send copies to both parents.

Admin 6: The parents have not set a model for their children for the past years—no model. Each generation gets worse and worse and they are not willing to send their children to the school because they have left the church too.

### **Reason 7: Pastoral Issues**

Admin 4: Another stumbling block is the modeling of some of our pastors. Some of our pastors do not send their children to SDA schools so it is difficult for them to promote what they do not support. I think that the more we sit down together and discuss the problems, the more the school would be promoted from the pulpit, and that would also help to increase our enrollment.

Our pastors are in a position to really help to promote Christian education. I believe in their sermons on Sabbaths they need to preach about Christian education, and as we work together—the principals and pastors—I believe that we will be able to reach the parents.

Admin 10: Our organization needs leaders—our school superintendents, our conference officers, and pastors need to get together and plan a strategy that they can use to attract the parents back to the school. I feel that the pastors do not have the passion for the schools that they ought to have—the passion our forefathers had in the past. People tend to idolize the pastor so they listen to people that they respect. They also idolize the conference officers so it makes it difficult for them to listen to us as teachers. . . . The conference officers should work with the pastors, then the pastors in turn work with us and the parents—form a chain.

Admin 7: I think it would have a greater impact on parents if the churches were involved in school’s transportation, and work from the church with the pastor’s assistance. The educational workers of each church can specify central locations from which they can pick up the children to bring them to school. For the school to take that responsibility, it seems impractical. I think what a wonderful thing it would be if the church would take that



initiative and say, “Here is what we can do to help you get your kids to school.”

Admin 4: Start with the home to help these parents become interested in Christian education. I would suggest that we start with our pastor—our ministers. They are in a position to really help to promote Christian education. I believe in our sermons on Sabbaths they need to preach about Christian education. Live out Christian education as we work together—the principals and ministers or pastors. I believe we will be able to reach the parents. Also if we are able to do that, we would have more of our children attending our schools. It takes a joint effort—the church, the home, and the school.

Admin 1: An urgent need for Christian education should be presented from the pulpit. If the pastor is not promoting it then the congregation would not see any value in it. I think it should be presented on a regular basis from the pulpit.

### Summary

The administrators know that the most important reason why more SDA students do not attend our schools is because the parents do not have the money. The tuition increases yearly, and it is very expensive for some parents. Administrators expressed that some parents perceive the public education curriculum as better than our church schools because we lack resources and facilities. Today, some parents do not value Christian education so it is not considered as the primary priority. Administrators also know that our schools do not cater for students with special needs, and some students do not want to attend our schools because we do not offer competitive sports.

Although transportation is not a direct problem, the administrators would like to see the churches become more involved in school affairs by supplying transportation to the students of their churches. Administrators realize that some parents prefer to home school their children. Some of them readily accept them when they return to school, but they mention the struggle they face in finding a correct placement for them. Other

administrators allow home schoolers to participate in certain school activities. They have seen the effects of broken homes and family structures on our schools, and solicit our organization for programs to heal these spiritual conditions. Administrators recognize that the attitudes of some of our teachers cause some parents to withdraw their children from the school.

The administrators have suggested that parents need to be denominationally educated, and the pastors need to support Christian education better. They believe that the decrease in enrollment is also the result of a spiritual problem. Since the pastors do not perform the redemptive portion, the educational portion is failing, because education and redemption are one. Administrators would also like to enjoy a closer relationship with the conference officials, pastors, and parents. They would like to see more parents accepting organizational help. They would like the parents to see unity and interaction displayed among the different levels of administration in order to portray a real Christian model and to lift up Jesus.

## CHAPTER VII

### DISCUSSION

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a summary of findings and is divided into five sections. The first section summarizes the findings from the previous three chapters—chapters 4, 5, and 6. It compares and contrasts themes of the three different groups of participants—the non-home-schooling parents, the home-schooling parents, and the administrators.

Section 2 explains how the findings answer the research question. Section 3 describes suggestions parents and administrators gave for getting more SDA children into SDA schools. Section 4 consists of my suggestions that churches and educators can implement to attract more SDA students to their schools. Section 5 also reviews suggestions for future research in this area.

#### **Themes by Groups**

This section summarizes findings by themes in descending order of their commonality (see Fig. 2 and Tables 7, 8, and 9). I compared and contrasted how each group understood the theme.

Throughout this section I used the literature to explore these responses. The themes are: financial issues, home schooling and its effect on the SDA educational

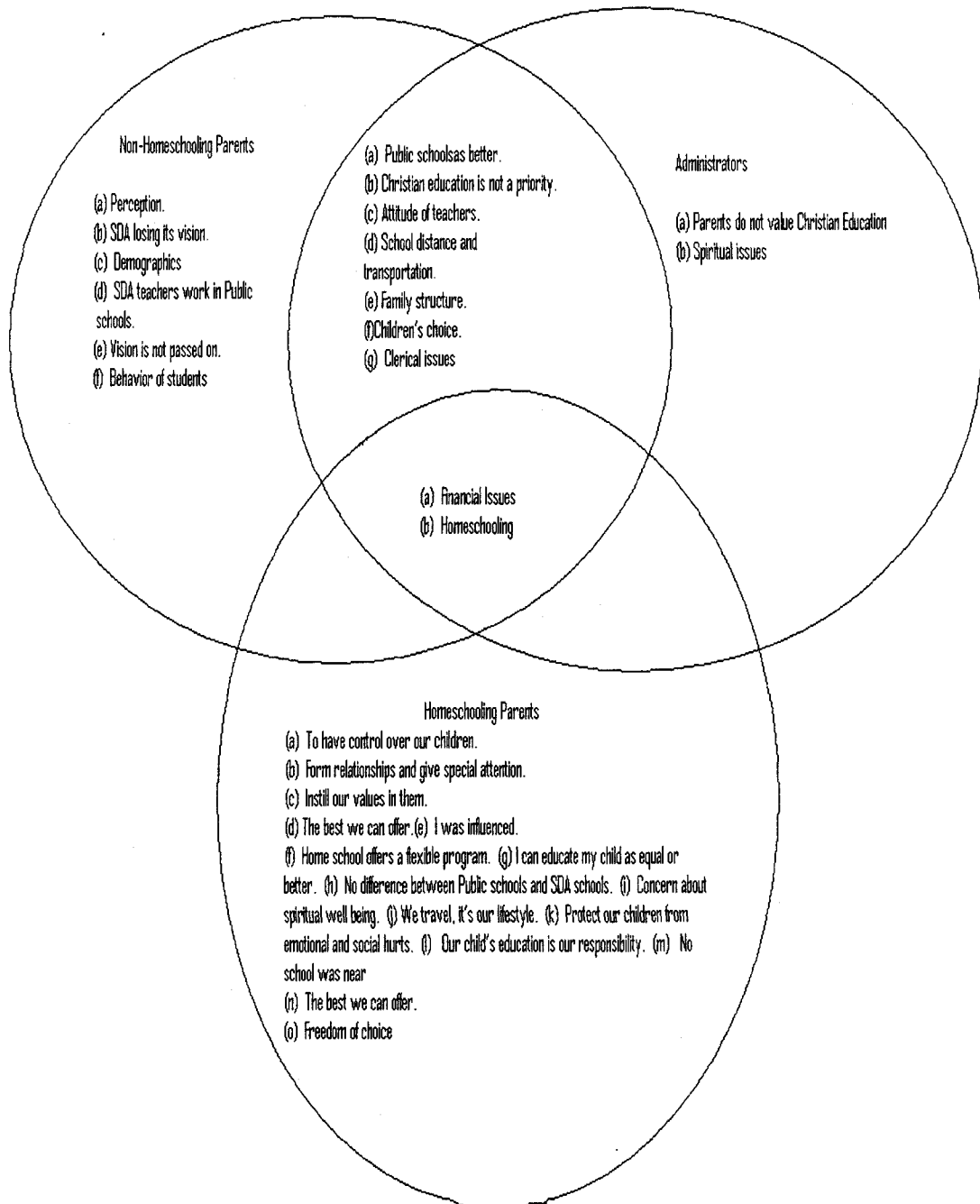


Figure 2. Reported themes by respondent groups.

Table 7

*Findings: Frequency of Themes Reported by Each Group*

Themes	Non-home Schooling	Home- Schooling	Administrators	Total
Financial issues	62	14	15	91
Public schools	27	-	33	60
Home schooling	80	10	24	114
Parents' perception	27	-	-	27
Parents do not value Christian education	-	-	10	10
SDA losing its vision	35	-	-	35
Christian education is not a priority	5	-	17	22
Mixed school population	22	-	-	22
SDA teachers work in public schools	14	-	-	14
Attitude of teachers	14	-	6	20
Distance and transportation	13	-	8	21
School's vision is not passed on	11	-	-	11
Family structure	10	-	3	13
Children's choice	3	-	2	5
Behavior of students	3	-	-	3
Pastoral issues	4	-	1	5
Parents have spiritual problems	-	-	10	10

Table 8

*Number of Respondents by Groups Mentioning Themes*

Themes	Non-Home Schooling		Home Schooling		Admin- istrators		Total No.	Total %
	No. ( <i>N</i> = 33)	%	No. ( <i>N</i> = 10)	%	No. ( <i>N</i> = 10)	%	( <i>N</i> = 53)	
Financial issues	33	100	7	70	10	100	50	94
Public schools	20	61	-	-	8	80	28	53
Home schooling	16	48	10	100	8	80	34	64
Parents' perception	14	42	-	-	-	-	14	26
Parents do not value Christian education	-	-	-	-	5	50	5	9
SDA losing its vision	14	42	-	-	-	-	14	26
Christian education is not a priority	5	15	-	-	5	50	10	19
Mixed school population	6	18	-	-	-	-	6	11
SDA teachers work in public schools	7	21	-	-	-	-	7	13
Attitude of teachers	7	21	-	-	4	40	11	21
Distance and transportation	6	18	-	-	5	50	11	21
School's vision is not passed on	5	15	-	-	-	-	5	9
Family structure	2	6	-	-	2	20	4	8
Children's choice	2	6	-	-	2	20	4	8
Behavior of students	2	6	-	-	-	-	2	4
Pastoral issues	4	12	-	-	1	10	5	9
Parents have spiritual problems	-	-	-	-	4	40	4	8

Table 9

*Home-Schooling Respondents' Frequency of Themes and Percentages*

Themes	Total No. of Counts	No. of Persons Mentioning Responses	Total % Mentioning Responses
Control over children	51	10	100
Relationship and special attention	23	10	100
Instill values in children	18	6	60
The best we can offer	6	6	60
I was influenced	9	5	50
Home schooling offers a flexible program	15	4	40
I can educate my child better or equal	9	3	30
No difference between Christian education and public schools	17	3	30
Concerns about spiritual well-being	5	3	30
We travel—It's our lifestyle	2	2	20
Protect from emotional and social harms	3	2	20
No church was near	1	1	10
Educating is our responsibility	1	1	10
Freedom of choice	10	2	20

system, public school as better, distance and transportation, attitude of teachers, mixed school population, and pastoral issues.

### Financial Issues

This section summarizes findings on financial issues as reasons why SDA parents do not send their children to SDA schools. Financial issues include: tuition, general educational costs, limited family funds for schooling, financial challenges of large or single parents, and financial aid.

One hundred percent of the administrators, 100% of non-home-schooling parents, and 70% of the home-schooling parents agree that the financial issues are a significant concern (see Table 8). Both the administrators and non-home-schooling parents mentioned financial issues as their main reason, whereas home-schooling parents cited financial issues as their third most important reason. This theme is one of two themes that all the groups discussed. Beyond this commonality on financial issues, there were differences in what each group emphasized. Each group stated slightly different rationales for why the financial issues theme was the main factor.

The non-home-schooling group repeatedly noted the expression that tuition was the main barrier for going to SDA schools. The non-home-schooling parents, for example, those with low income, mentioned that they did not earn enough money; therefore, they could not afford to send their children to SDA schools. This finding matched the research by Catsouphe et al. (2006). A single parent expressed that the tuition cost was too large for her to keep a balanced budget in the household. It was not possible to be faithful to God by returning the tithes and offerings, pay extra offerings when there was an extra request from the pulpit, keep the bills up to date, and still pay



tuition. This also matched what the literature said about school funding by Cornia & Danziger, 1997. Another parent, who was a graduate student, disclosed that the family survived on a very tight budget. They were supporting themselves through graduate school and had no extra money for the children's SDA education. This finding also was supported by the literature of Cornia and Danziger, 1997. Schneider and Coleman (1993) noted that the wages of some other families were too high to be eligible for financial aid, but too low to afford tuition. They were willing to send their children to a SDA school, but were not financially able to do so.

Parents prioritized items differently, and where there is a choice between free versus payments for almost similar products, parents often chose the free products. For parents with large families, the cost of tuition for all of their children was too much. Some other families had to make a choice among food, clothing, and shelter, or tuition. This point regarding family's cost was made by Coons and Sugarman (1979). Often tuition was the last bill on the parents' list, and was one bill likely to be omitted in financial crises. For these parents with difficult financial issues, not only was the public school tuition free, but it offered important free services—free special education, free breakfast and lunch, free after-school care, and free transportation. This was where financial issues may also connect to public school quality issues discussed later.

Home-schooling parents also mentioned their awareness that non-home-schooling parents were stating finances as their reason for their children's non-attendance at SDA schools. Home-schooling parents called this "the pressure of the world" and linked it to the rising cost of living. One home-schooling parent agreed with this answer and replied, "It is a price thing. When an academy is charging about \$7,000 a year for tuition that is a

big chunk of change. I do not think that many parents can afford that.”

The administrators’ group agreed with the non-home-schooling parents group on two main issues – (a) some parents did not have the money and could not afford to pay tuition, and (b) the tuition was expensive and cost too much. Some of the administrators admitted that besides paying the tuition, the SDA school parents paid a lot of added fees, “so it got to be a very costly fact to have kids in our church school.” Administrators emphasized that if the non-home-schooling parents were interested to have their children at school they could apply for financial aid. They also stressed that those who valued Christian education and made it their first priority figured out ways to find money to pay for their children’s education.

Several administrators said that money became an issue for parents primarily because many parents had other priorities. Some administrators stated that lack of support for spiritual issues was an underlying problem for non-home-schooling parents’ decisions, and probably prevented them from making the sacrifice needed to have their children in SDA schools. Some administrators noted that today’s parents preferred to spend their money on material things (a new car, a house, etc.) rather than on Christian education.

One administrator noticed that SDA parents were no longer revealing their financial situation to anyone. These parents seem to prefer preferred to remain confidential about their finance, and send their children to public schools. Furthermore, one administrator disclosed that the acceptance of SDA financial aid carried with it both a stigma and more financial disclosures. Parents might have felt exposed in this process. Some school administrators reported that there were safeguards which shielded even

principals from knowing who received assistance, but the stigma was still quite strong.

Various situations in some homes seemed to make tuition too expensive. For example, for non-home-schooling university parents, there was no money available because the funds were being spent on the parents' education. Another group consisted of single parents who had only one income. Parents of large families cannot afford tuition costs for all of their members. Some administrators acknowledged those issues, but some of them stressed that the parents did not value SDA education and did not have their priorities in the correct order, plus these parents could have applied for financial aid. The home-schooling parents also cited that the price of tuition and the pressures to buy more material items could be preventing more non-home-schooling parents from sending their children to SDA schools.

### Home Schooling

This section summarizes findings related to home schooling as reasons why SDA parents do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools. One hundred percent of home-schooling parents, 80% of administrators, and 48% of non-home-schooling parents stated this issue as a reason why some SDA parents did not send their children to SDA schools. Overall, 64% of respondents mentioned this issue, making it the second most important reason. This was the most important reason given by home-schooling parents, the second most important reason for administrators, and the third most important reason given by the non-home-schooling parents. All groups seemed to acknowledge that home-schooling parents "preferred to home school their children [because] the home was the most powerful educational force" (White, 1952). The non-home-schooling parents' group believed that home schooling had its place if it

was done for the correct reason. They knew that home-schooling parents could impress incredible things on their young children's minds. Since their parents were the teachers, they could teach their children their values, their beliefs, and their customs. Due to the small teacher/pupil ratio, home-schooling children would understand more concepts in less time than the regular school children. These opportunities promised to help them to excel academically.

Mayberry et al. (1995) reported that 98% of home schooling was done by Caucasians (p. 30). Sadly, a few of the non-home-schooling parents mentioned that home schooling appeared to be couched in racism.

The non-home-schooling parents' group agreed with Mayberry et al. (1995) that home-schooling parents formed a network relationship in order to help each other. These home-schooling parents felt that they could do a better job educating their children than the teachers at the formal schools. They were protecting their children from emotional and social hurts, but some non-home-schooling parents declared that home-schooled children were socially disadvantaged. The non-home-schooling parents group also knew that home schooling could "become quite a challenge to the home-schooling parents, but it was doable." All these reasons led home-schooling SDA parents away from SDA schools. Home schooling was a vibrant reason for not attending SDA schools.

Home-schooling parents, as cited in Mayberry et al. (1995), and Klicka (1995), were very concerned about the quality of their children's education, and the moral values that were being instilled in them. One parent expressed their family frustration with limited options (a) "the SDA educational system which was charging an exorbitant amount of money to meet their school bill," and (b) "of putting their children in a public

school where they were bombarded by so many things.” That left them with only one other option: teach their children at home. Other home-schooling parents traveled a lot and integrated the traveling experiences into their children’s education. Still others practiced home schooling because they were far from a church school.

Some of the home-schooling parents expressed concerns with the demeanor of SDA students when they were in and out of school. They mentioned that the influences of some children from “some of the SDA homes were affecting other kids.” Another home-schooling parent mentioned that the school standards were lowered because principals were not getting the support from parents as before.

Some of the home-schooling families have made a commitment to live on one salary. If their children were to go to a regular church school, then the spouses would have to work to pay the school fees. They felt that the spouse, who remained at home and taught the children was fulfilling their first priority. They emphasized that the amount of money they would have to pay for all of their children for 1 month’s tuition at a regular school could pay for the cost of the entire home-schooling programs for 1 year.

Home-schooling parents, according to Mayberry et al. (1995), felt that school teachers’ behavior has not changed much from their day, because they are seeing education through “the lens of their prior experiences” (p. 47). These home-schooling parents were protecting their children from similar school experiences. Home-schooling parents had concerns about the large percentage of non-SDA students who attended SDA schools in order for the school to obtain its operating income. Like Hughes, Wikeley, and Nash (1994) these concerns played an important role in the choice of schools.

Home-schooling parents with children who have learning disabilities or health

problems preferred to provide them with the needed help, especially if the parents had the same ailment as the child. Some of the home-schooling parents wanted their children to “remain together as a family group and not to be fragmented into classes as in school.” Others did not like the unwise system of confining “children rigidly to grades” (White, 1943, p. 177). The home-schooling parents’ group cited that the home-schooling parents could do “a better than or a job equal as” that of school teachers.

The administrators’ group, like the non-home-schooling parents’ group, recognized that generally home schooling: (a) had its advantages and disadvantages, (b) had its place when it was done for the correct reason, (c) students excelled academically, (d) parents did a good job, (e) parents had built a network of families, but (f) students did not know how to interact socially among a crowd. The administrators also noted additional reasons for home schooling: Parents had control over the influences that could affect their children’s behavior, the curriculum, and the activities that their children learned, but that some home schoolers when they returned to a formal school before going to college tended to wander “aimlessly around the class.” Furthermore, they noted that the home-schooled students, because they were advanced in some subjects and behind in others, needed the teachers to work with them in order to place them correctly in a class; but the parents were exercising their right to choose how their children were educated and by whom. Klicka (1995) also mentioned these reasons in his article.

Another administrator stated that home schooling was often not permanent, so there was a need for a link between the church school and the home-schooling parents. There should not be a barrier between these two groups. Some administrators stated that home schooling was the closest model to Mrs. White’s educational counsel, and it was

easier to home school today due to the use of technology. The home-schooling parents were holding firm to the counsels of White (1952), and were not yielding their children's responsibilities to other teachers. They realized that their children's education had eternal consequences.

The home-schooling parents' group agreed with the administrators' group that home schooling decreased the enrollment of SDA schools and the expected income. In addition, according to one respondent, it removed "the most caring families from the school system and altered the social atmosphere of the school." As Randall (1994, p. 54) suggested, it appears that SDA schools were now gaining more non-SDA student enrollment and losing White enrollment to home schooling.

The administrators reported that the effect on enrollment due to home schooling "caused additional stress to be placed on those families who sent their children to SDA schools." These parents had to pay more tuition to make the school operative because, as the enrollment decreased, it lowered the school's income. Administrators agreed with the non-home-schooling parents' comments that home schooling weakened the social structure of the school and robbed it of the most caring parents. Pearson (1993, p. 105) also found this to be true, noting that home schooling did remove very good parents from many schools.

In conclusion, home-schooling parents wanted to "teach their children themselves—that is their SDA education," monitor their children's spiritual growth, and "form a life-long relationship with them and their immediate family." These parents had many reasons to do home schooling and these reasons kept them from sending their children to SDA schools.

### Public Schools

This section summarizes findings when public school quality was given as a reason why some SDA parents do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools. Eighty percent of the administrators stated that some parents articulated a preference for public schools, and 61% of the non-home-schooling parents also expressed that the public schools were better. Since public schools were not an option for home-schooling parents, they were not mentioned as a theme. The administrators and non-home-schooling parents cited this theme as the third most important reason why SDA parents do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools.

The non-home-schooling parents emphasized public schools were better because: (a) they thought or perceived so, (b) “in the public school the education was free,” (c) public schools “had more money, better teachers, and more facilities,” (d) they “offered their pupils more courses and a lot of different classes too,” (e) in public schools, “the teachers were more willing to stay after school to help the slower kids,” (f) the teachers “really took better care of their children than those that are in the church school,” (g) “the teachers at the public schools were more honest than those at our SDA schools, because at SDA schools the amount of care given to a child depended on his or her SDA genealogy,” (h) “the SDA schools did not provide for students with special needs,” (i) SDA schools did not have state accreditation, (j) “the students, who came from SDA schools, had to take extra courses when they went to public schools to bring their work up to par,” and (k) the public schools offered competitive sports. Today, some parents were encouraging their children “to pursue competitive sports due to the benefits, the



popularity, fame, and money that athletes now receive.” SDA schools did not compete in sports.

The administrators’ group confirmed some of the responses that the non-home-schooling parents’ group made about the superiority of the public schools. They admitted that some SDA schools lacked resources and facilities. However, they were confident that a caring and effective teacher was more valuable to students than lots of facilities, money, and resources. Good, caring, pupil-teacher relationships were resources needed for learning. They also admitted that at some SDA schools there were no medical personnel on staff, and so parents with children with special health problems could not attend our schools. Special education was an additional area of weakness in SDA schools.

One administrator stated that parents believed that public schools had more to offer, so they sent their children to public school. They would “provide the religious upbringing at home and make up the difference in the spiritual area because the best teachers were in the public schools.” The popularity of sports and sport clubs in public schools was also mentioned as a reason but was not as often cited.

Some administrators labeled the parents’ inability to discern the difference between SDA and public education as a sign of poor spiritual discernment. However, some of these administrators did admit that some SDA schools were not much better than public schools and were only schools that had the Bible classes thrown in. Some wanted SDA schools to be unique, different from the world, stand for something, and give that definite message by integrating faith and learning. Some administrators were able to sympathize with those who felt SDA schools had lost these distinctive features.

### **Parents' Perceptions of Public Schools**

This section is part of the previous discussion on public school quality. It, however, addresses parents' perception of public schools. Forty-two percent of the non-home-schooling parents' group mentioned that public schools were better. One non-home-schooling parent remarked that "SDA parents seemed to think that SDA education was inferior, because the building was small, because the idea was new to them, because it was ours, it could not be as good as what was out there," or "because it was Adventist, it was not as good," therefore, this view explained why some were not sending their children to our schools. Some parents thought "that the public schools had more money and better teachers."

One respondent suggested that this perception may have been strengthened in one church because pastors and middle economic class Seventh-day Adventists also did not send their children to the local SDA school. That respondent also noted that these high-ranking men also occupied the high church offices, thus, their influences impacted the church. Other families tended to follow the examples of these leaders, pastors, and church officers.

Some other non-home-schooling parents claimed that they were following "the example of Jesus who mingled with all types of people." Some other non-home-schooling parents emphasized that there "were Christian teachers in public schools and they were very good teachers."

Fifty percent of administrators stressed the fact that SDA parents were not valuing Christian education and that maybe they did not hear sermons about the importance of Christian education from the pulpit on Sabbaths. This probably led them to value public

schools instead of SDA Christian education. Some of these administrators thought that the pastors needed to motivate the parents to send their children to SDA schools and that would lessen the emphasis on public schools.

### **SDA Schools Are Losing Their Vision and No Difference Between SDA and Public Schools**

Forty-two percent of the non-home-schooling parents felt that SDA schools were losing their vision. Thirty percent of home-schooling parents mentioned that there was no “differences between SDA schools and the public schools.” Both of these areas suggest weakening valuing of SDA schools as distinct from other schools. Some non-home-schooling parents expressed that “our schools wanted to be like other schools” seeking for greatness, and they even wanted to “participate in competitive sports.” The non-home-schooling parents believed that our schools were “losing their identity” and were “like horses wearing blinds.” They have requested that our schools be different, and the teachers to be more “fair, caring, and mature.” This lack of difference emerged as a moderate theme of why some SDA parents did not want to or see the need to participate in SDA education.

### **Parents Are Losing the Vision for SDA Schools**

Fifteen percent of the non-home-schooling parents’ group complained that the younger parents had not caught a vision for SDA education. They seem to suggest that SDA vision was being lost because these younger parents were too busy pursuing the American dream. They claimed that young people may have had no brand loyalty to their parents’ beliefs, because their parents may have lived a double standard before them. As SDA schools were criticized, a strong vision of SDA education waned. As teachers

criticized parents and parents criticized teachers, the children lost the sense of an SDA vision. The younger generation did not think quality was at our schools, so their children attended other schools.

### **SDA Teachers Work in the Public School System**

Twenty-one percent of non-home-schooling parents cited that this younger generation of SDA parents claimed that it was safer now to send their children to public schools, because there were many “SDA teachers, who are working in the public schools.” These teachers might be “the children’s parents or close relatives.”

The non-home-schooling parents commented that the presence of SDA teachers in a class would “remove such traits as unfairness, the use of obscene languages, etc., from the class room.” Other non-home-schooling parents claimed that these SDA teachers “were mothers to the SDA children in public schools.”

The non-home schooling parents were also aware that the teachers in public schools earned more money than those who worked with our SDA organization. Their workload was less than SDA teachers, so some parents thought that the best teachers were in public schools. This topic about SDA teachers in public school teaching may be a result of a higher percent of respondents coming from a community high in SDA membership. Other parts of the region or country may not have such high concentration of SDA teachers in public schools, and this may not be as key an issue elsewhere.

### **School Distance and Transportation**

This section summarizes findings on school distance and transportation as reasons why SDA parents do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools.

Fifty percent of the administrators and 18% of the non-home-schooling parents responded to this theme. Non-home-schooling parents cited that some SDA schools, especially the academies, are located too far away from their residences. When parents sent their children far away from them they tended to worry unnecessarily about their children's safety. Many parents' employers were not flexible and did not grant them time to get their children after school dismissed.

Some non-home-schooling parents noted that the time to bring their children to school was infringing on the parents' working time. Non-home-schooling parents requested that SDA schools provide before- and aftercare services so that this problem could be solved. It appeared that many of the SDA schools did not offer these services, and that some of these parents may have sent their children to public or other Christian schools that were closer to their workplaces and provided such services. Some non-home-schooling parents wondered why the counsel of Ellen White, concerning the erection of school buildings near families, was not followed. Other non-home-schooling parents pointed out that free transportation was provided for public school students. These parents stated they understood why transportation difficulties would be a reason for not utilizing SDA schools.

The administrators did cite this as an issue but did not think that transportation posed an insurmountable problem. They were encouraging all the interested parents to carpool. They were also concerned that some parents had chosen to live too far from the school and were scattered in many directions. Some administrators felt it was not feasible for the school to operate a school bus, but they believed the churches could take responsibility to organize transportation for children. Home-schooling parents were not

affected by transportation or the location of the school building.

#### Attitude of Teachers

About 20% of non-home-schooling parents stated that some SDA school teachers' attitude towards their children made them very uncomfortable, and some had removed their children from SDA schools for that reason. They noted that some teachers' reactions showed prejudice and abuse. Some non-home-schooling parents wanted the teachers to love their children so that their actions to them could be a medium through which other members of their household would be drawn to Christ. Some felt that a few SDA teachers had failed to do this. Some parents mentioned they had discussed with the principals the conflicts that occurred between teachers and their children, but were not satisfied with the manner in which the conflicts were resolved. These parents finally withdrew their children from the SDA school. Some parents remembered their own miserable treatments under SDA teachers' care, and they did not want their children to experience similar trauma. It was noted that some other teachers bore grudges against certain families and that may affect SDA school attendance..

Forty percent of administrators also noted the issue of teacher's attitude as a reason for some SDA withdrawal from SDA schools. It was felt that when one parent withdrew his or her child, it could start a chain reaction of withdrawal of students from other parents. Some researchers, such as Kotler and Fox (1985), noted this issue as a cause of enrollment changes. Administrators were fearful that withdrawals caused by teachers' attitude could damage the image of the school, because parents continually mentioned the past occurrences when they spoke with others about their child's development. Administrators described SDA teachers' life as living in a "fish bowl."

They realized that SDA teachers had to attend the same church, and the parents have their phone numbers. These administrators noted that teachers were frequently criticized for every minute mistake. Home-schooling parents did not mention these drawbacks.

### Diverse School Population and Family Structure

#### **Diverse School Population**

This section summarizes findings related to socioeconomic and racial composition of schools and family structure as they relate to reasons on why SDA parents do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools. Eighteen percent of non-home-schooling parents' group mentioned changes in the school's population, especially multi-culturalism, as a reason for some SDA parents not sending their children to SDA schools. Migration and immigration were noted by a few parents. They noted that each family carried with it their values, culture, customs, and religious beliefs. As the families relocated, their children entered different schools and churches. The children usually formed themselves into peer groups. Parents appeared to suggest that this process could lead to a lot of diverse grouping in schools. Each group had differences.

Some non-home-schooling parents mentioned changes in school population have "damaged the values, the social culture and academic standards of SDA schools." They observed that the minority groups, which were "rapidly increasing in this country," were not economically strong. They had different cultural backgrounds, and the former parental approaches that were upheld in schools were no longer observed. Some non-home-schooling parents expressed that older parents were uncomfortable with our school population, because before 1960, Seventh-day Adventists "had operated segregated schools." When desegregation laws were enforced, the western Caucasians "were very

troubled about mixed school population.” These changes in school socioeconomic and cultural processes may account for some parents’ decision not to send their children to SDA schools. This may be especially true for SDA church schools “in city areas.”

### **Family Structure**

Six percent of non-home-schooling parents and 20% administrators reported that family structures affected SDA schools’ decision. The non-home-schooling parents’ group expressed that different kinds of homes do affect SDA school attendance. For example, divorced parents may have trouble agreeing about where the child or children must attend school. This may lead them to go to public schools. Catsouphes et al. (2006), stressed separated and single-parent family structures affected the finance which in turn influenced their final decision to go to the public schools. One parent also suggested that when both parents needed to work, the added stress may have “contributed to the breakdown of the family, since most children were left unsupervised after school dismissed.”

The non-home-schooling parents’ group also expressed concern about family discipline issues. This may have led to children living in difficult situations. Some children “were coming from drug-addicted families, others had parents in jail,” and because of working schedules, others did not see their parents until the weekends. All this added stress may account for changes in SDA school attendance

Some administrators stated that the churches “were not meeting the families’ needs.” They felt that some parents were no longer committed to each other, and “the families were disintegrating.” The “spouses were unequally yoked in marriage and business” and their children were not permitted to attend SDA schools even if their



grandparents wanted them to attend. Administrators claimed that the parents “were not a model to their children.” Some parents were drinking, eating unhealthily, attended dances and parties, and lived immoral lives in their children’s presence. This made them less appreciative of SDA schools.

### Pastoral Issues

This section summarizes findings on pastoral issues as reasons why SDA parents do not send their children to SDA elementary and secondary schools. Ten percent of administrators and non-home-schooling parents discussed this theme.

Some non-home-schooling parents remarked that some pastors were not good models to their church members. They commented that some of these pastors did not send their children to SDA schools. Some non-home-schooling parents reported that the church school was not promoted by some pastors on Sabbaths and school children were not allowed to participate in church programs during the Sabbath. Some school announcements were not included in the bulletins and they believed that pastors should be visible in church schools.

Administrators declared that some pastors did not know how they could greatly help in promoting the school. Some administrators were imploring that the pastors unite with them and plan for the saving of the boys’ and girls’ souls. Concerns about the role of pastors in support of SDA schools was mentioned by non-home-schooling parents and administrators, however , this accounted for only a minor number of individual and responses.

Although the issue of parental support for SDA education was mentioned only a minor number of times, the issue may be of significant importance to SDA schooling.

We cannot tell from this study how much this may be influencing parents' decisions. Furthermore, although most the mentions of this issue were about the negative influence of pastoral support for SDA education, it could be that many parents' experience a positive influence from pastors when choosing to send their children to SDA schools. I only secured responses related to those who do not send their children to SDA schools.

Because pastors and church leaders carry such great influence on SDA members decisions, this may be a very significant reason although not evident by frequency counts. More research on this potentially crucial point is needed.

### **Answers to Research Question**

This section reviews how the responses answer the research question: What are the reasons parents give for sending their child or children to SDA elementary or secondary schools. According to the findings there were several reasons that were given: financial issues, home schooling, public schools as better, school distance and transportation, demographics, family structure, attitude of teachers, and pastoral issues.

1. Financial issues were the greatest factor discussed by participants. Most non-home-schooling single parents and parents of large families were mentioned as specifically influenced in their decision by this factor. Many other explanations were provided for why cost prohibited participation.

2. Home schooling was the next greatest challenge to the SDA educational system. Home-schooling parents wanted to have control over their children, to be their mentors, choose their children's activities, monitor those who could influence their children, and form close relationships with their children. These parents appear to be concerned also about the standards and values of the SDA schools., and as such were not

sending their children to SDA schools.

3. The quality of public schools was also a reason cited as why SDA parents did not send their children to SDA schools. There are many different explanation surrounding this issue as reviewed earlier including issue of better facilities, more resources, more and better teachers, and less issues of multicultural conflict. Some also mentioned that public schools offered varied and free extracurricular activities. They also noted the opportunities to obtain free lunches, breakfasts, afternoon snacks, free transportation to and from school, free textbooks, join different sports clubs, and gain scholarships to attend colleges. Some public schools even had good SDA teachers. Public schools had nurses on staff, and catered to children with different learning needs.

4. Another reason that non-home-schooling parents gave for not sending their children to SDA schools was the distance from and lack of transportation to SDA schools. Some parents' employment made it difficult to transport and collect their children from school, and some SDA schools did not provide after- or before-school services like public schools. Therefore, parents who sent their children to SDA schools had to carpool if they could not take them to school.

5. Another reason given was that some SDA teachers fostered poor attitudes and caused parents to be dissatisfied with the SDA schools. These dissatisfied parents could withdrew their children from the school, and start a chain reaction of negative response to SDA school. The image of the school could be affected and become a reason against SDA school.

6. School population also affected our schools, Increase conflict related to socioeconomic and cultural changes was another reason given. Some Whites may not

send their children where there are many minority or foreign children and the minority may prefer to send their children to schools with more minority children. The teaching methods of the school may be also challenged with diverse changes in a mixed school population and create reasons for non-attendance..

7. Family structure also linked to issues of limited school enrollment. Single parents or parents of large families had difficulty affording tuition. Divorced parents also may have had disagreements about sending their children to SDA schools, and a non-SDA spouse could oppose the decision of sending his or her children to SDA schools. Parents of disintegrating and hurting families may also have a challenge in sending their children to SDA schools.

8. The role of church leaders was also a reason given by some individuals. Leaders who send their children to public schools weaken members resolution to go to SDA schools. Some leaders did not promote Christian education at church, give children nor teachers opportunity to promote Christian education. Other parents may not know enough about SDA educational system to make inferred decisions.

### **Recommendations for Administrative Actions**

In this section I provide recommendations for administrators on how to attract more SDA children to our schools. These recommendations arose from this study and promised to help SDA administrators make better plans to attract SDA children to their schools.

#### **A Call for Unity**

From the research, administrators and parents seemed to suggest the need for a

stronger emphasis on SDA education among SDA leaders. I recommend that the superintendents meet and explain their visions and objectives for the schools' improvement. Each superintendent should meet with all their ministers, school teachers, and school board members and parents to discuss the: (a) school problems, (b) enrollment improvement plans, and (c) create shared vision and goals. With everyone working towards the goal, the ministers would work to keep the commitments ever before their congregations and provide time to the school principal for educational promotion. These activities would help to motivate other parents about SDA Christian education.

Principals and ministers would then educate church members about the value of Christian education, the SDA purpose for living on this earth, and the importance of developing the character of God. The vision for SDA education would include developing simple and interesting courses for parents on issues like money management, living a happy family life, etc. These would be used to bolster numbers and involvement in school activities.

### Spiritual Values and Standards

From this research it was clear that strong SDA spiritual values and standards were needed in schools. SDA teachers needed to integrate faith and learning in every school activity, and encourage the students to represent Christ in their speech—verbal and non-verbal, actions, and dress, especially when they meet out of school in groups with their non-SDA peers. This could be done by helping teachers to model good Christian behavior based on a lively and daily relationship with Jesus.

### Distance and Transportation

Church members seemed to want help transporting their children to school or to have their own SDA school in their community so that they could participate in the training of their children. Maybe churches need to start a school traveling ministry to assist parents in this process. In some communities where there were no SDA schools, other creative solutions are needed.

### Attitude of Teacher

From the research, the attitudes of SDA teachers seemed to have a strong influence on SDA parents' decision. These teachers should be given encouraging readings to improve their attitude. I would encourage all teachers to read the book entitled *Teach by Will* (1963) and commit to practice mercy and justice to create harmony.

### Family Structure

From the research, school enrollment was also influenced by family structures. Churches could help SDA families emphasize and instill in students the importance of working and living together as a loving family. Attention to strengthening family ties, regardless of the type of family, would improve a sense of responsibility with God's plan of redemption available in SDA churches and schools. Attention to the principles in *The Adventist Home* (White, 1952) would foster love and support.

Churches could hold family seminars as part of their educational courses and counseling sessions for the youth, stressing that education and redemption are one. They could also provide big brothers and sisters for SDA children and thus draw these children

closer to SDA schools and churches.

#### Pastoral Issues

The findings indicated that congregations look to pastors for a model of SDA school support. It is advisable that the conference, when they are relocating ministers, take into consideration the influence these pastors will have on their church family members.

Church officials can encourage their ministers to be visible in the schools, promote the schools, and keep the school activities before the parents.

#### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In this section, recommendations are made for further research about understanding SDA parents' reasons for not sending their children to SDA schools. This study was isolated to a small section of the USA. Therefore, more research is needed in other geographical areas. Also this study did not examine college-level participation issues. Research can be done on that level. This study did not include children and youth. Understanding their reasons would be helpful. Non-Seventh-day Adventist parents and children who utilize SDA schools may help us understand more positive reasons for attendance in SDA schools. Beyond these more obvious areas of study, there are four major suggestions I would recommend for future study.

The first area for future research would be on the role of home schooling in influencing SDA parents' support for and participation in SDA schools. Toch et al. (1991) stated that home schooling was a fast-growing movement in American education, and Klicka (1995) reported that about 1 million students were being home schooled and

the number was increasing. This study showed that home schooling presently is affecting SDA enrollment in SDA schools. A concern exists that as home-schooling parents remove their children from SDA schools the schools are losing a very important group of supporters of SDA beliefs. This could be weakening SDA schools. Further research is needed on the role of home schooling influencing overall SDA support for SDA schools.

Furthermore, more study can be done on how SDA schools could involve SDA home-schooling parents more in their activities.

The second area that needs more research relates to finances. While the issue was acknowledged by all groups as very significant in influencing parents' decisions, there were differences in interpreting the exact influences of finances. More is needed to understand this sensitive topic of funding SDA schooling. For example, if SDA parents had more training on managing their resources, would SDA schools see more enrollments from these SDA parents? Are there new ways of funding SDA education in some schools that make finances less of an issue for SDA parents? A lot more information is needed on the role of finances in SDA choice of schooling. More research is needed on how different churches financially support their schools.

The last two areas for further research would be to examine the influence of sports and diversity on SDA parents' choices. Due to our religious beliefs, SDA schools do not participate in highly competitive sports. Sports may be influencing some parents' choice.

Finally, concerns about diversity may influence some parents' choice of schools. Schmitt (2001) stated that the classrooms are more ethnically and racially mixed today when the statistics are compared to those 30 years ago. Some parents may want more



homogeneous classrooms for their children. Some may want more diverse classrooms. Either way, more research is needed concerning SDA parent choice regarding the diversity issue. According to many SDA parents and church believers, they feel we are living in the last days of earth's history when people would be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. As these SDAs find ways to keep alive this belief, they will also need to work to keep alive support for SDA education. Hopefully, this study has done this.

## APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

LETTERS

## RESEARCH PROTOCOL

- Researcher:** Irma C. LaBorde
- Research Title:** Reasons SDA Parents Give Why They Do Not Send Their Children to SDA Schools
- Advisor:** Dr. Duane Covrig
- Department** School of Education, Administration and Leadership, Andrews University
- Population Group:** SDA church members of the Lake Union Conference.

This study will explore the reasons SDA members give why they do not send their children to SDA schools. The purpose of this research is to try to discover what causes the continuous decrease in enrollment in SDA schools. The research will utilize a one question survey, face-to-face interviews, and focus group research methodology.

The criteria for choosing the administrators will be::

1. The individual must be a SDA parent who has worked or is working at a SDA School.
2. The interviewee must have teaching experiences.
3. He or she must have or had administrative responsibilities.

The criteria for choosing the participants of the focus groups will be:

1. The parent or guardian must be a member of the chosen local church and be above 18 years old.

2. The parent or guardian is presently sending his or her child or children to a non-SDA school.

3. A parent who has no school-age child now but also sent his or children to a non-SDA school within the last ten years.

4. A parent who home-schools his or her child or children

Each focus group can consist of mixed genders of five to ten persons.

The very large church will have two groups, one group that consists only of men and the other only women.

The selected churches will fulfill one of the following criteria:

1. A small membership, < 100 members.
2. A medium membership, > 100 to 500 members.
3. A large membership, > 500 to 1,000 members.
4. A very large membership, > 1000 members.
5. A church that had a school.
6. A church that has no school.
7. A church that is racially mixed.
8. A church that has predominantly Afro-Americans.
9. A church that has a school.
10. A church that is primarily white.

There are no anticipated risks to participants. A research guide will be prepared for each participant. This guide will contain all the research rules, the research question, and a cover letter describing the importance of the research. Participants will be asked to sign the Consent Form at the beginning of the meeting and will be assured of anonymity

and confidentiality. A feed-back sheet using a 5-point Likert's rating scale will be given to each person so that each participant will evaluate how comfortable he or she felt participating in the discussion and expressing his or her thoughts.

The data will be securely kept and will be only used for the purpose of the research. In addition, the participants will be totally voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

TITLE: REASONS SDA PARENTS GIVE WHY THEY DO NOT  
SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO SDA SCHOOLS

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a Ph. D. student at Andrews University, Michigan, U.S.A. My research focuses on “Reasons SDA parents give why they do not send their child or children to SDA schools.”

This study is important because it will help Adventist leaders understand why many SDA children did not attend SDA schools. The low enrollment of SDA children in our SDA Schools is of great concern among SDA educators and I hope to discover the reasons for this. Your support can provide answers to this issue so your participation is greatly needed.

According to the criteria, you were selected for a one-to-one interview. I would like to interview you on the reasons you believe SDA parents give for not sending their children to SDA schools at your comfort. With your consent I will audio-tape your responses which will be kept anonymous and confidential. A number will be assigned to your transcript and your address and name will be removed.

If you are willing to be interviewed please sign the enclosed Consent Form. Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Irma LaBorde

## SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Topic: Reasons SDA Parents Give Why They Do Not Send  
Their Children to SDA Schools

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a Ph. D. student at Andrews University, Michigan, U.S.A. My research focuses on "Reasons SDA parents give why they do not send their child or children to SDA schools."

This study is important because it will help Adventist leaders understand why many SDA children did not attend SDA schools. The low enrollment of SDA children in our SDA Schools is of great concern among SDA educators and I hope to discover the reasons for this. Your support can provide answers to this issue so your participation is greatly needed.

According to the criteria, you were selected to participate in a survey and a focus group discussion. To complete the Survey, you will be asked to write or type your answer to one question. Place your answer in the enclosed envelope, seal, and you will give the envelope to me when you attend the focus group meeting. The same question will be discussed generally at the focus group meeting. With your consent, I will audio-tape the responses at the focus group meeting and all information will be kept anonymous and confidential. A number will be assigned to the group's transcript and all addresses and names will be removed.

If you are willing to participate in the simple survey and follow up focus group discussion, please sign the enclosed Consent Form. Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Irma LaBorde



March 8, 2006

Cary Steinkraus  
1430 S. Ironwood  
Mishawaka, IN 46544

Dear Pastor Steinkraus,

As a Doctoral student in the Andrews University Education and Leadership Program, I am kindly requesting your assistance in helping me to complete my dissertation. My study is entitled: Reasons SDA parents give why they do not send their children to SDA schools.

I have received permission from the Superintendent of Education and the Ministerial Director of the Lake Union Conference to conduct this research and your church was selected. Your involvement in this study would require you to give me permission to use ten or twelve of your members to form one focus group in order to discuss freely and candidly the topic of this study. I ask that you also provide me with a nice setting in your church to hold this meeting.

Please give the invitation to the church members, and select the group for me using the following criteria:

1. The parent or guardian must be a member of the local church.
2. The parent or guardian is presently sending his or her child or children to a non-SDA school.
3. A parent who has no school-age child now but also sent his or her children to a non-SDA school within the last ten years.
4. A parent who home-schools his or her children.

Kindly send me the postal and e-mail addresses of these volunteers as quickly as possible so that we can make our plans for our meeting. All responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. If you have any questions about this research please feel free to e-mail me at [laborde@andrews.edu](mailto:laborde@andrews.edu) or contact my adviser, Dr. Duane Covrig, Andrews University, at (269)471- 3475. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Irma LaBorde

Dr. Duane Covrig  
Chair of the Dissertation  
Committee.

James Martz  
619 Plainfield Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
P.O. Box 1110  
Westmont, IL 60559

Dear Mr. Martz,

I am a Ph. D student at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, at the research stage of my program. My research focuses on “Reasons SDA parents give why they do not send their children to SDA School”. I am requesting your permission to perform this research in your constituency.

This study will utilize survey, interviews, and about eleven focus groups within the Lake Union Conference. There are no known physical or emotional risks associated with gathering this data. All information collected will be held in strictest confidence. At no time will the respondents’ names be used. In addition, participants will be totally voluntary and the respondents will be free to terminate their consent at any time without prejudice.

Lake Union Conference stands to benefit greatly from this study, as I feel that the results will provide some valuable insights in improving educational planning and school enrollment. If you have any questions about this research please feel free to e-mail me at [laborde@andrews.edu](mailto:laborde@andrews.edu) or contact my adviser Dr. Duane Covrig, Andrews University, at (269) 471 – 3475. I thank you for your time in considering this request and I look forward to hearing from you at the earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Irma LaBorde

Dr. Duane Covrig  
Chair of the Dissertation  
Committee.

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Title: Reasons SDA members give why they do not send their children to SDA Schools**

**Purpose of the Study:** I understand that the purpose of this study is to discover the reasons SDA members give why they do not send their children to SDA schools and to determine what could be done to stop the decline in enrollment.

**Inclusion Criteria:** In order to participate, I recognize that I must be an adult over 18 years old and of a sound mind, and must be a member of the SDA church, but do not send my child or children to SDA school or I had school age children at one time but selected not to send them to SDA school.

**Risks and Discomforts:** I have been informed that there are no physical or emotional risks to my involvement in this study.

**Benefits/Results:** I accept that I will receive no remuneration for my participation, but that by participating, I will help the researcher and the SDA church arrive at a better understanding of the reasons why SDA members choose not to send their children to SDA schools, and this will enable the churches and administrators to develop strategies that will attract SDA members to send their children to SDA schools.

**Voluntary Participation:** I understand that my involvement in this research is voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation at any time without any pressure, embarrassment. Or negative impact on me. I also understand that participation is anonymous and that neither the researcher nor any assistant will be able to identify my responses to me.

**Contact Information:** In the event that I have any questions or concerns with regard to my participation in this research project, I understand that I may contact either the researcher, Irma LaBorde at [laborde@andrws.edu](mailto:laborde@andrws.edu) {Tel: (269) 471 -8137}, or her advisor, Dr. Duane Covrig, Professor in School of Education at [covrig@andrews.edu](mailto:covrig@andrews.edu) {Tel: (269) 471 – 3479}.

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 Signature of Participant

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 Date

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 Signature of Witness

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 Date

Signed at: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B  
FOCUS GROUP

FOCUS GROUP QUESTION

TOPIC: REASONS SDA PARENTS GIVE WHY THEY DO NOT SEND THEIR CHILD OR CHILDREN TO SDA ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Instructions: Here is the main question that I would like to discuss generally at our meeting. Please be prepared to participate in a lively discussion. All answers will be audio-taped and the information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

I will start with only one question which is:

What are the reasons parents give why they do not send their children to a SDA school?

I will ask other probing questions based on the responses that I receive.

Focus Groups

MEETING RULES

1. You will be given and asked to sign a "Consent Form" at the beginning of the meeting to certify that you have voluntarily consented to participate in this discussion.
2. The meeting will last about one and a half or two hours. You are asked to maintain a high level of confidentiality, and only your first name will be used during the discussion.
3. You may leave the meeting at any time if you so desire.
4. Your answers will be recorded.
5. One person from the group will volunteer to read the group's transcript for accuracy, add any additional information, sign it, and return it to me in the enclosed stamped envelope.
6. You are allowed to express yourself openly and without concern for whether others in the group agree with the opinions offered.
7. Everyone will have the opportunity to speak one at a time.
8. No answer is right or wrong, rather they are just differing views.
9. No one "has" to answer a certain question.
10. This is a research project and no sales are involved.
11. I am interested in hearing thoughts and feelings, so please speak one at a time so that comments will not be misinterpreted.
12. At the end of the meeting you will be given a feed back sheet. Please rate how comfortable you felt participating in the discussion, and to what degree you were able to express your thoughts. You will be asked to provide additional comments on the discussion if you so desire.

THANK YOU

THANK YOU

THANK YOU



FEED BACK SHEET FOR FOCUS GROUP

**Research Title: Reasons SDA Parents give why they do not send their child or children to SDA elementary and secondary schools**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME on this page. Please write the number that best describe how you felt in the space before each statement.

For example: 4.   1   I felt comfortable here at church.

- 1. Extremely comfortable
- 2. Very comfortable
- 3. Fairly comfortable
- 4. Sometimes comfortable
- 5. Not Comfortable

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I felt comfortable participating in the discussion

2. \_\_\_\_\_ I was able to express my thoughts freely.

Other comments related to the discussion.

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APPENDIX C

QUESTION

POSSIBLE PROBING QUESTIONS FOR THE REASONS SDA PARENTS GIVE WHY THEY DO NOT SEND THEIR CHILD/CHILDREN TO SDA ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Introduction: All of you are not sending your children to a SDA school. As a way to get started, let us talk about the reasons why parents do not send your child to SDA School.

Some Possible answers:	Themes
a. Not Convenient-	Distance and location.
b. Limited range of subjects –	Academic excellence
c. Child’s wishes –	Children’s choice
d. Low academic standards –	Quality of education
e. Too much Bible –	Spiritual issues
f. Lack of resources-	Financial issues
g. Tuition is too high-	Financial issues
h. Home schooling-	Home schooling/ Parent’s choice
i. Quality of the teachers –	School’s image
j. Poor services/facilities offered -	Lack of resources
k. Multiple classes. –	Parents choice/ Low enrollment

Probing questions that I can choose from as responses are given:

What are the differences between these schools?

Why do you think these differences exist?

I don’t quite understand. Can you explain what you mean by....?

Why did you see it as an advantage?

Would you say more about....?

Are there any more views that can be added?

Do you feel your child progresses better at -----? Why?

What made you think this? Why?

Is there any thing else?

How did you feel when it happened?

Was this experience pleasant or unpleasant? Why?

How did you feel when you decided to take that action? Why?

Tell me more.

You all seem to understand what he/she is saying, but I am still confused. Can anyone help me? (To enlist others in aiding one respondent’s explanation)

Can you show me? Or tell me what it was like?

Is this anyone else’s experience?

Can you give me an example/illustration?

Did any one have a similar/different experience?

What changes should be made before you decide to send your child to a SDA school?

Is there anything else that you would like to share that we have not mentioned?

APPENDIX D  
SUGGESTIONS

## Suggestions

### Non-Home Schooling Parents

This section contains the non-home-schooling parents' suggestions how the organization, the conferences, churches, pastors, and members can work together to help parents choose to send their children to SDA schools. These suggestions are organized by the following sub-themes: (a) financial suggestions, (b) parental education, and (c) other suggestions. Financial suggestions are provided first because it represented the most often stated reasons why SDA parents are not sending their children to SDA schools. Parental education was a strongly suggested category as well. It has a separate section. All other areas were mentioned less frequently and are grouped together in the last theme

### Financial Suggestions

- Parent 29: Ministers and church officers, who strongly believe in Christian education, can help to take the financial burden off the parents. . . . If you have no children in any church schools and the church membership is not taking up their responsibility of organizing a school and making sure that our children are taught "of the Lord by Christian teachers" the church is not engrained in their philosophy. . . . We are all responsible for providing programs so that all the children could be taught, and it should not be a burden on only their parents. . . . If the organizational body plans properly . . . the vast amount of money will come from the church itself. Every body as a Christian would have paid into it for the ultimate goal of saving our children. The leaders must believe in it, then take it, keep it before the people, and provide for the counseling. They can also plan fund raising.
- Parent 19: Well, I can only talk for myself. Looking back on the reasons we could not send our child there, if they were able to provide that financial help, it would have been very helpful. I volunteered as a room-mother on my days off, and I kept in touch with the teacher that way but I think that it is

difficult for most parents who do have children in the school to be involved in the school. However, we can get them to be interested to come and visit the school, somebody I do not know who, principal, secretary, or teacher would go and visit them and encourage them to come to the school. . . . I know it is difficult, but offer them some incentive.

In our church we were trying to be a constituent church for "X" school because we would have received a discount in tuition but the school refused. We tried, so that we can encourage others, but no, the School Board did not want that. . . . We wanted to be a part of the constituency.

- Parent 33: I think the organization can make it easier by reducing the bureaucracy and the paper work. The organization should be more supportive of parents who have children, and grandparents who also have grand-children who are of school age. They should use communication as a key instrument and have a lot of communication and encouragement. . . . Some people want to be invited to send their children to our school; it is not enough for them to know that the school is there. Some parents want someone to give them a little nudge to have them send their children to our school.
- Parent 29: I think it starts at the local church and what they can do. It is their responsibility because they know what their resources are and they should know how much effort they could put forth in order to meet those children's needs.  
. . . It is still our Christian duty cooperatively to make sure that all God's children are cared for in the educational developmental process. Education should be an integral part of our budget. We include it as a part of what we give in addition to our tithes. . . . If we are trying to save all of our children for eternity, then we all have a share in that process.
- Parent 15: Let the church help to pay for them. If the church is more willing to be involved and help the parents with some of the cost, it may actually help. There are some rich Seventh-day Adventists out there too. If they can tap those rich ones and put up scholarship funds somewhere so that we can have an on-going scholarship for those kids. Provide more work that pays enough, so that the students can work and maintain themselves.
- Parent 13: The church needs to be more innovative, entrepreneurial, and provide for souls of children as much as they provide for adult souls. We must place an Adventist school within the realm of every Adventist church so that no child will be left uncovered.
- Parent 14: The church has to become more enterprising, planning with the parents and not planning for the parents. The church needs to seek sponsorship for education just as they seek sponsorship for evangelism.

Parent 11: Thank God for the pastor's wife who had her kids in school. She just drilled it in my head that it was necessary to send the children to church school. She helped to support my children along with some members of the church and I thank God for that support. . . . We have to try to support others.

Parent 25: I have heard that the members of the Orthodox Jews in New York pay a second tithe and all the children go to school without paying tuition and they have good schools. I think that we can look on at other institutions, we can evaluate, and we can adopt whatever can work for us. It used to be that teachers in some conferences were paid from tithe, and in other conferences only the pastors were paid from the tithe because teachers are not [church] workers as the pastors are. I think if we get ourselves organized and we use the tithe money properly, we can cover all of our expenses and all the church members can benefit.

A lot of city SDA people are working two jobs and three jobs, some others . . . do a lot of live-in jobs. They live away from their families and they come home on weekends. They pay their faithful tithes and offerings and . . . they have to pay for their kids' tuition. So our church should do something to support these parents with their kids.

Our Black inner-city schools need to understand and practice the use of endowment and scholarship funds, have scholarships in people's names and have people donate regularly to keep the scholarships going so that we can fund all of our children. I think if we have chairs and scholarships, memorial scholarships and so on, those would help to keep our schools afloat.

#### Parents Need to Be Educated

Parent 10: We need to learn about the SDA educational system.

Parent 8: I have to say that I have never been approached by anyone, and I do not know much about SDA Schools.

Parent 10: I can also say that I had no information about the Adventist school system or about their financial arrangements.

Parent 11: There are many children here. Mrs. White advised us that if there are even six children there should be a school. Why do we not obey that suggestion?

Parent 9: If there is a way that I can get some help to get my children back into the school, I would be very grateful.

Parent 25: Our church members also need courses in money management. A course like that can be done at our elementary schools.

### Other Suggestions

Parent 25: Another thing we need to do is to treat our parents as customers. As in business, we need to treat our customers well and always try to please them. In our schools we must remember that we are doing business with our parents and we must try our best to please them.

Parent 25: We need to offer more services. I spoke to a teacher on Sabbath . . . and he was very disappointed [stressing this point] because he had worked for the church for many, many years and he said that our church has really let down our young people . . . who are intelligent but they are not being challenged. . . . They are not able to play an instrument, to do art, to have a craft, or to have a hobby.

We need to get our members committed and we need to put a high priority on having our kids develop in every subject area. We need to provide extra activities at a higher level—expose the kids. Our kids do not need entertainment. They do not need to be taken to Disney on class trips. They need to go on mission trips, and they need to be shown that they can make a valid contribution to their community and to the world.

Parent 14: We, as an organization, make serious restrictions regarding the source of finance. We do not get as much as we can get. We should be able to get but if we go out as a Tax Exempt 501 C3 organization and reach out to a marriage between Education and Business, reach out to the Federal Government and ask for grants. . . . There are Federal grants now available.

We are very fortunate to have a president and a wife who are interested and keenly involved in education. Get men and women who have experience in education, born-again Christians, committed people, and form a committee. . . . Get men who are looking for results. Put them together to make plans for the school, organize your plans, and implement them. . . . We would also be providing jobs for our Adventist youth.

Parent 17: What really happens is, unfortunately, if the school has parents that are most caring about their children and the teachers spend the most time with those children who are the best-behaved. Then, when they are taken out of the school system, the school is going to have less numbers and it affects the social system of the school. That is definitely the negative downside of home schooling. There are two negative downside effects:

1. It affects the school because it takes finances out of the school.
2. It takes families out of the school system—families who are willing to give everything to their children. So it switches the quality of

the school families. . . . Those families who are willing to take the time to educate their children and make sacrifices are no longer a part of the school system.

Parent 29: Home schooling has invaded the climate of church schools all across the length and breadth of Adventism simply because some home schools are couched in racism. Others are based on what they perceive to be voiced, and they determine that they can do a better job at home than what the climate currently invading our church school gives. . . . It affects the school because it takes finances out of the budget.

Home schooling, in my view, has become a debilitating factor in the current status of church school because a vast number of the popular parents in our churches decide to go into home schooling as opposed to attend our church school. It is a very difficult thing to in-team the climate of the church school and the caliber quality of peace in its programs and operations.

Parent 30: It decreases enrollment. I know of one area right now where there are so many parents that are doing home schooling with their kids that the enrollment of the school is really suffering from it. With the decrease in enrollment comes less effectiveness in some of the areas where you do need a certain number of children working together to work on a project. It also affects the school financially as from a purpose standpoint.

Parent 25: Home schooling does affect our SDA educational system economically too. In a community where a lot of church members are doing home schooling, it reduces the school population and reduces the income of the school. On the other hand, it would keep the church population high because parents have a longer time to transmit their values to their children. I have seen a lot of home scholars become active members and get into missionary activities and so they keep the church moving. So there are two sides to everything [smiling]. You cannot win all around because the income is taken away from the school if the parents are going to teach their children.

Parent 17: We have yet to learn the full sense of integration of faith and learning. It is not just the Bible that must be different; it is every aspect of the school. . . . We have to bring Christianity into every topic and every activity, and let the parents know that is what we are doing.

To me, we need to make a contra-cultural statement. It is not the size of the school that is so important, it is what it stands for, and then the people would have that vision in order to send their children there. We should not just take people just for money. . . . The first thing I did was to tell 30% of my students that I am not coming back next year because I am not in harmony with the principles. We had more students that next year



for the parents said that the school is standing for something. Are we standing for the right thing?

There are also the parallels. There was a book entitled, *Why the Conservative Churches Are Growing* by Kelley. They were growing because they were standing for something. They are not just a part of culture, and that is a message for the schools. I believe Adventist schools unfortunately need to stand for something that is unique and different, and then we would not have a population problem. If we did, it was better off with small, quality Adventist schools than big ones which are culturally, and with first-class foot-ball teams [laughs]. We need to get the thinking of teachers and ministers, boards, and parents competitive.

Parent 29: Well, part of it is a heart change from a Christian prospective. If we are not fully born again we would want to harbor fame as the way out towards our self-importance. We get recognition as the factor for success, and as a result of this our children are growing up with the idea that unless they distinguish themselves in whatever sports they think are the most important, that they are not important. That is causing chaos, and that is what is uppermost before the children as being important.

Of course, sports and things like that in themselves are not the important thing. We do exercise and we do need exercise for health, but what they are talking about is the people who are encouraging the youngsters to go out and excel in sports because of the fame and money that is attached to it. Well, many think of sports as the gateway to financial success, and if the school that they are going to is not promoting sports, then it is not quality. It is not offering challenges that they think their child needs. They have to understand that sports, yes, for exercise. I do not think anyone is against exercise but when it becomes competitive, it breathes other damaging things that we cannot see at the moment but surface later on. What is our ultimate purpose on this earth—to save our children or to acquire material things that will eventually fail, or are we making sure that character traits essential for eternity are engrained and developed in those who were entrusted to us?

Parent 17: I think the organization, first of all, needs not only to find their identity but to highlight that identity that there is a specialty and not just that we are another denomination. We are not just another church, not just another educational system, or Americans, or Canadians, or whatever it happens to be. WE ARE A SPECIAL PEOPLE [spoken with emphasis] and if all goes well we are not going to be here forever. When we have that identity solved in the larger church and publicized, then we need to get it figured out what does it mean for education. If you have a prophetic identity then it will be sticking through in what we teach the children. It will be in the curriculum, it will relate to the children's teachers and that needs to be also publicized. We must really demonstrate to our church that it has a unique special message for this time in history and the schools are to

prepare people for the spreading of that message so that Jesus can come. You see, today, schools become social clubs. All the rich kids go to the Adventist schools, because they are nice schools [laughs] and after they start to wear the papers of the social clubs.

Parent 14: I believe that the church today is wearing blinders—looking straight with a very narrow vision. We have to look beyond. . . . Parents want the better quality education for their children that our system gives. They want better quality morals. Parents do not want their children to be involved in drugs. We need better teachers to guard our children from day to day. We are not having those kinds of caring teachers today that we had in the past.

Some of our schools have become the devil's workshop. Every day I warn my children about crime, about teachers against children, about children against children. . . . Some of the teachers do not respect themselves. . . . If we are a remnant of a remnant, set apart, we must not only say it; we must prove it by living it.

Parent 17: The parents may not know what happens in the school; that is one of the issues.

## **Suggestions**

### **Home-Schooling Parents**

This section contains the home schooling parents' suggestions on how the organization can help parents to send their children to SDA schools. These suggestions are organized into sub-themes: (a) financial suggestions and (b) other suggestions.

### **Financial Suggestions**

Parent 8: At some churches they have a matching program . . . but you have to have a strong church for that. Because the parents were extremely needy, the committee would take into account the finances, look over the [family] finances and see if the family is blowing [wasting] their money or if they were really struggling, then get the kids to have a Christian education.

Parent 4: There is a temple plan where the cost is supplemented by the local church by those who do not have school-age children. The whole church as a unit puts money together to help worthy students. I think everyone benefits that way.

- Parent 9: Our church maintains a generous tuition assistance program.
- Parent 10: If the fees are lowered the parents would have more time to participate in school activities and help out if they [administrators] would allow parents to do that.

### Other Suggestions

- Parent 9: The minister can help his people to prioritize their whole life. If you are out of whack in one area then the money is not going to be there. If your commitment level is low, then you need a personal spiritual revival.
- Parent 10: I think the school should harness their resources in the community and as educated members we need to be a community. The school also has to use its resources in a better manner. Right now, some schools want to function on their own, and the parents have to spend too much money on text books, etc. More hands-on approaches can be used.
- Parent 4: We spend much time and money trying to evangelize the world but little time is spent with our own children in our community. . . . The church should evangelize those parents and children and encourage the parents to accept the help the church offers for their children's education.
- Parent 3: The work aid program should be done at our schools to allow the students to see the value of cleaning, repairing or caring for others. . . . Why hire someone from the outside when you can be training the kids to do the same work?

### Suggestions

#### Administrators

This section consists of administrators' suggestions that can help give more SDA children an opportunity to obtain a Christian education.

#### Our Parents Need to Be Educated

- Admin 4: We need to educate our young parents. That is quite challenging. If we look back even in our small church, the senior citizens are really and truly the backbone of the schools, and they greatly support Christian education. The younger parents are the ones that we have to reach, because they are more concerned with the everyday happenings of life. I believe we ought

to have an educational program where we really sit down with the young parents and discuss with them the importance of a Christian education. The older parents had a better understanding of Christian education than the younger parents, because the ministers taught them. Over the years, from 1985 until the present, the importance of Christian education is not audible in this area, in order to describe what is perceived as true education. Several parents are now going after many different unimportant goals.

We need to educate our parents, because God has given to them these children, and one day he is going to ask them for the flock. I believe that if we spend time to explain to them the importance of Christian education, I know that we will have an increase in enrollment in our schools.

Admin 6: We need some programs to help our families—healing seminars, marriage counseling, parental programs, and others. We have to get these families healed, and when the parents are healed, the children will be part of the healing process, and the children will be back into the school.

Admin 7: The parents really need to be educated. They need to see the total picture. I think that we are dealing with a culture problem too. The parents are under a lot of pressure to provide material things for their kids. Another thing is that the parents have seen so many of our young people, who went to our school, that have left the church, and so they are not encouraged to send others there. I have heard it voiced at times that some kids went to church school, but they do not go to church any more, so what is the use, and where is the difference.

You know, Home and School Association used to be a strong thing here, but it is not functioning any more. It is so hard to get the parents to come together just for an educational meeting. I am somewhat old-fashioned but I think studying the book, *The Adventist Home* and going back to some of Ellen G. White's writings would help the parents. I think we can probably do some more research and present current research findings to the parents, so as to help them to understand how the kids' minds work, how to reach them, and keep them focused on Christ.

We can help the parents' minds to see the different scenarios and how we all need to work together if they truly, truly want their children to be in heaven. We can also show them how important it is for the entire family to be ready to be in heaven. . . . If parents and teachers are working as a unit, and if children see their parents are working together with the teachers, then the children would value more what we are trying to do for them. . . . We do need to educate them.

Admin 1: The church's congregation also must be given stewardship instructions.

## Financial Suggestions

- Admin 1: A school budget is no secret and it is also not a money-making endeavor. The church members should know about the school budget, and how much money is needed to efficiently operate the school. Quality education is expensive, and just as they have a budget for home, we have a budget for school, and so we cannot expect to have a free education. If people are exposed to the cost of running the school, although it appears to be expensive, they would realize that the expense is necessary. They would become informed that several constituent churches can assist in tuition, but if there are but few or no constituent churches that are assisting, then the tuition has to be increased.
- Admin 5: The church helps some students a lot. We give the parent the bill and those who are in need take the bill to the Financial Aid Committee. We have a committee that meets and they give the parents the money they need. There are also members who sponsor children and we find other ways to help them too. The church collects offerings for them, but some parents may not want you to know that they are needy and so they do not accept the help.
- Admin 8: Some parents may be afraid to let other members know that Sally's parents cannot pay her bill. Yes, they may be afraid of that, but a school should keep that information confidentially. I do not have any idea, as the principal, neither do our teachers, which families get or do not get tuition assistance. . . . We do not need to know that information.
- Admin 6: We tried very hard this year to get more children to attend our school by offering them free Christian education for a year, but no one would take it. Scary! I think . . . I do not know what else to say.
- Admin 3: We do have a pretty good base of financial support from our church and the other surrounding churches that help children to make it financially. We tell every parent that comes to our school that if they want to apply for financial aid if lack of funds is an issue for coming here, they can apply, and we give them the forms to fill out. We let them all know that, so that nobody is left untold that there is help for them if they are interested in having their children attend a SDA school. There is a formula that they have to meet in order to qualify, and that is a current setup. We need to tell the parents, "You know what, this information that you are sharing with us is not advertised. It stays between me and my treasurer, it does not go anywhere. We want your children to come to our school, and we want to provide you a way so that the kids can come here by giving you some resources to do that."

I think we should be very open and say that we will help them if they are interested for their children to be there. If they have financial difficulty, we should be willing to give them the help so that they can make it. We can work with them on a month-to-month basis because some of our parents do have difficulty making their monthly payments. . . . We have places in our church where people can donate to our school fund. Several times a year we say that a particular offering is going to the school to help financial aid. The offerings on Education Sabbath and the Lambs offering all go to help our educational system. There are other members who have a burden to promote Christian education, and they make their contribution towards Christian education too.

If there is a student from the sister church, that church gives us money, because the child attends our school. If the students are members of the sister church they also get some aid from that parent church. . . . We do not have the sister churches as constituent churches, so they are not a financial part of our school.

Admin 1: I think probably that most churches have a worthy children fund and that can provide some scholarship assistance . . . and no matter how badly off we think we are, we can pay something even if it is \$5 per month. I am not comfortable with setting up an arrangement where parents have no financial responsibility even if it is a dollar per month. They need to have some ownership in the financial responsibility of educating the child, but each church should have an On-Listing fund.

There might also be church members who are able to sponsor a student and there are ways to fundraise to get the tuition. I do not think that anyone should let cost be a factor in not having an SDA education. We work for our money and we think our money is ours but our income is a sacred trust. God expects us to use our finance in a way that would advance his cause and part of that is to prepare our children to be of service to him.

Admin 2: There are cases where some people really do not have enough money to pay for tuition, and that is where the church comes in, where the school comes in, and the conference comes in. These children need to have an opportunity to have an Adventist education and these three parties should provide it for them if they can show from their tax return that they do not have enough money to make their particular family grow. There are scholarships that also can be given, and then people in the community may also help by giving "X" dollars.

Admin 7: Here in this city we deal with several parents whose income may not be enough to find that tuition; however, we make a lot of arrangements. We work with each family, and we have a financial plan that is suitable for them so that their kids can come to school. On our part, we make a great, great effort to help our parents who do not have that income. Our finance

is done through private donations. Some members from our church donate to Student Fund and we disperse those funds according to the amount the parents owe. . . . Sometimes, we have to cut; we have to cut Library funds, cut here and there, whereas if there were more income we could do better. Yet, I could say year after year we can see God's blessings and he stretches those dollars. We still provide a number of services—we provide new computers and all these things, keep the furniture updated, and other basic things. We work on these things and different projects year by year.

### Other Suggestions

Admin 2: We can do visitation. There is nothing like having a one-on-one relationship with people in the community. We know that there are students who have plans out there to go to public schools, and there are students who have plans to go to private schools. Last summer, I had the opportunity to visit about 40 to 50 homes, and in visiting them I found students who were planning to go here, there, and everywhere, and those who told me that they do not know what to do. Most of them ended up coming here. Why? It is only because somebody visited them, and because someone showed interest in them. There is nothing like one-on-one. You can fill out all the fliers you want, put all the billboards out on the highways, make all the CD's for them to listen to, make all the announcements on TV, all these things are very fine gadgets, but there is nothing like visitation.

I remember well an incident on a small farm in Washington. As a teenager, I was moving around at the bottom of a big wheat bin. . . . I was down there moving some wheat around, and then I heard some footsteps from outside coming up the ladder. In a few seconds I saw a face at the top of that bin looking down at me. He said to me, "X, are you coming to the Upper Columbia Academy next year?" I replied, "I do not know." Immediately, I went to my dad and asked him. He said that he did not know. I said, "I really need to know because the person out there who was teaching math and science would like me to read a science paper for him." I said to the person, "Well, I think so." It made a lasting impression on me. I remember it to this day, so people often respond positively, especially to their children's requests.

. . . I think that as we visit the homes we are able to contact parents and their children, and relate to them. Let us give them the opportunity to choose. They must decide where their children may be better off, and give them the opportunity to make an intelligent decision.

Admin 3: We would like to go to different churches that do not have a school and promote our programs put on by our students.

- Admin 4: We are designing a web page, and we have decided to do quite a bit of marketing. One of the things the school board decided to do is to fast and pray every Wednesday for the Lord to give us insight as to how to do his will, and we are confident that as we depend on him that he will show us what to do.
- At our last board meeting we spent quite a bit of time discussing if we could get someone to help us with some extracurricular activities, because we would like to see the student enrollment increase. We are looking at some type of sporting activity for after school. We are not blessed with a gymnasium yet, and so we are putting a concerted effort to try to add one to this building.
- Admin 3: Parents want to see what our classrooms are like; they want to know about our technology. Technology is a very hot thing today, and parents want to know what we do. We take them to our gym and show them our hot-lunch program, our music room, our great music teacher and those kinds of things, so I think that our facilities do appeal to our parents.
- Admin 4: I know that the parents would like us to have, first, a gymnasium, and they would like us to have some type of sporting activity for the young people. They also like us to have clubs—racket club, science club, and things of that nature, and music after the regular school hours. Right now, it is not easy, because we are not able to incorporate those activities into our regular school day, but they would definitely like the young people to have some kind of sporting activities, physical or educational.
- Admin 2: I can think of several cases right now where the parents are educated but they do not see the value of Christian education, and there is another case where neither the child nor the parents see the value of a Christian education, but we see some good things that are happening. How are you going to explain to the parents how important education is? . . . I think, however, that you can do individual contact with the student. It takes motivation and dedication. If the students know that the teachers care for them, the students begin to realize that they are important, that they can be educated, that things could be different if they are willing to work something out, and then things begin to change. I remember the verse which says, “A little child shall lead them.” If we can get the children thinking right, we will get the parents thinking right. How do we get to the parents? The answer is, by the children.
- Admin 3: Some of our parents do not accept our financial assistance when we try to help them because there is a stigma that goes with that action; so they do not want to expose their financial situations. . . . They have to put down how much their income is and all the different things they have to disclose to see if they qualify. I feel that parents are afraid . . . and if people are apprehensive to share that information, we have a problem that we need to



tackle. We want the children here and the children need to be here. In these situations they want their kids to be here most of the times. I heard parents say this statement, "I wish I could send my kids to your school but I cannot do it financially." Encourage the parents.

- Admin 6: Why are not more SDAs sending their children here? I am thinking that we need to promote our education to the people. We should let people know that we have something important to offer.
- Admin 7: I would like to see Adventist churches take transportation as a project. For example, our church can say, "We will support the school by picking up the children and taking them home." We know that the parents would appreciate that but I do not know if it would ever happen. I would like to see that happen.
- Admin 2: Even though it may be the most normal thing for a child to be at home, when there is a conflict between the teacher and the child, sometimes it is good for them to move. Sometimes it is good for the parent to see a little bit of flurry so they can see that the school has all things put together right, and they have to say, let us see how we can make it work. I think it is very important, that in the home as parents raising our children, we need to be very, very careful not to criticize the schools or the teachers, and those in areas of authority in their presence. Also as teachers in a school we need to be very, very, careful not to criticize the parents at home. It is a two-way street. We cannot satisfactorily educate the child unless we work together and that is extremely important. How we get to work together is to support one another in prayer, with money, and in verbalization, etc.
- Admin 4: The Lake Union Conference started something that I think can be very effective, in my opinion. I wish we could continue it. They had different sessions for 3 days where the educators, pastors, administrators and local church members came together, brainstorming, and giving ideas how to work together for our children or students. To me, that was a step in the right direction . . . so what we need to do is to spend more time together—educators and pastors, discussing ways how we can enlighten the parents about the importance of Christian education.
- Admin 10: One thing we can do to strengthen the vision and confidence in our system is to have a meeting to find out what is happening why parents are not sending their children to our school. If parents are given the opportunity to air their grievances and dislikes, the leaders can make corrections.
- Admin 8: Sometimes we have not been trustworthy, do not treat children as they should be treated, and feel that we have an entitlement to their children. They are Adventists and we are in an Adventist school. We believe that

they should send their children to us, and we do not have to earn their interest, trust or their respect. . . . The school must be aggressive about praying for the children, loving and accepting them when they are here, and the children themselves would want to be here.

Admin 1: The parents have to buy into Christian education and no matter how in the world we provide support, if they do not buy into the need of Christian education, if they do not value it, then, there is nothing you can do. Some of it is a mind-set—not valuing Christian education enough to figure out how to meet their other expenses.

Admin 4: In order to get our families to accept our financial aid, it has to be a ministry where you meet them and talk to the parents about the values of Christian education in order to get them to make that commitment to Christian education.

### **Summary**

This section summarizes the suggestions that non-home-schooling parents, home-schooling parents, and administrators gave for getting more children into SDA schools. These suggestions were organized by group and themes. Although the main purpose of this study was to explore reasons for SDAs not sending their children to SDA schools, many participants suggested ways to improve SDA schools to attract more SDA children. It was felt that some of these suggestions should be reviewed here. I merely listed these suggestions with very little comment and not necessarily in any order of importance.

### **Non-Home-Schooling Parents' Suggestions**

#### **Financial Suggestions**

1. The local church could help to pay more of the tuition.
2. The wealthy church members without any school-age children could assist some parents.
3. The church could generate scholarship funds so that there were ongoing

funds for the children. The Black inner-city schools could use endowments, have scholarships in people's names, such as memorial scholarships and so on, and have people donate regularly to them.

4. The schools could provide work for the students that pay them enough money to help defray tuition.

5. Like some Orthodox Jews, members could pay a second tithe and allow church children to go to school without paying tuition.

6. The conferences could pay teachers from the tithe as they do the ministers.

7. Provide SDA members needed courses in money management, so that they could learn how to manage their money better.

### **Other Suggestions**

8. SDA principals and teachers needed to treat all of SDA parents as partners.

9. Where there was no school in the community, the members needed to build a school or put an addition onto the church that could be used as a school if there were more than six children from that church who attended a central school. They also suggested that all SDA schools should be built in the community, so that parents could have an input in the training of their children.

10. The conference needed to reorganize SDA curriculum and add more extra-curricular activities.

11. Get SDA parents to volunteer more in school activities to lower expenditure.

12. Principals, teachers, the secretary, and church board members could visit the parents and offer them incentives for participation in school activities.

13. Facilitate SDA schools to involve other sister churches as constituent

churches.

14. Each conference superintendent could encourage the schools to share their resources and ideas among Adventist schools, for example, teachers' observation, class visits, etc. This could help to improve the quality of SDA schools and teachers.

15. The churches need to be more innovative and entrepreneurial in supporting SDA schools. .

16. Make education more a a part of the church budget.

17. Support all the church members to commit themselves to share in the educational program of the church and embrace Christian education.

18. That SDA schools uphold the strong values, so that we clearly embrace their identity, publicize it, and demonstrate it in what they do.

19. Encourage SDA pastors to pray more with parents, teachers, and children and to encourage the parents to exercise their faith in Jesus by sending their child to church school.

20. All pastors need to support the schools by making themselves visible at the school sites. They need to be a model of Christian education, and keep the churches informed of the school activities.

21. SDA church members, public school teachers, or other retired teachers can be asked to volunteer after school in order to assist the slower children.

22. Revitalize the Home and School association that it can also promote the school and keep the financial situation and progress of the school before parents.

23. SDA schools need to consider offering more essential services and extracurricular activities, such as home economic classes, etc.

24. Do more fundraisers and provide opportunities for the children to go on mission trips.

25. Reduce and simplify the amount of bureaucracy and paper work when financial assistance is offered to parents and grandparents. Practice effective communication with and give more encouragement and hope to the family members. Invite everyone to attend or visit SDA schools.

### Home-Schooling Parents' Suggestions

#### **Financial Suggestions**

1. Implement the matching program—a third, a third, a third. The church pays a third, the conference pays a third, and the parent or school pays a third.
2. Use the temple plan where all the members pay a second tithe and all the parents will not pay tuition.
3. Implement the work aid program where a student can study half a day and work the other half of the day. Train the young people to do the work that other skilled laborers are paid to do and pay them well.
4. Maintain a generous tuition assistance program at SDA church.

#### **Other Suggestions**

5. Plan revivals for SDA children and parents, and let them members make a commitment to Christian education. Encourage the pastors, the parents, and the children to work together. The ministers could teach their members to prioritize their whole life, because if they are deranged in one area, then the money is not going to be there, or if their commitment level is low, then they need a spiritual awakening. Pastors could plan

and conduct programs to help parents to stay out of debt, and show them how to make and live by a budget.

6. Teachers can use more hands on approaches to lower educational costs.

### Administrators' Suggestions

#### **Financial Suggestions**

1. Remind the church members about the school budget.
2. The schools could invite other churches to become constituent churches in order to lower tuition. Administrators could market their schools.
3. Some wealthy church members could be asked to sponsor a child. More fundraisers can be introduced, and other SDA church members could donate liberally to the student fund.
4. Each family could pledge to live by a planned budget.

#### **Other Suggestions**

5. Encourage the conference officers to have different sessions for 3 days with educators, pastors, administrators, and local church members to brainstorm and gain ideas how they can work together for the children's educational benefits.
6. Encourage all pastors to send their children to SDA church schools, and let them promote Christian education from the pulpit on Sabbaths.
7. Cordially invite the people in the community to participate in SDA school activities.
8. Promote school activities at church. Let the school children be more involved in the local SDA church programs.
9. Invite conference officials of the educational department to work with the

pastors and the pastors in turn could work harmoniously with the teachers and the parents.

10. Demonstrate to the public that the kids from the SDA schools are different. School representatives could visit the parents at home and do not visit them only when enrollment is low. Administrators or school boards could permit home schoolers to participate in selected school activities.

11. The school boards, teachers, and parents could select financial suggestions that are workable in their area and implement them.

12. Administrators stated that it was very difficult to get parents to participate in school activities and attend meetings that were planned for them. The administrators desired the parents to become convicted about Christian education. Administrators also believed that parents must receive home visitations and know from experience that the teachers cared about their children. Administrators are anxious to form a close relationship with the conferences' officers, pastors, teachers, and parents. The administrators are persuaded that all parents, when they are educated and convicted about Christian education, would wisely choose the best school for their children.

13. The administrators also would like to encourage churches that are far away from the central school building to follow Mrs. White's counsel and open schools in their community for the SDA children

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