

# 20 Suggestions for an Effective School Marketing Program



Greater New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
Office of Education

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## Inspirational Statements

- God plus one is always a majority!
- There are four steps to accomplishment:
  - Plan purposefully
  - Prepare prayerfully
  - Proceed positively
  - Pursue persistently
- The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.
- The secret to success is to start from scratch and keep on scratching.
- When we have done our best, we should wait the result in peace.
- Vision is the art of seeing things invisible.

## 20 SUGGESTIONS FOR AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL MARKETING PROGRAM

The main thrust of this document is to propose a variety of marketing strategies that should be successful for **any** school operated in the Seventh-day Adventist system of education. The principal should not attempt to do any of these proposed strategies by himself/herself – and certainly not without the endorsement of the school staff and school board. Marketing a school successfully is **not** the sole responsibility of the principal. It is a coordinated effort of the principal, faculty/staff, pastor, school board, students, etc., working cooperatively as a team.

The Office of Education recommends each school consider the following as part of their marketing program:

- 1) Each school should conduct a **visioning conference** in which the school staff, board, parents and constituent members are present. At this meeting, discussion should focus on pinpointing the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the school operation. The strengths and weaknesses should be prioritized and placed in rank order. It is the intended goal of this meeting to begin creating a “road map” (known as a strategic plan or master plan) leading to excellence in education. A master plan is worthless unless **everyone** has a burning desire to make it happen at all reasonable and ethical costs. Copies of the master plan are on file in the Office of Education.

### **Recommendation**

After prioritizing the entire list of strengths and weaknesses, develop a minimum of four committees that will focus on issues in the following areas:

- a) Faith/Values/Commitment (Spiritual Issues)
- b) Academic Quality and Professional Issues
- c) Financial Issues
- d) Marketing (Communication Issues)

Members on these committees should brainstorm together and develop solutions to the weaknesses that were cited in the general visioning conference. Members from each subcommittee should then reassemble together to discuss the solutions collectively. A committee of 5-7 should be appointed to develop a master plan for the school based on the findings from the strengths/weaknesses visioning conference. The master plan should be presented to the faculty, staff and school board for final consideration. The master plan then needs to be implemented systematically. The following points should be addressed for each point:

- Who is responsible for implementation?
- What is the time frame for implementation?
- What are the anticipated costs for implementation?

- 2) The principal should request authorization from pastors who are part of the school constituency (as well as pastors whose churches are within commuting distance of the church school) the opportunity to promote the school during the Divine worship hour.

### Recommendation

Consult with the pastors several months beforehand. Pastors' schedules are frequently booked months in advance. Besides the principal's involvement, the pastor from the constituent church should be present to endorse the school. Also present should be parents and students (to give testimonials on Christian education), students to participate in a religious skit, the school choir, students to give opening and closing prayer and/or school board members to affirm support for Christian education. The videotape *Safe & Sound* (available through the Office of Education) can be shown as *Mission Spotlight*. These are just a few possibilities. Be creative!

- 3) The school should develop a survey that would be distributed to each church within commuting distance of the church school. The survey should contain the following points of information: name, age, address, phone number, grade level and birthday of each child. After compiling a list of prospective students (taken from the survey), develop a list of volunteers who will assist the principal in making home visitations to every home of prospective students. Visits may be made by members of the school faculty/staff, pastor(s), board members, etc.

### Recommendation

Ask the church clerk if a student survey is already on file. If not, make certain that the survey developed by the school has a professional tone (double-check spelling, format, grammar, etc.). Get permission from the local church pastor before distributing the survey to members of his congregation. A sample survey is on file in the Office of Education. After compiling a list of prospective students, make individual visits on the following basis:

- a) At each home having a VCR, show the 20-minute videotape *Safe and Sound*.
  - b) Bring along a school application, school bulletin and the booklets *Training the Head and Heart – for Today, Tomorrow and Eternity* and *Ten Reasons Why Small Schools Work*. Both booklets are available through the Office of Education at no charge.
  - c) If the school has any special incentives for new students (i.e. money-back guarantee, first month tuition is free, etc.), this information should also be presented.
  - d) A follow-up telephone call should be made and a letter thanking the parent/student for their interest in Christian education should be sent.
- 4) An insert (Progress Report) about your church school should be placed periodically in each constituent church bulletin. The Progress Report should contain highlights of and information on upcoming activities/events during the school year and human-interest stories about the school.

### Recommendation

Get permission from the pastor to place a Progress Report in the church bulletin. Before distributing a Progress Report to local congregations, this should be advertised from behind the pulpit, preferably by the pastor, as a “must read.” Make sure that the Progress Report has a professional tone. Include three “Honor Rolls” (scholarship, perfect attendance, citizenship), invitations to special events, etc.

- 5) Invite the church pastor (or a representative) from each local non-constituent church (within commuting distance) to be present at school board meetings. Ask these representatives to promote the school at their local churches. Also, they could provide insight as to why children from their church are not in attendance at your church school. Such insight will be helpful in addressing issues raised by parents locally.

### Recommendation

Get authorization from your school board to include representatives from non-constituent churches and grant them voice but no vote. Embrace these representatives as you would a regular member of the school board family and make each one feel extra-special.

- 6) Have at least two open house days in which parents of prospective students and constituent members can visit your school. These open house dates should be thoughtfully scheduled, i.e., spring and summer when parents are making final decisions as to where their child(ren) will go to school the following year.

### Recommendation

First impressions are **lasting** impressions. Make sure your school building looks inviting. Offer light refreshments. New school bulletins, brochures, showing of the video tape *Safe and Sound* and any other pertinent information about the school should be made available for distribution. The principal and school staff should be present to answer any questions. The principal should share his/her vision of excellence for the school. A follow-up telephone call should be made and a letter thanking the parent/student for coming to the open house should be sent.

- 7) Request that each constituent pastor of your church school preach a sermon on **Christian Education**. During the service, there should be affirmations in support of Christian education by parents, students, board members, alumni, etc. This is a time to celebrate the positive impact that the church school has made upon the community.

### Recommendation

Request that the pastor to include in his calendar at least one Sabbath for **Christian Education Day** per school year. Encourage the pastor to preach on Christian education on this designated day. The congregation needs to **hear** and **see** their local pastor endorse Christian education. The request to designate a Sabbath for Christian Education Day must be made months in advance. A pastor's calendar can be filled quickly. Plan accordingly.

- 8) Use creative means to market your school such as:
  - A. **Money-back Guarantee** – If a student attends your church school for a minimum of six weeks and a parent or the child feels that school is not a good match, refund tuition/registration.
  - B. **First Month Tuition Free**

Both of these incentive programs will only be effective if parent(s)/child(ren) perceive school program to be “top notch” and desire to remain in school for the entire school year. If you are operating a church school where there is enthusiastic support for the quality of the school operation, then these are worthy considerations.

### Recommendation

Present this to the school board for consideration. If you do not desire to participate in either of these programs, explore other possible incentive programs.

- 9) Invite prospective students, parents, constituent members and members from the community to attend special school programs such as Thanksgiving programs, Christmas pageantry, talent programs, special fund-raising events, etc.

### **Recommendation**

Develop an invitation card and make the invitation personal. As a special Christian service project, have students from school develop the invitation card and deliver them to neighbors' doors. Run off a sufficient supply for constituent church members.

- 10) Determine the feasibility of operating a four (4) week summer school program in reading and mathematics. Invite children from constituent and local non-constituent churches and community to attend – as well as current students.

### **Recommendation**

Get approval from school board. Determine from a survey the interest level of parents/students for a summer school program. Items to be considered: teacher's qualifications/salary, tuition, transportation, curriculum, pre/post examinations to determine student growth, projected enrollment, etc.

- 11) Send prospective students a birthday card, Christmas card and a card inviting them to special school events.

### **Recommendation**

**Personalize** your card to the students with a greeting that includes **their** name and a warm personal statement (Hope you can be here for this special occasion, etc.).

- 12) Include a **Baccalaureate Service** as part of the graduation exercises each school year. This service should be conducted on Sabbath during Divine worship hour.

### **Recommendation**

Get approval from the school board. Request permission from the church pastor months in advance. A copy of a recommended format for a Baccalaureate Service is available through the Office of Education.

- 13) Develop a **Marketing Committee** that will be responsible for assisting the principal in marketing the church school. Recommendations from this committee should result in greater effectiveness in the recruitment of students.

### **Recommendation**

The school board should approve the members of the Marketing Committee. This committee should meet periodically during the school year. Planning an annual month-by-month strategy is essential for an effective marketing program.

- 14) Have a banquet, ice cream feed, or Sunday educational field trip for prospective students/parents. The banquet and ice cream feed may include a suitable general audience family entertainment film. The education field trip should be to a place that would arouse a lot of interest by prospective students/parents.

### **Recommendation**

Get school board approval. If you are renting a film, screen the entire film in advance. If you are planning an educational field trip, maintain the same standards as a regular school field trip –appropriate supervision is essential.

- 15) Submit feature articles about your school to the local conference's magazine and local newspaper.

**Recommendation**

This should be done periodically and is an excellent, inexpensive manner (no charge) to effectively promote your church school.

- 16) Determine the feasibility of opening a Day-Care/Pre-School Center.

**Recommendation**

Call the Office of Education and request that the superintendent of schools mail to you information about state requirements for opening a day-care/pre-school program. The superintendent of schools would be willing to meet with your school/church board to discuss the feasibility of making this happen.

- 17) Recognize the volunteers who assisted the school in its marketing program or aided in the recruitment of students.

**Recommendation**

Award volunteers with a Certificate of Appreciation or a plaque. This gesture will go a long way in acknowledging their efforts and thanking them for a job well done. This presentation may be done during Divine Worship Hour or at an awards banquet. Get permission from pastor if done during Divine Worship Hour.

- 18) Have a **Parent and Grandparent Appreciation Day** for all students who are enrolled in your church school.

**Recommendation**

This recommendation needs school board approval as well as support from the church pastor. It should be planned months in advance. The program should be conducted during Divine Worship Hour and the sermon should center on the importance of Christian parents/grandparents. The Office of Education recommends:

- A. In **small** church schools, every student gives a brief testimonial in support of Christian parents/grandparents. Each parent/grandparent receives a rose.
- B. In **large** church schools, a representative from each class should be selected to give tribute to all parents/grandparents. Each parent/grandparent receives a rose.
- C. A potluck dinner after church in honor of each parent/grandparent from the church school.
- D. Each parent/grandparent should receive a personal invitation from their child/grandchild to attend **Parent and Grandparent Appreciation Day**.

- 19) Use Office of Education brochures/videotapes to help market your church school.

#### **Recommendation**

The Office of Education has the following items for marketing your church school (available at no-charge):

- A. *Training the Head and Heart – for Today, Tomorrow and Eternity* (booklet)
- B. *Adventist Elementary Schools* (booklet)
- C. *Ten Reasons Why Small Schools Work* (booklet)
- D. *Safe and Sound* (videotape)

- 20) Develop a **Master Plan** for your church school for mass distribution to your constituent churches.

#### **Recommendation**

The Master Plan should include various elements that focus on **Excellence in Education**. Ideally, it should get the constituency **excited** about the desire to send their children to the church school. Several different Master Plans are on file in the Office of Education for your perusal. Feel free to use this resource material as a guideline.

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

A successful marketing plan for each church school that is part of the Seventh-day Adventist system of education is a journey not a destination. The twenty ideas identified in this publication are only a springboard from hundreds of possibilities. A successful marketing program should include the following elements:

- 1) A comprehensive marketing strategy that is well planned, effectively coordinated, and regularly evaluated and updated.
- 2) A broad base of support beyond the principal that includes the pastor(s), teachers, parents, board members, constituent members, etc. At the very least, the principal should ensure that the staff and school board feel a sense of ownership of the school marketing plan.
- 3) A marketing team that helps to coordinate marketing strategies throughout the school year. The team should explore ways to effectively address the needs and concerns of all target groups that are part of the school community. Special attention should be given to reaching out to new converts, former Adventists, single-parent families, young professionals and those disillusioned with Christian education, etc.

A successful marketing plan does not happen by accident. It is the result of careful planning and preparation – and a lot of hard work! If done properly, it should be a joyful, positive experience.

The Office of Education is committed to your school in helping to make this happen. As Nike (the sneaker manufacturer) says – “JUST DO IT!”

May God bless you abundantly in your aspirations of successfully implementing a marketing strategy that brings the “little lambs” into His school system and, ultimately, into His kingdom.