

HOW WELL IS YOUR SCHOOL RESPONDING TO THE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL MARKETPLACE IN ONTARIO?

Christian schools are facing a number of challenges in the post-EETC era in the Ontario educational marketplace. The long-awaited government funding solution for independent schools has slipped out of reach and, sadly, does not appear to be a political reality soon. Instead of preparing for their share of an anticipated rise in family interest and student registrations in the independent sector, our Christian school leaders are now challenged to maintain the quality of their programs despite declining enrolments and escalating operational costs.

Aggressive student recruitment is taking place across the province as more schools, both public and private, vie for the shrinking population demographic of school-aged children. In this new educational marketplace, we know that Christian parents are also shopping for the best educational programs for their children. Some are loyal to their local Christian school but are demanding higher expectations than the previous generation of parents. Others are deciding on home schooling. Many are attracted to the local public school and other independent schools which are vying for their attention. Although this trend has been experienced in large urban centres for some time, the new reality is that now suburban and rural Christian schools are increasingly facing the same competitive dynamic.

Christian schools require a new clarity of purpose, renewed vision and professional operational practices in order to thrive in this changed educational marketplace. Christian school leaders need examine their schools and prayerfully determine how to equip them for these new challenges by employing a continuous improvement approach that seeks to turn struggling schools into flourishing schools.

SINKING SCHOOL	STRUGGLING SCHOOL	COASTING SCHOOL	PROGRESSING SCHOOL	FLOURISHING SCHOOL
<p>Description:</p> <p>The school is experiencing a high level of stress due to its rapidly shrinking market position and its inability to correct this trend. The topic of continuous improvement is a foreign concept here.</p>	<p>Description:</p> <p>The school has no time for discussions on continuous improvement because it is experiencing increased anxiety with the realisation that the school's traditional market position is in jeopardy.</p>	<p>Description:</p> <p>The school has heard about the need for a continuous improvement approach but is content with its traditional market position in the community.</p>	<p>Description:</p> <p>The school is implementing a continuous improvement approach, experiencing a renewed enthusiasm and achieving initial success in re-defining their market position.</p>	<p>Description:</p> <p>The school practices a continuous improvement approach, has a growing community of support and is successful in their market position.</p>

	SINKING SCHOOL	STRUGGLING SCHOOL	COASTING SCHOOL	PROGRESSING SCHOOL	FLOURISHING SCHOOL
1. VISIONARY LEADERSHIP					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision & Mission 	The school is preoccupied with survival, not visionary planning.	The school is experiencing factionalism regarding the need to redefine its vision and mission.	The school is content with its traditional vision / mission of service for a traditional support community.	The school is in the process of redefining its vision / mission to better engage the community.	The school has redefined its vision and mission in order to engage the community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission-focused Planning 	The mission has been forgotten in the plans to keep the school operational.	The mission exists on paper but has no influence on plans and operations.	The mission exists on paper and is referred to occasionally during annual plans and operations.	The mission is captured in the long-range strategic plan and is beginning to be developed and implemented.	The mission is captured in the long-range strategic plan which is being implemented and renewed yearly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Perception 	The general public does not even know about the school.	The general public has a limited awareness and a generally negative attitude towards the school.	The general public is aware of the school; accepts its presence but does not embrace the school.	The general public is increasingly positive towards the school and speaks well of its reputation.	The general public has a highly positive attitude and appreciates its Christian educational contribution.

	SINKING SCHOOL	STRUGGLING SCHOOL	COASTING SCHOOL	PROGRESSING SCHOOL	FLOURISHING SCHOOL
2. EFFECTIVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Governance 	Board management model is in a dysfunctional state as almost all operational issues come to the board.	Board management model shows evidence of dysfunctional use of authority and decision-making.	Board is content with its current management board model and sees no need to examine reforms.	Board is actively pursuing its governance reform and revitalisation.	The new board governance model is clearly understood and executed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal Training 	The lone administrator is preoccupied with basic operations and teaching assignment and has no time or energy to pursue professional development and certification goals.	The administrator is aware of professional development and certification goals but struggling to stay ahead on school operations.	The administrator holds or pursues professional development and certification in order to meet contract requirements or personal goals.	The administrators pursue certification and further professional development in conjunction with school growth and development needs.	Administrative team holds proper certification, place a high value on continuing professional development and establish a culture of personal and staff improvement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office Management 	Principal incapable of managing the basics of office management and the heavy teaching load.	Principal struggles with personal ability to manage a school office and more teaching assignments.	Principal continues to work with committee leadership regarding school management.	Principal is developing an effective team management approach for school operations	Principal leads a highly efficient proactive office staff in the operation of the school.

	SINKING SCHOOL	STRUGGLING SCHOOL	COASTING SCHOOL	PROGRESSING SCHOOL	FLOURISHING SCHOOL
3. EFFECTIVE MONETARY MANAGEMENT					
• Budget	School can only afford a skeleton staff and essential supplies.	Budget cut-backs have compromised the core program and staffing.	The school budget covers the core program regarding supplies & staffing.	Budget provides for an expanding program offering with proper staffing.	Budget provides for an expanded program and quality staffing.
• Surplus / Deficit Profile	School is accumulating annual deficits that are threatening fiscal viability.	School is struggling to meet the annual budget and has had to cut back on staffing and basic programs.	School is able to match revenue with a basic operational budget. The Ladies Guild is funding the extras.	School is able to raise funds beyond the need to carry an expanded program and office staff.	School is consistently able to set aside funds for a reserve or contingencies.
• Tuition	High tuition levels for reduced program quality are becoming a challenge for even the committed.	High tuition levels and reduced program quality are regularly cited as the reason parents give for leaving the school.	Parental complaints about tuition levels and program quality are a regular feature of Board concerns.	Parental complaints about tuition are decreasing as program improvements are being implemented.	Parents willingly pay the tuition and are very satisfied with the program available for their child.
• Supporters	The supporters are indicating their lack of enthusiasm to support the school through traditional fundraising activities.	Traditional supporters of the school are voicing concerns about the narrowing base of volunteers for the annual fundraising projects.	The school relies on traditional volunteers to raise an ever increasing amount of funds using traditional fundraising methods.	The school is finding a new willingness by a growing list of donors to support projects and appeals. Has set aside traditional fundraising projects.	By employing professional staff, the school is able to attract significant donations for both capital and program projects.

This document was prepared by Julius de Jager for the OACS Leadership Conference on November, 2005

It was revised for the CSS Building to Flourish Conference on November 12 & 13, 2008

Used with Permission

	SINKING SCHOOL	STRUGGLING SCHOOL	COASTING SCHOOL	PROGRESSING SCHOOL	FLOURISHING SCHOOL
4. QUALITY PROGRAMMING					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student / Teacher Ratio 	The school has slipped down to the triple grade classroom level.	The school's STR policies are ineffective as most classes are at the double grade level.	The STR policy of the school is being challenged by decreasing enrolments and uncomfortable decisions to combine grade levels.	The STR policy is guiding the school in meeting its maximum enrolment efficiency levels in several grade levels.	The STR policy assists the school in maintaining its maximum enrolment efficiency across all grade levels.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Programs 	Triple grade classroom demands have required reduction of the quality of the programs.	Current educational program is being compromised by declining enrolments and double grades.	Current program is considered acceptable; limited effort being applied to program assessment and renewal.	Educational program is being improved to be more intentional about the school's teaching and learning goals with initial success marked by assessment results.	Educational program is accomplishing clearly stated goals of teaching methods and student learning supported by assessment results.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated Instruction 	Teachers have no time to think about differentiated instruction.	Differentiated instruction is not being implemented in the school.	Differentiated instruction is being done in some classrooms by motivated teachers.	Differentiated instruction is being implemented in the school.	Differentiated instruction is being implemented as a general practice throughout the school.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Ed 	<p>The school has no specialized ability to diagnose or instruct LD students.</p>	<p>The school accesses a trained professional to diagnose students with possible difficulties.</p>	<p>School has a trained professional who is identifying and working with LD students.</p>	<p>School's SE program identifies, recommends and implements learning strategies for LD as well as gifted students.</p>	<p>School's SE program identifies, recommends and implements learning strategies for LD as well as gifted students.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Performance 	<p>Teachers are just coping with their instructional, management and supervision duties.</p>	<p>Teachers are feeling stressed about their daily tasks and are reluctant to embrace program changes.</p>	<p>Teachers are working individually on program improvement but substantive staff collaboration is not in place.</p>	<p>Teachers are learning to become a professional learning community and some program successes are already in place.</p>	<p>Teachers are functioning as a professional learning community with a high level of interaction over program improvement.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Quality 	<p>The staff has shrunk to a core group who do not plan to relocate to another school.</p>	<p>The staff consists of veterans who are deeply connected to the community and a contingent of younger staff who move on in a few years.</p>	<p>The school is losing its better staff to other schools and having difficulty attracting new staff to their community.</p>	<p>The school is beginning to attract quality personnel who are excited about the potential of the school.</p>	<p>The school attracts and retains high quality teachers and staff members who are motivated to contribute to the school's mission.</p>

	SINKING SCHOOL	STRUGGLING SCHOOL	COASTING SCHOOL	PROGRESSING SCHOOL	FLOURISHING SCHOOL
5. APPEALING FACILITIES					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appearance 	The facilities are in a serious state of disrepair and may be slipping into health concerns regarding air quality.	The facilities are slipping into disrepair and show evidence of “fatigue” of use.	The facilities has not been updated or redecorated substantially in the last 10-15 years.	The school is following a development plan to rejuvenate their facilities.	The facilities have been replaced or rejuvenated in an attractive manner.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location 	The school is hidden from public view or is situated out of town. The community does not know where the school is located.		The school is set back within a residential community but good signage is in place. Community use is taking place.		The school is clearly visible in the community, enjoys immediate access to major arteries in the community and is used by community groups regularly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gymnasium 	The school does not have a gymnasium.		The school has an smaller gymnasium.		The school has a fully equipped and adequate-sized gymnasium.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library 	The school does not have a space designated as a Library		The school maintains a Library large enough to store its book collection.		The school has invested in a full-sized teaching Library.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer Lab 	The ratio is 1:4 students using old units.		The ratio is 1:1 but the equipment is older.		The lab is 1:1 and each classroom is also equipped with quality units.

	SINKING SCHOOL	STRUGGLING SCHOOL	COASTING SCHOOL	PROGRESSING SCHOOL	FLOURISHING SCHOOL
6. SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loyalty 	The school has a remnant of its former traditional support community still committed to support.	The school's traditional support community is in decline.	The school continues to receive support from its traditional community but struggles to extend it beyond the founding church groups.	The school is enjoying a resurgence of support among parents, alumni and supporters.	The school has generated an enthusiasm among the parents, alumni and supporters.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance 	School events involve small groups of people.	Attendance at school events is in decline especially at society meetings.	Attendance is slipping as school events especially at society meetings.	Attendance is increasing at school events.	School events are well attended.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers 	Volunteers are replacing paid positions. They are suffering "burn out" under the workload.	Volunteerism is being done by a shrinking core of supporters at both the school and the governance level.	Volunteerism is becoming a challenge for the school especially at the board level.	Volunteerism is improving for both the school and governance positions.	Volunteerism is high for both school and governance positions.