

LONDON DISTRICT
Catholic School
BOARD

LDCSB Strategic Priorities Stakeholder

Survey Results (2006)

**Prepared by the
Strategic Priorities Planning Committee**

June 2006



LDCSB Strategic Priorities

Stakeholder Survey Results (2006)

BACKGROUND

The London District Catholic School Board's (LDCSB) Strategic Priorities (2004-2006) were first disseminated in August 2004. The Board's (2004-2006) Strategic Priorities: *Catholic Identity, Focus on Learning, Commitment to Community and Commitment to Stewardship* encompassed twenty-eight indicators.

In January 2005, Corrie Gicante, Strategic and Staff Development Officer requested a status update on the implementation of the Board's four Strategic Priorities. Implementation Effectiveness Surveys were administered to all superintendents, principals, and school council chairs, as well as a sample of elementary and secondary school teachers. A Status Update Report was prepared and presented by Dr. Jim McTavish, Assessment and Evaluation Consultant and Corrie Gicante to Administrative Council in April 2005. One of the recommendations stemming from the report was to re-administer a second survey in the spring of 2006.

Toward this end, the LDCSB Strategic Priorities Stakeholder 2006 Survey was launched on February 2, 2006 via the Board's website. The survey was prefaced with a letter of invitation from Mr. Joseph Rapai, Director of Education and was accessible to LDCSB stakeholders until May 5, 2006. The primary intent of the survey was to help determine, how well the Board has addressed its Strategic Priorities (2004-2006) and related indicators, as well as provide LDCSB stakeholders an opportunity to identify additional priorities or issues the Board should be addressing for 2007-2010.

The purpose of the current report is to provide a preliminary descriptive level summary of the quantitative and qualitative data stemming from the on-line Strategic Priorities Stakeholder 2006 Survey.

LIMITATIONS

At the outset it is important to note that the survey sample is relatively small (N = 225) and may not necessarily be representative of LDCSB stakeholders. Caution is warranted when making any inferences or generalizations derived from the survey sample data to the target population (i.e., LDCSB stakeholders). It is acknowledged that all LDCSB stakeholders may not have been able to access the on-line survey.

KEY FINDINGS

Respondent Role or Affiliation

For question # 1 respondents were asked to indicate their current role or affiliation. Two hundred and twenty-two stakeholders answered this question. Table 1 lists the role or affiliation of those respondents. Secondary teachers, parents, elementary teachers, school council members and principals represented the five largest role/affiliation groups.

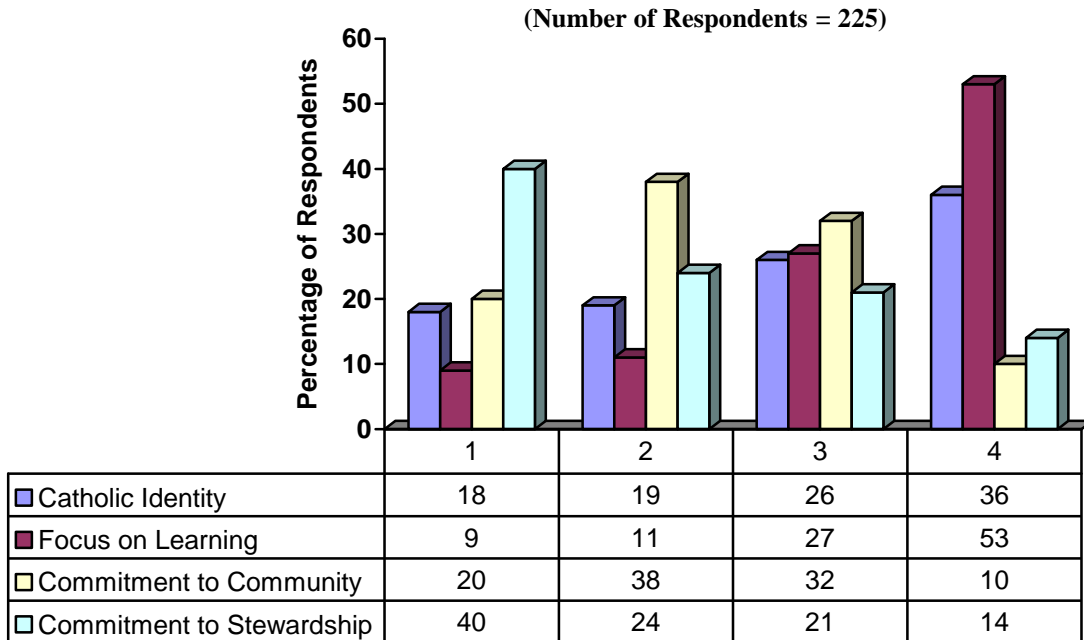
Table 1. Respondent Role or Affiliation

Role or Affiliation	#	%
Administration	9	4
Association of Business Professionals	2	1
Association of Professional Student Support Services	6	3
Computer Support	1	0
Chaplain	2	1
Community Stakeholder	4	2
Custodial and Maintenance	2	1
Educational Assistant	7	3
Elementary Teacher	28	13
Resource Teacher	8	4
Librarian	3	1
Parent/Guardian	37	17
Principal/Vice-principal	17	8
School Council Chair	9	4
School Council Member	18	8
Secondary Teacher	39	18
Secretarial Support	9	4
Student	14	6
Trustee	0	0
Other	7	3
Total	222	100

Ranked Importance of the Four Strategic Priorities (2004-2006)

For question # 2, which used a Likert type four-point rating scale (1 = Least Important and 4 = Most Important), respondents were asked to rank the importance of the four LDCSB Strategic Priorities (2004-2006). As illustrated in Figure 1, the majority (53%) of respondents ranked *Focus on Learning* as the most important strategic priority followed in descending order by *Catholic Identity* (36%), *Commitment to Stewardship* (13%) and *Commitment to Community* (10%).

Figure 1. Ranked Importance of Strategic Priorities



Implementation Effectiveness of the Four Current Strategic Priorities (2004-2006)

Each of the four strategic priorities had associated with it a number of indicators that serve to help determine how successful the Board has been towards addressing each strategic priority. In total the four strategic priorities had twenty-eight indicators associated with them.

For questions # 3, 4, 5 and 6 respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they believed each indicator listed under its strategic priority had been addressed using a five-point rating scale (1 = To a very little extent; 2 = To a little extent; 3 = To a moderate extent; 4 = To a large extent; and 5 = To a very large extent) within our Board for 2004-2006. Respondents were also provided with a ‘Don’t Know’ option for those indicators in which they did not have sufficient information on which to base an implementation effectiveness rating.

Catholic Identity

The strategic priority – *Catholic Identity* had six indicators associated with it. Table 2 lists the implementation effectiveness of each indicator as rated by survey respondents. Fifty-seven respondents also provided an additional comment regarding the implementation of the six indicators.

Indicator # 1 – *Provide a distinctly Catholic education through the integration of Catholic beliefs and values in all learning experiences* was rated the best addressed of the six indicators under this strategic priority. Sixty percent of respondents indicated that this indicator had been addressed to a large or very large extent. One respondent wrote, “This pillar speaks to the heart of our existence” while another respondent stated, “ We do a wonderful job in this.”

Indicator # 2 – *Continue the integration of the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations into the Ontario Curriculum and acknowledge all students and graduates who demonstrate the expectations* and Indicator # 5 – *Provide opportunities for all stakeholders to learn about, grow in, and live their faith in Jesus Christ* received the second highest implementation scores. Fifty-nine percent of respondents reported that these two indicators had been

addressed to a large or very large extent. Some respondents indicated that more work still needs to be done in this areas. Five percent of respondents responded with ‘Don’t Know’ for Indicator # 2.

Table 2. Implementation Effectiveness of Indicators for Strategic Priority – Catholic Identity

Indicators	1 To a very little extent	2 To a little extent	3 To a moderate extent	4 To a large extent	5 To a very large extent	Don't Know
1. Provide a distinctly Catholic education through the integration of Catholic beliefs and values in all learning experiences.	2% 4	9% 19	28% 62	41% 92	19% 42	2% 4
2. Continue the integration of the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations into the Ontario Curriculum and acknowledge all students and graduates who demonstrate the expectations.	2% 4	6% 12	29% 63	43% 93	16% 35	5% 11
3. Encourage and empower all partners in education to recognize, celebrate and advocate for the distinctive nature of Catholic education.	4% 8	12% 26	27% 59	42% 93	13% 29	2% 5
4. Deliver Catholic education in partnership with the family, the parish and the community as a means of developing learners who can contribute positively to the Church and society.	3% 7	12% 27	28% 60	39% 85	16% 35	1% 3
5. Provide opportunities for all stakeholders to learn about, grow in, and live their faith in Jesus Christ.	2% 4	11% 24	26% 56	42% 92	17% 38	2% 5
6. Reinforce vocation and service in the Catholic learning community through system staff development programs.	5% 11	11% 24	30% 65	34% 74	15% 32	5% 11

Indicator # 3 – *Encourage and empower all partners in education to recognize, celebrate and advocate for the distinctive nature of Catholic education* and Indicator # 4 – *Deliver Catholic education in partnership with the family, the parish and the community as a means of developing learners who can contribute positively to the Church and society* were rated by 55% of respondents as being implemented to a large or to a very large extent. One respondent commented that Indicator # 3 is an “absolute priority”. Another respondent stated, “Social justice issues which the church finds important, the Board does not”.

Indicator # 6 – *Reinforce vocation and service in the Catholic learning community through system staff development programs* was rated by 49% of respondents as being addressed to a large or very large extent. However, 5% of respondents also responded with ‘Don’t Know’ for Indicator # 6.

Focus on Learning

The strategic priority – *Focus on Learning* had nine indicators associated with it. Table 3 lists the implementation effectiveness of each *Focus on Learning* indicator as rated by survey respondents. Seventy-three respondents also provided an additional comment regarding the implementation of the nine *Focus on Learning* indicators.

Indicator # 1 – *Promote the concept of schools as inclusive Catholic learning communities under the leadership of the school principal* was rated the best addressed of the nine indicators under this strategic priority. About 60% of respondents indicated that this indicator had been addressed to a large or very large extent. The leadership of the principal was acknowledged but some felt that it should be more broadly based, including the Church and school staff. Concern was expressed about the effect of twinning schools on the effectiveness of leadership able to be provided by the principal.

Table 3. Implementation Effectiveness of Indicators for Strategic Priority – Focus on Learning

Indicators	1 To a very little extent	2 To a little extent	3 To a moderate extent	4 To a large extent	5 To a very large extent	Don't Know
1. Promote the concept of schools as inclusive Catholic learning communities under the leadership of the school principal.	5% 12	8% 17	26% 57	40% 88	20% 45	1% 3
2. Create student-centered education communities that foster the development of the whole person.	4% 9	12% 25	28% 61	39% 85	16% 35	1% 2
3. Allocate resources to maximize opportunities for student learning and success.	13% 29	23% 51	23% 51	28% 61	11% 23	2% 4
4. Promote the use of effective instructional and assessment strategies and programs that meet the needs of all students.	6% 14	10% 23	33% 72	36% 79	13% 28	2% 4
5. Provide quality professional development that focuses on teaching and learning to support the needs of our diverse student populations.	8% 18	17% 37	29% 62	28% 60	12% 26	6% 14
6. Improve and support increased student use of information technology as a learning tool.	8% 17	15% 33	30% 64	35% 75	11% 24	1% 3
7. Facilitate and support the development of integrated school improvement plans.	10% 21	15% 32	30% 65	34% 74	5% 10	7% 15
8. Provide consultative, analytic and decision-making support to schools for conducting action research that evaluates and improves instruction.	9% 19	18% 38	33% 71	20% 43	4% 9	17% 37
9. Use data to determine learning priorities, monitor and guide progress and sustain continuous improvement.	7% 14	13% 28	32% 69	30% 65	4% 8	14% 31

Indicator # 2 – *Create student-centered education communities that foster the development of the whole person* received the second highest implementation score. Fifty-five percent of respondents felt it has been addressed to a large or very large extent. Respondents stated that teachers, particularly in the elementary schools, are implementing this indicator. A number of respondents also suggested that it is easier to implement this particular indicator in smaller schools.

Indicator # 4 – *Promote the use of effective instructional and assessment strategies and programs that meet the needs of all students* received the third highest ranking under this strategic priority. Forty-nine percent felt it has been addressed to a large or very large extent. Respondents commented that some teachers are doing this very well, however, more support is needed to effectively implement programs including the principles of ‘Education for All’. There is a need for more evidence-based decision-making. Some respondents felt that more discussion with parents needs to take place regarding assessment strategies.

Forty-six percent of respondents reported that Indicator # 6 – *Improve and support increased student use of information technology as a learning tool* had been addressed to a large or very large extent. Respondents commented that there is recognition of the importance of information technology in today’s society and teachers are very positive about using it but need to be able to update their knowledge on an on-going basis. Respondents frequently indicated that there are not enough computers in many schools to allow easy access by students and staff. A number of respondents commented that often computers are slow and out of date, creating frustration. The quality of desktop programs was reported to be inconsistent and there are inequities among schools with regard to available resources. Concern was expressed about the long-term viability of the technology resources in schools.

Indicator # 5 – *Provide quality professional development that focuses on teaching and learning to support the needs of our diverse student populations* was rated by 40% of respondents as being addressed to a large or very large extent. The majority of comments appeared to come from educators expressing a variety of opinions. Some respondents reported that the professional development provided was good but there was not time or support to effectively implement ideas learned. Others said that too much time was being spent on literacy to the detriment of other subjects or teaching students with diverse needs. There was some concern expressed that some of the professional development provided involved too much listening and needed to be more ‘hands-on’. Several respondents identified the need for more professional development at the secondary level.

Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported that Indicator # 3 – *Allocate resources to maximize opportunities for student learning and success* was being addressed to a large or very large extent. Survey respondents raised a number of issues regarding resource allocations to schools. Several respondents commented that there is not equity between schools in the allocation of resources (i.e., have and have-not schools, rural schools versus urban schools). Specific concerns expressed were quite diverse (e.g., too many portables, not enough support and staff to adequately deal with diverse needs of students, too few textbooks in some schools, inadequate school facilities, increased support for special programs (e.g., French Immersion, anti-bullying programs, physical education, arts). Some respondents reported that the drop in per student allocations in secondary schools had made operations very difficult.

Indicator # 7 – *Facilitate and support the development of integrated school improvement plans* was rated by 39% of respondents as being addressed to a large (34%) or very large extent (5%). Seven percent of respondents were unable to rate the implementation effectiveness of this indicator. Comments ranged from ‘doing well’ to ‘not enough support or feedback provided’. Several respondents interpreted the Integrated School Improvement Plan as a board plan intended to improve the physical aspect of schools. From that perspective, these respondents indicated the board was not doing well.

Thirty-four percent of respondents reported that Indicator # 9 – *Use data to determine learning priorities, monitor and guide progress and sustain continuous improvement* had been addressed to a large (30%) or very large (4%) extent. Fourteen percent of respondents, however, provided a ‘Don’t Know’ response. Comments reflected both endorsement, as well as suggestions for improvement. There were several suggestions about the need for our board to become more ‘evidence-based’. At the same time, some respondents cautioned that too great an emphasis on “data” could detract from the educational experience of a classroom.

Indicator # 8 – *Provide consultative, analytic and decision-making support to schools for conducting action research that evaluates and improves instruction* was rated by 24% as being addressed to a large (20%) or very large (4%) extent. Seventeen percent of respondents, however, provided a ‘Don’t Know’ response with respect to rating the implementation effectiveness of this particular indicator. Comments provided by respondents were quite varied. A number of respondents suggested that more work is needed to provide access to data (i.e., via eSIS). Others indicated that research is overdone and that more funds should be allocated to classroom resources. More collaborative professional development and increased communications were suggested as opportunities for improvement.

Commitment to Community

The strategic priority – *Commitment to Community* had six indicators associated with it. Table 4 lists the implementation effectiveness of each indicator under this strategic priority. Sixty respondents also provided an additional comment for the *Commitment to Community* indicators.

Indicator # 5 – *Facilitate accessibility for all community members through identification, removal and prevention of all barriers for persons with disabilities* was rated the best implemented of the six indicators under this strategic priority. Fifty-eight percent of respondents indicated that this indicator had been addressed to a large or very large extent.

Indicator # 1– *Continue to nurture inclusive school communities that focus on improved student outcomes and celebrate the unique gifts of all students* was rated by 52% of respondents as being implemented to a large or very large extent. Respondents expressed a number of positive comments about the implementation of this indicator. For example, one respondent stated, “ I see students getting more attention from their teachers”. Another respondent wrote, “We are doing very well here”.

Indicator # 3 – *Provide encouragement, expertise and support in order to establish procedures and protocols that address the safety and dignity of all stakeholders* and Indicator # 2 – *Continue to foster cooperative community initiatives and partnerships* were rated by 48% and 47%, respectively, by respondents as being addressed to a large or to a very large extent. For Indicator # 2, it was suggested that more community partners should be invited to provide input into school related priorities.

Indicator # 4 – *Enhance communication with, and service to, students, staff, parents, volunteers, parishes and Catholic School Councils* was rated by 40% of respondents as being implemented to a large or to a very large extent.

Indicator # 6 – *Improve system communications and information management throughout the district* was rated the least addressed by 39% percent of respondents. About 6% of survey respondents responded with ‘Don’t Know’ for Indicator # 6.

Table 4. Implementation Effectiveness of Indicators for Strategic Priority – *Commitment to Community*

Indicators	1 To a very little extent	2 To a little extent	3 To a moderate extent	4 To a large extent	5 To a very large extent	Don't Know
1. Continue to nurture inclusive school communities that focus on improved student outcomes and celebrate the unique gifts of all students.	6% 12	11% 24	30% 65	40% 87	12% 26	0% 1
2. Continue to foster cooperative community initiatives and partnerships.	4% 9	11% 25	37% 80	38% 83	9% 19	1% 2
3. Provide encouragement, expertise and support in order to establish procedures and protocols that address the safety and dignity of all stakeholders.	7% 16	11% 25	31% 67	37% 80	11% 24	3% 6
4. Enhance communication with, and service to, students, staff, parents, volunteers, parishes and Catholic School Councils.	8% 17	12% 25	40% 85	32% 69	8% 18	0% 1
5. Facilitate accessibility for all community members through identification, removal and prevention of all barriers for persons with disabilities.	4% 8	12% 26	23% 50	39% 84	19% 41	4% 9
6. Improve system communications and information management throughout the district.	8% 17	15% 33	31% 67	32% 70	7% 16	6% 14

Commitment to Stewardship

The strategic priority – *Commitment to Stewardship* had seven indicators associated with it. Table 5 lists the implementation effectiveness of each *Commitment to Stewardship* indicator as rated by survey respondents. Sixty-eight respondents also provided an additional comment. For all seven indicators under this particular strategic priority, 35% of respondents or less reported that they were being addressed to a large or very large degree. It should also be noted, however, that from 11% to 20% of respondents indicated they could not rate five of the seven indicators for their implementation effectiveness.

Table 5. Implementation Effectiveness of Indicators for Strategic Priority – *Commitment to Stewardship*

Indicators	1 To a very little extent	2 To a little extent	3 To a moderate extent	4 To a large extent	5 To a very large extent	Don't Know
1. Recognize, value and develop the human resources necessary to sustain quality Catholic system programs and services.	9% 20	17% 37	35% 76	27% 59	8% 18	4% 8
2. Continue the practice of sound financial management, focusing on the delivery of quality Catholic education by providing the best possible accommodations for all students and improving the educational environment within the available funding model and finances.	17% 36	20% 44	33% 72	20% 44	5% 11	4% 9
3. Develop long term and preventative maintenance strategies to extend the life of the Board's physical plant.	8% 18	11% 23	27% 57	27% 57	8% 17	19% 41
4. Conduct research and evaluation studies within existing resources towards determining the impact of system initiatives.	5% 11	17% 35	33% 71	22% 47	2% 5	20% 43
5. Implement information technology and data towards enhancing human resources management.	7% 14	15% 33	30% 64	25% 53	4% 8	20% 42
6. Review recruitment and selection processes and develop Board policy to clarify philosophy and practices.	9% 19	15% 32	31% 66	22% 46	3% 7	20% 43
7. Continue to provide resources that identify and support potential leaders, serve current system staff in their new roles and build capacity within the organization enabling it to fulfill its mission and values.	7% 14	13% 27	38% 81	24% 52	7% 16	11% 24

Indicator # 1– *Recognize, value and develop the human resources necessary to sustain quality Catholic system programs and services* received the highest implementation rating at 35%. The open-ended responses reflected both positive, as well as negative comments concerning professional development, faith leadership and administration. Several respondents commented on the need for more Educational Assistants and other support personnel for students. Some respondents also commented on the need to recognize in a consistent way the contributions of all staff to system success. The objection to outsourcing custodial services was raised by several respondents.

Although Indicator # 3 – *Develop long term and preventative maintenance strategies to extend the life of the Board's physical plant* also received the highest implementation rating under this strategic priority at (35%), 19% of survey respondents said they could not rate the implementation of this indicator. Many of the respondents who submitted comments expressed concerns over inequities that exist between schools and identified specific things that need to be fixed or upgraded. The need to eliminate portables, for example, was one issue repeatedly raised. It was suggested that repairs are often 'band-aid efforts' rather than long-term solutions. Overcrowding was another issue identified by a number of respondents. It was also noted that preventative maintenance is done regularly and praise was directed at the work of custodians.

Indicator # 7 – *Continue to provide resources that identify and support potential leaders, serve current system staff in their new roles and build capacity within the organization enabling it to fulfill its mission and values* was identified by 31% of respondents as being addressed to a large (24%) or very large (7%) extent. Eleven percent indicated they were unable to rate this particular indicator. Respondents commented on the importance of identifying criteria for selecting future leaders and the need to communicate that information to staff.

Twenty-nine percent of respondents reported that Indicator # 5 – *Implement information technology and data towards enhancing human resources management* was being addressed to a large (25%) or very large (4%) extent. However, 20% of those completing the survey indicated they were unable to rate this indicator. Equity issues were raised by a number of respondents.

Indicator # 2 – *Continue the practice of sound financial management, focusing on the delivery of quality Catholic education by providing the best possible accommodations for all students and improving the educational environment within the available funding model and finances* was reported by 25% of respondents as being addressed to a large (20%) or very large (5%) extent. This indicator drew the largest number of comments (37) under this priority. The comments spoke about overcrowding in schools, inadequate facilities, the need for broader input to the decision-making process and greater transparency in communication to stakeholders, deficit budgets and the lack of the needed human (Educational Assistants) and other resources to meet the needs of the students.

Twenty-five percent of respondents reported that Indicator # 6 – *Review recruitment and selection processes and develop Board policy to clarify philosophy and practices* was being addressed to a large (22%) or very large (3%) extent. Comments suggested that there is a need for clarity about Board philosophy and policies in this area. It was also suggested that practices appear inconsistent and, in some cases, unfair. The best teachers do not necessarily have the highest grades.

Indicator # 4 – *Conduct research and evaluation studies within existing resources towards determining the impact of system initiatives* was rated by 24% of respondents as being addressed to a large (22%) or very large (2%) extent. Twenty percent of respondents were unable to rate the implementation effectiveness of this indicator. Respondents generally acknowledged that research is important and is needed to establish proper goals, however, the results must be communicated and used for improvement. There was some concern expressed about schools being inundated with surveys and some question about the value of surveys.

Greatest Strengths and Cause for Celebration

For question # 7, respondents were asked to tell us what they consider the greatest strengths in our system and cause for celebration. About 140 respondents provided a comment. The strengths that respondents provided were broadly organized into three categorical themes:

Students

Illustrative comments included:

“The great strength of our system are our students. They continue to excel when given the opportunity. We must continue to call them by name and honour their individual giftedness and accomplishments.”

“The children. In my school we have the greatest children.”

“Our children who graduate with as sense of confidence and self-fulfillment, knowing the difference between right and wrong. Largely as a result of their Catholic educational background, and who are exceptional role models for the next generation.”

Staff

Illustrative comments included:

“The staff at all levels”

“We have many unnamed and unacknowledged people within our system who do a tremendous job for no other reason than the pride and the knowledge that they have done good today.”

“Your people and their genuine concern for Catholic education.”

Faith

Illustrative comments included:

“Teaching our Kids the value of a Catholic education”

“Our Catholic –based education curriculum is our greatest strength. It is one we should be proud of. We teach our children to be strong in faith and compassionate towards others.”

“The Greatest strength is that it is still a Catholic education system! It is a treasure!”

Future Direction

For question # 8, respondents were asked to comment on emerging challenges, as well as new issues they would like to see addressed. One hundred and forty respondents provided a comment to this question. The challenges and issues most commonly cited by respondents included:

Viability of Catholic Education

A number of respondents commented on the financial instability of Catholic education and the impact of current social trends (e.g., declining enrolment) and political pressures that serve to threaten the existence of Catholic education. The closure and re-structuring of parishes was cited as a challenge as this may adversely impact the connection between home, Church and school. A number of respondents also made reference to Catholic social teaching and its implications for Board policies and business plans.

Equity Issues

Several respondents commented on the need for equity of programs and services for rural schools and schools with small student enrolments. A number of respondents cited inadequate school facilities and a need for clarifying the capital planning process.

Information Technology

Information technology serving as a driver was cited by a number of respondents as an emerging issue. Respondents mentioned the need for better technology in the schools, as well as the staff training to support its use.

Additional Comments and Suggestions

Question # 9 provided respondents with an opportunity to offer any additional comments or suggestions concerning the Board's strategic planning initiative. Fifty-nine responses were provided. A majority of respondents expressed appreciation for having the opportunity to provide input into the Board's strategic planning process. The on-going and continual need to be transparent, accountable and broadly consultative especially with school communities and, in particular, school councils was emphasized by a number of respondents.

NEXT STEPS

The Strategic Priorities Planning Committee will meet in order to begin the process of integrating the key findings stemming from this survey (LDCSB Strategic Priorities Stakeholder 2006 Survey) with other data and information related to the Board's strategic planning process for 2007-2010 (e.g., survey findings from the Implementation Effectiveness 2005 Survey, proceedings from the Town Hall Meeting held on March 22, 2006).