

**Perceptions  
of Leaders  
Regarding  
Children's  
Ministry  
Curriculum  
Materials**

Purpose of the Study .....	1
Executive Summary .....	2
Methodology and Demographics .....	3
Survey of Findings - Total Sample .....	5
Overall Favorable Impressions .....	6
Focus Group Responses .....	7
Student Interest Level .....	8
Student Involvement .....	9
Visuals and Gizmos .....	10
User Friendly .....	11
Music	
Quantity and Method .....	12
Enjoyable - Contemporary .....	13
Memorization and Getting Into the Bible .....	14
Focus Group Responses .....	15
Easy to Teach .....	16
Lesson Relevance and Interest Factor .....	17
Handouts and Activity Sheets .....	18
Packaging .....	19
Survey of Findings - Beginners .....	20
Overall Favorable Impressions .....	21
Student Interest Level .....	22
Student Involvement .....	22
Visuals and Gizmos .....	23
User Friendly .....	24
Music	
Quantity and Method .....	25
Enjoyable - Contemporary .....	26
Memorization and Getting Into the Bible .....	27
Easy to Teach .....	28
Lesson Relevance and Interest Factor .....	29
Handouts and Activity Sheets .....	30
Packaging .....	31
What Do You Want In The New Curriculum? .....	32
Additional Focus Group Responses .....	33

# Table of Contents

Survey of Findings - Kindergarten .....	35
Overall Favorable Impressions .....	36
Student Interest Level .....	37
Student Involvement .....	37
Visuals and Gizmos .....	38
User Friendly .....	39
Music	
Quantity and Method .....	40
Enjoyable - Contemporary .....	41
Memorization and Getting Into the Bible .....	42
Easy to Teach .....	43
Lesson Relevance and Interest Factor .....	44
Handouts and Activity Sheets .....	45
Packaging .....	46
What Do You Want In The New Curriculum? .....	47
Additional Focus Group Responses .....	48
Survey of Findings - Primary .....	50
Overall Favorable Impressions .....	51
Student Interest Level .....	52
Student Involvement .....	52
Visuals and Gizmos .....	53
User Friendly .....	54
Music	
Quantity and Method .....	55
Enjoyable - Contemporary .....	56
Memorization and Getting Into the Bible .....	57
Easy to Teach .....	58
Lesson Relevance and Interest Factor .....	59
Handouts and Activity Sheets .....	60
Packaging .....	61
What Do You Want In The New Curriculum? .....	62
Additional Focus Group Responses .....	63

# Table of Contents (continued)

Survey of Findings - Juniors.....	65
Overall Favorable Impressions .....	66
Student Interest Level .....	67
Student Involvement .....	67
Visuals and Gizmos .....	68
User Friendly .....	69
Music	
Quantity and Method .....	70
Enjoyable - Contemporary .....	71
Memorization and Getting Into the Bible .....	72
Easy to Teach.....	73
Lesson Relevance and Interest Factor .....	74
Handouts and Activity Sheets.....	75
Packaging.....	76
What Do You Want In The New Curriculum? .....	77
Additional Focus Group Responses .....	78
Recommendations .....	79

# Table of Contents (continued)

During the past two years the North American Division has conducted significant research into various aspects of its ministry approach to children. After careful review and study of the findings, many felt that the time has come to develop a new Sabbath School curriculum and program approach. A special taskforce has been established to further explore these issues and to make recommendations.

To assist the taskforce in its work the Division has asked the Church Resource Center to conduct a qualitative study of local church children's ministry leaders. The purpose of this study is to:

1. Document general feelings and perceptions of leaders toward the current Sabbath School program and lesson materials produced by the church.
2. Document general feelings and perceptions of leaders toward curriculum materials produced by non-Adventist publishers.
3. Identify specific elements of available curriculum materials that generate strong positive and/or negative feelings.
4. Profile by department, Beginner through Juniors, leaders feelings toward specific elements that should be kept, eliminated, changed or strengthened in the event a new curriculum is developed.

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# Purpose of the Study

- There is a large reservoir of loyalty on the part of local church Children's Ministry leaders toward Adventist produced Sabbath School materials.
- The most appreciated component of Adventist Sabbath School material is the lesson, which is perceived to be very biblically based and doctrinally sound.
- Despite a strong preference and loyalty to the Adventist curriculum, most respondents could not identify anything to commend it, other than its Bible centeredness, familiarity, and denominational ownership.
- When compared with curriculum materials from four other publishers, Adventist materials taken as a whole ranked third in the areas of "student interest" and "involvement."
- A strong preference is given to those publishers who use an "active learning" style. Leaders expressed desire for "hands-on" materials to help in general programming and lesson study.
- There is a sense that the components that make up the Adventist curriculum are not "connected" in purpose.
- There is a preference and desire for offerings on audio and video tapes. This is especially true of small churches. Leaders want music on cassette and video tapes as opposed to being referred to books.
- The greatest level of dissatisfaction with Adventist materials is in the area of "visuals." Leaders want more color—everywhere. In this area SDA produced materials ranked far behind those of all other publishers whose materials were evaluated.

# Executive Summary

Twenty focus groups were conducted in five North American locations. In four of the locations participants were recruited by local conference Children's Ministries Directors. In those areas where Regional Conferences existed those conferences participated in providing focus group participants. Recruitment for focus groups held in Silver Spring was done by the North American Division Office of Children's Ministry.

Four focus groups, one for each children's division, were held in each of the following cities:

- Portland, OR
- Denver, CO
- Hinsdale, IL
- Atlanta, GA
- Silver Springs, MD

*August 1995*

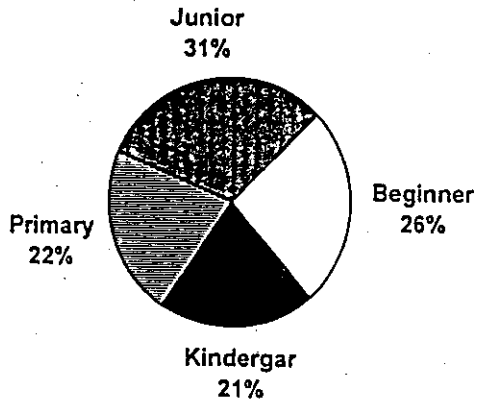
In selecting focus group participants conferences were asked to consider the following:

- Experience in Children's Sabbath School work
- Representation of churches of all sizes
- Ethnic and gender mix
- Representations of younger and older workers

Participants were given two hours to evaluate and share, by written and verbal response, their opinions concerning materials produced by:

- Review & Herald Publishing Association/Pacific Press
- Scripture Press
- Group Publishers
- Standard Publishing Association
- Gospel Light

Nearly 140 leaders participated in the groups. The statistics used in this report represent the data received from 121 completed written surveys.



Respondents By Sabbath School Division

# Methodology and Demographics

All but the first chart in each section of this report represent cases where respondents were given the opportunity to vote for TWO publishers whose materials they considered "best" in a given area. The values listed for each publisher on the horizontal bar charts represent the number of votes each received.

It should be noted that this report is more qualitative than quantitative in nature. The samples represented for each Sabbath School division are not significant enough in size to guarantee projectability of opinion to the total universe of leaders in each division. Statistics representing the total universe (Beginners - Juniors) however, have reliable projectability and provide general information that can prove helpful.

\*Data was entered and analyzed using SPSS, a computer tabulation and analysis program for microcomputers.

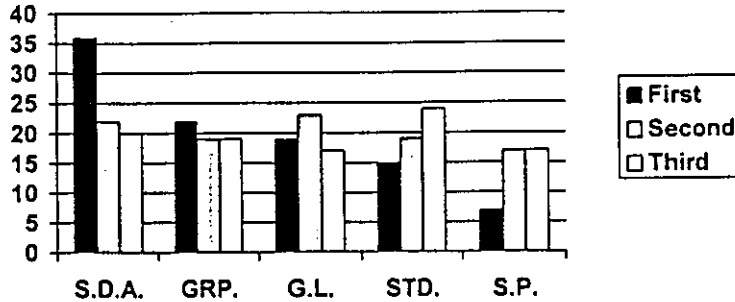
# Methodology and Demographics (continued)



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# Survey of Findings of Total Sample

*"You have now reviewed curriculum materials from 5 different publishers. Please rank below the 3 publishers whose materials you liked best."*



**Table 1**

	1	2	3
SDA	36	22	20
GROUP	22	19	19
GOSPEL LIGHT	19	23	17
STANDARD	15	19	24
SCRIPTURE PRESS	7	17	17

Percentages of First – Third Choices

# Overall Favorable Impressions

*"Which materials did you select as best after reviewing the work of all five publishers?"*

"I chose Gospel Light. I like the fact that they have a lot of gizmos. They had tapes, they had relevant current up-to-date colorful, attractive, inviting material. I felt very excited when I sat down at that table, to be perfectly honest with you. It was like it just jumped out at me. I wasn't coming to it, it came to me. It took me the shortest amount of time to evaluate it to know that I liked it."

- Hinsdale Beginners Teacher

"I wanted to be loyal to SDA but I did choose Group because I think that the more a child is involved, the more senses they use, the better they learn and the more they take with them."

- Atlanta Juniors Teacher

"I love Group. I think the way Group does things, putting it all in a package and its user friendly and you can get a lesson at a glance. On Sabbath afternoon you can just look at the next week's lesson and be planning what you are going to do for the next week. I can see that all incorporated. It's fun. I've used it, kids love it and I think it brings home a lot of things."

- Denver Kindergarten Teacher

"Well, I picked the Scripture Press because I thought it was a little more up to date."

- Denver Juniors Teacher

"I chose Standard. I think Standard and Group were similar. It was hard but my #1 choice was Standard and then my #2 choice was Group. Everything was there. You don't have to draw from any other resources. I guess it puts less stress on the teacher."

- Portland Kindergarten Teacher

**Most who selected SDA materials did so out of loyalty, familiarity, or comfort level.**

"I chose SDA. I like it because I'm comfortable with it."

- Portland Juniors Teacher

"I did choose the SDA one because I'm more familiar with it."

- Silver Spring Primary Teacher

"I chose our material to be loyal"

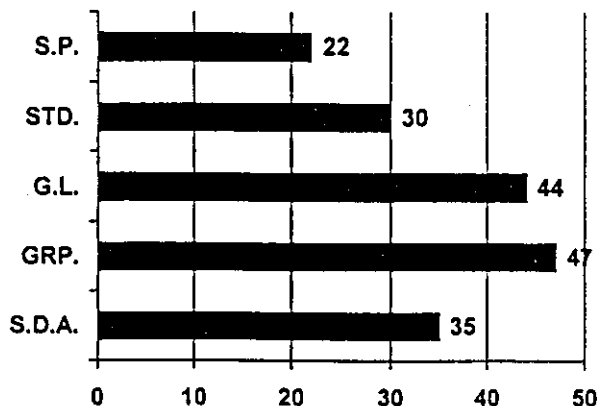
- Denver Beginners Teacher

"I chose SDA. I chose it because it's familiar. I'm biased to start off with."

- Denver Juniors Teacher

# Focus Group Responses

*"In your opinion, which of the publishers produce materials that would be most interesting to children?"*



# Student Interest Level

## Focus Group Responses:

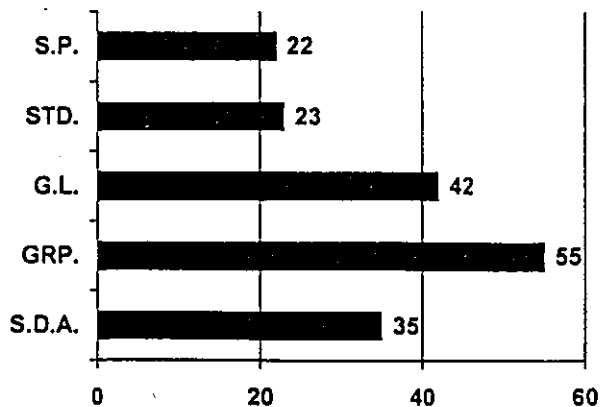
"I think that our kids are bored." - Atlanta Juniors Teacher

"I tried to put myself as a four- or five-year-old and I think the other publishers have lots of interesting and fun things and it would hold their attention." - Portland Kindergarten Teacher

"My son, who is 9 gets very bored reading the same lesson over every night. Set it up like the adult quarterly. You study on Sunday and some part you study on Monday and some part you study on Tuesday. He likes reading it once and then he doesn't want to hear it again. He doesn't want to go to the Primary Treasure and read that all over again. You know, he has it already - he's bright."

- Portland Primary Teacher

*"Which materials are most likely to foster student involvement?"*



# Student Involvement

## Focus Group Responses:

"I have a problem with the programs where you talk and they answer and you talk and they answer. The more you can give them, even if it's looking up Bible verses, anything where they can be real active. Give them something to do, they love it."

- Denver Primary Teacher

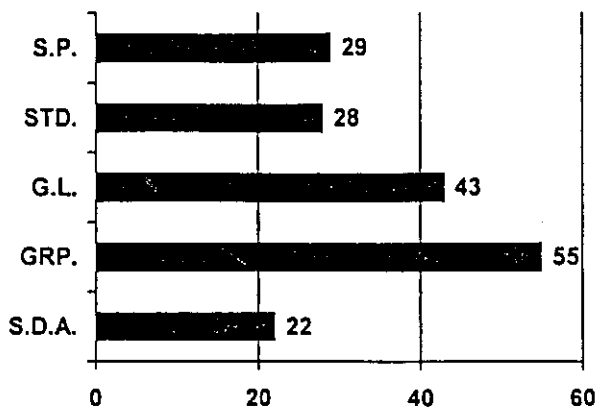
"I was impressed with having all of the activities in the Group box. I was really impressed with the fact that they got kids up and involved in the SS lesson rather than you being up front all the time teaching them. They had a lot of things that would get the kids involved."

- Denver Juniors Teacher

"I quit using our materials four or five years ago. I'm currently using the Group Program. I really like the Group Program because it has one point that is presented in lots of different ways throughout the lesson. I like it because it is active learning. Last week we did one on the body, and it said that we all need to work together and one person was a hand and one a foot and one the eyes and that was the only thing you could do. The hand could only reach, the feet could only take people places, but it couldn't see where it was going and it couldn't reach. And I thought that was a neat way to illustrate how the body of Christ works."

- Portland Juniors Teacher

*"Which publishers had the best program and teaching visuals?"*



## Visuals and Gizmos

### Focus Group Responses:

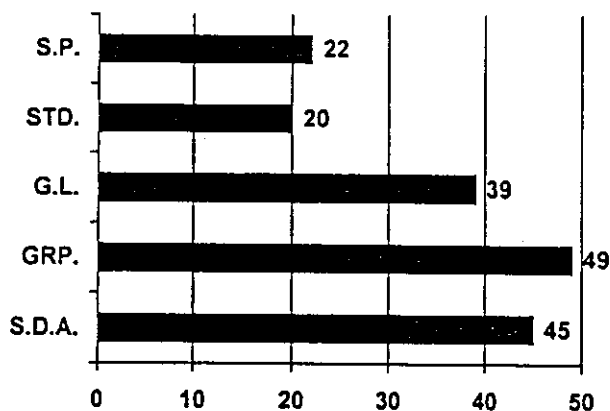
"I think some of our material is dull looking. And this was very vibrant, it catches your eye."  
- Portland Kindergarten Teacher

"I would say that I did enjoy this kit right here (Group) of the hands on, they had a little hands-on kit in the Group publishers. Most of the time our materials don't include hands-on things. The other primary teacher and I are creating some centers for the children so that they can have more hands-on types of things to do.

- Denver Primary Teacher

"Group Publishers, it was amazing to have those huge books. I know the kids would love that, and I wish we would have something like that more visual, something for the kids that you could use. I know my son would love that!  
- Atlanta Kindergarten Teacher

*"Whose materials were most user-friendly?"*



# User Friendly

## Focus Group Responses:

"I like the way Group does things, putting it all in a package and it's user friendly and you can get a lesson at a glance. On Sabbath afternoon you can just look at the next week's lesson and be planning what you are going to do for the next week. I can see that all incorporated. It's fun. I've used it, kids love it and I think it brings home a lot of things."

- Denver Primary Teacher

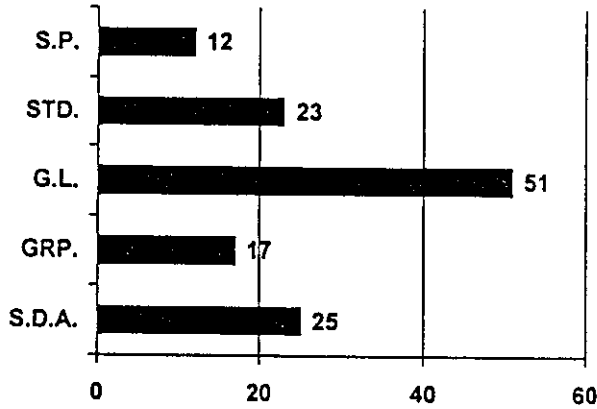
"Group is more inclusive. The stuff that we get you have to buy every-thing separately, and then you have to decide what you need, what you want to get. You have to basically choose from everything that's out there and what I liked in some of these, it's done. The basic stuff looks like it's all there and it's a lot more appealing to me than having to gather."

- Atlanta Kindergarten Teacher

"I liked all the organization in some of the other (non-SDA) programs for the teachers. It is much more specific, more activities that were more age appropriate, activities that were easier to put together that you don't have to use as much of your own creative energy to do, it's spelled out for you more."

- Silver Spring Beginners Teacher

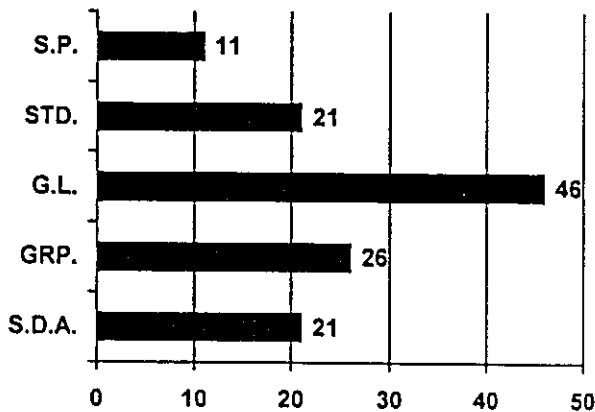
*"As you reviewed the music components of each curriculum, which publishers did best when it came to quantity?"*



## Music

## Quantity and Method

*"Which publishers did the best job when it came to the method in which the music was presented and/or used in the program?"*

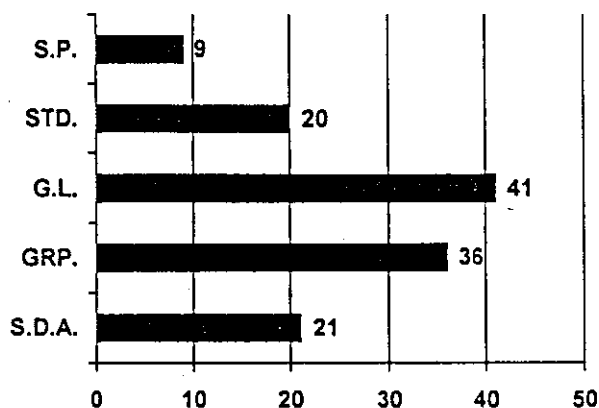


Focus Group Response:

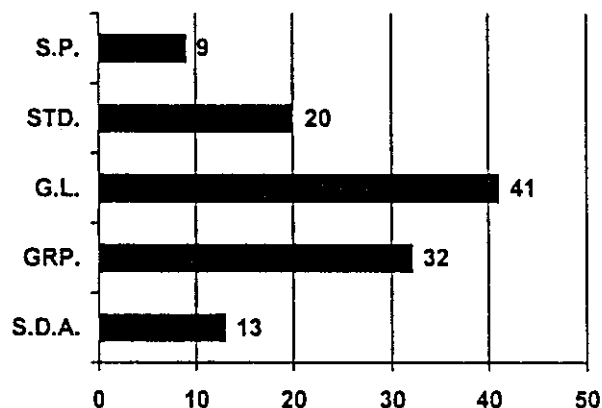
"I like the fact that the Gospel Light packet included the music, it included the videos."  
- Hinsdale Primary Teacher



*"Respondents were asked to select two publishers whose music components were most 'fun.'"*



*"Whose music was the most contemporary?"*



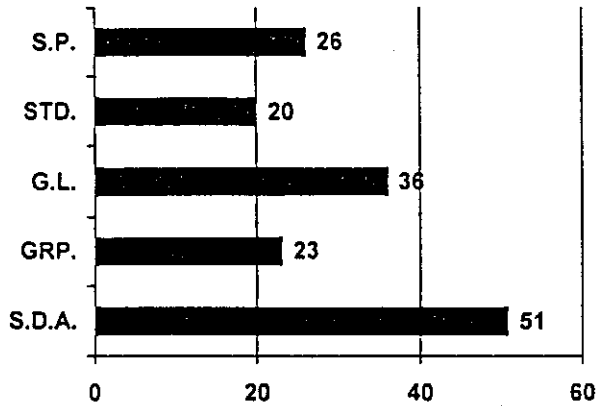
Focus Group Response:

"I like Group best; specifically I like their tape music the best. I really believe that there's a need for taped music. I like the teacher's book the very best of everything I saw in that one. And I just thought it was very vibrant."  
- Denver Beginners Teacher

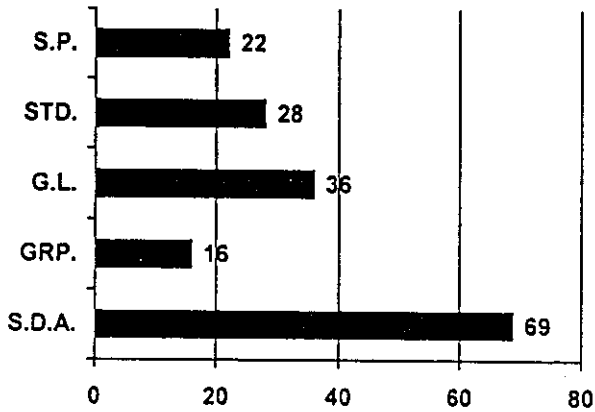
# Music

## Enjoyable - Contemporary

*“Which publishers are best in the area of Bible memorization?”*



*“Choose the two publishers that do the best job of getting kids into the Bible.”*



# Memorization and Getting Into the Bible

"I chose the SDA, because I think they know the Bible stories."  
- Atlanta Beginners Teacher

"So as far as the doctrinal and the deepness, I like the SDA program."  
- Portland Juniors Teacher

"I vote 100% for the individual quarterly that they take home and if they're sick they still have the lesson at home. If they're on vacation, if they fold it up and sit on their Primary Treasure in church, they still have their lesson at home. There's no excuse, because it's there. I'd rather, if I had to choose, lose the Primary Treasure and keep the Quarterly so they'd have a lesson at home."  
- Silver Spring Primary Teacher

"I know the Bible from Genesis to Revelation because of the Primary. I do not want to get rid of that."  
- Silver Spring Primary Teacher

"Drop out the stories about the killings, because a little boy asked me one time if it's all right for David to kill Goliath, why isn't it all right for people to kill other people? And there is a lot of times the Kindergarten lesson has stories about somebody killed so and so or killed all these people."  
- Atlanta Kindergarten Teacher

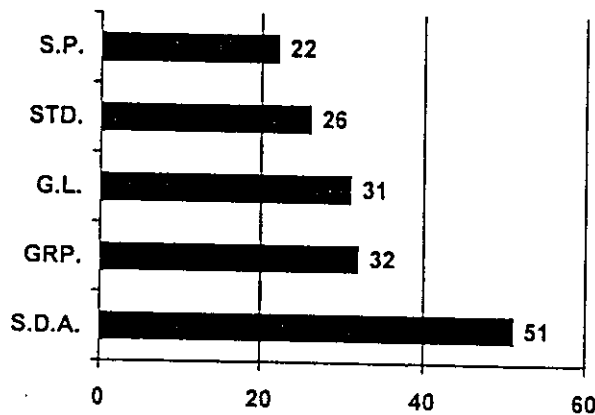
"This quarter was really difficult because you'd be in the middle of the desert talking about the Israelites, and it never resolved the story. They would talk about one incident about Moses hitting the rock and that was it. And the kids were left hanging and they had a hard time with the continuity of the stories. So it has to be resolved enough for the kids to feel good about—you know they're sitting there trying to figure out what happened, what's the purpose."  
- Hinsdale Kindergarten Teacher

"I found that in our group we're getting three different Memory Verses. We're getting a New King James, we're getting a King James, and we're getting a NIV; and the picture roll is one thing, the quarterly is another thing, the Little Friend is another thing."  
- Denver Kindergarten Teacher

# Focus Group Responses

## Getting Into The Bible

*"From a teachers perspective, which two publishers have lesson material that is most easily taught?"*



**Focus Group Responses:**

"A couple of weeks ago we were teaching the lesson and it's difficult for me to teach four and five year olds about the sanctuary, it has to be for the right age. Why do they do the sacrifice—I'm trying not to be morbid about it—I try to help them understand what a blessing it is for use and—that's why I like Gospel Light because everything is more age level."

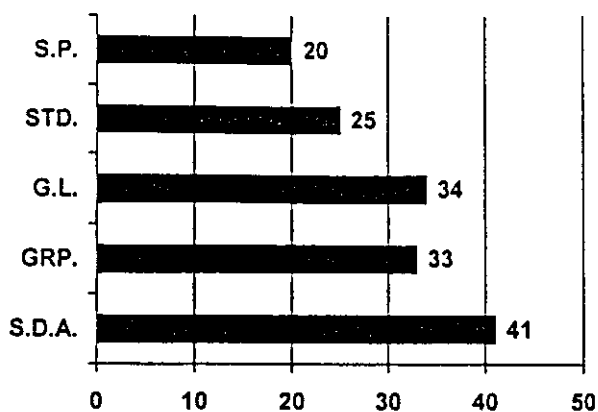
- Atlanta Kindergarten Teacher

"I chose Group, it just seemed easier to follow than the other ones."

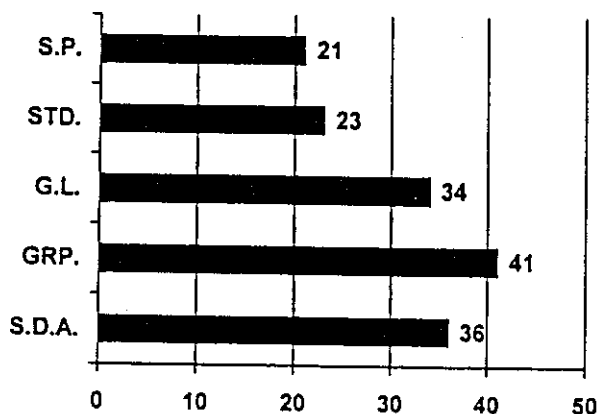
- Portland Primary Teacher

# Easy to Teach

*"Which two publishers have produced lessons that are most relevant to a child's daily life?"*



*"Which two publishers have produced lessons that would be most interesting to children?"*

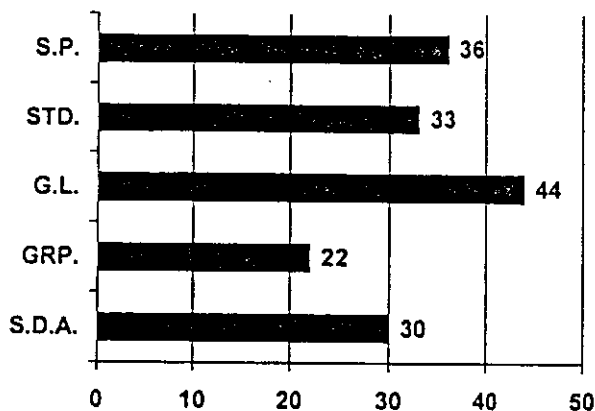


Focus Group Response:

"A lot of our kids are not in church school. They're in public schools. They're facing issues like violence, sexuality, music, school challenges. I'd like to make it so that it works for them every day, cause that's what they're really up against."  
- Hinsdale Juniors Teacher

# Lesson Relevance and Interest Factor

*"Which publishers have the best hand-outs and/or activity sheets?"*



# Handouts and Activity Sheets

## Focus Group Responses:

"Group had some very nice activity sheets. We don't have activity sheets persay in our program. It's basically stories and you know, read this or color that or whatever. But when you look at our Little Friend, it looks like an adult's magazine. It's gray and black and white."

- Denver Kindergarten Teacher

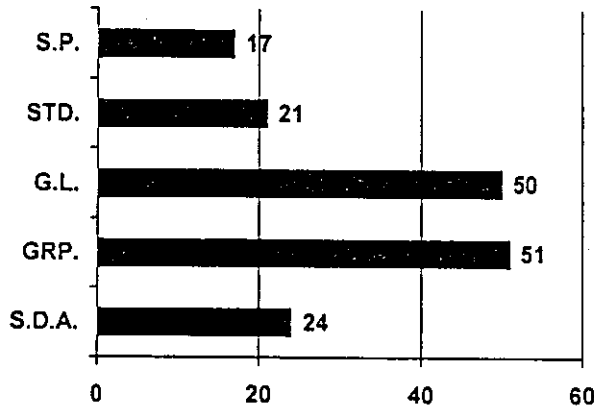
"I like Gospel Light. It had good activities to take home. It was colorful, it wasn't very cartoonish, and the teacher's guide book gave information to the teachers. It gave advice on things to do, activities; and also for beginning teachers it gave you list by list, you could just follow it. It told you exactly what you needed to do and exactly how to do it and that's great."

- Silver Spring Beginners Teacher

"I'm extremely excited when I looked at Gospel Light and their teacher training program in the helps and involving the children. The program for the children had really good hands-on and applicable things for the children to do that really brought home what they were teaching. I was really impressed."

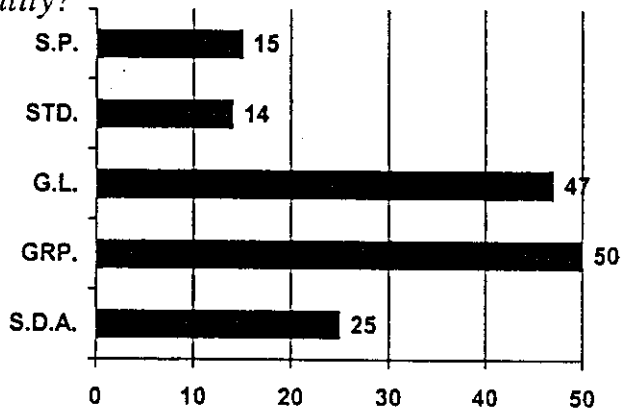
- Denver Primary Teacher

*"Which publishers materials are packaged in the most attractive way?"*



# Packaging

*"Whose materials are packaged best when it comes to practicality?"*



Focus Group Response:

"One thing I did notice was that the activities in the other ones (non-SDA) were more spelled out. A lot of them had everything all put together with the activities and the lesson. Everything was more combined. Ours is more spread out. You have to look into too many different areas to get the things put all together. In the other ones they had one manual that had everything together, which I really like."

- Denver Beginners Teacher

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# Survey Findings

## Beginners



*"You have now reviewed curriculum materials from 5 different publishers. Please rank below the 3 publishers whose materials you liked best."*

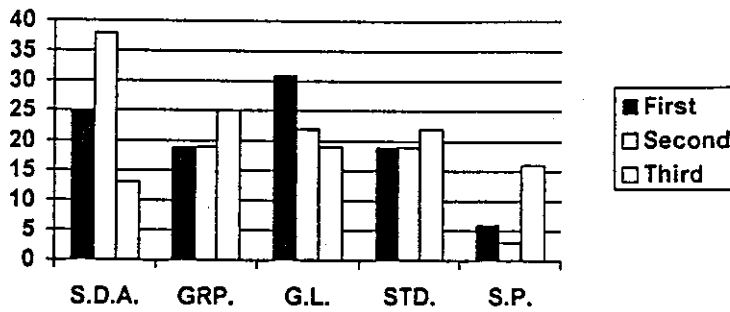


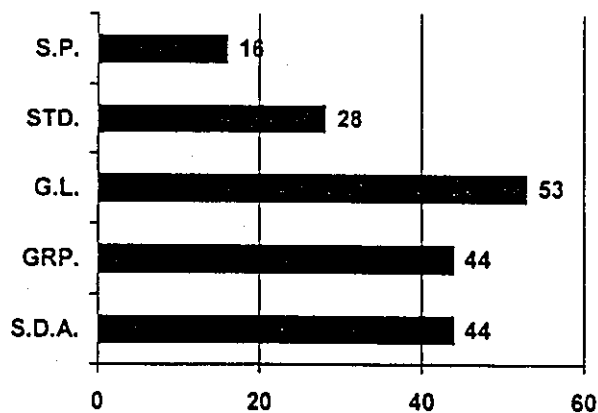
Table 2

	1	2	3
SDA	25	38	13
GROUP	19	19	25
GOSPEL LIGHT	31	22	19
STANDARD	19	19	22
SCRIPTURE PRESS	6	3	16

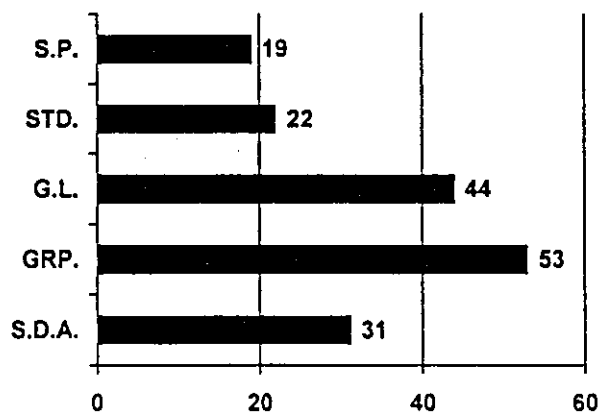
Percentages of First - Third Choices

# Overall Favorable Impressions

*"In your opinion, which of the publishers produced materials that would be most interesting to children?"*

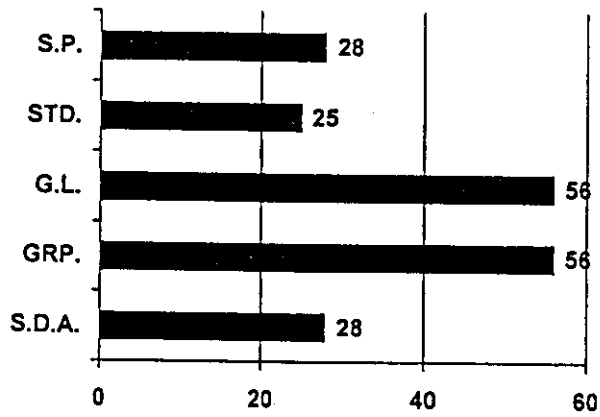


*"Which materials are most likely to foster student involvement?"*



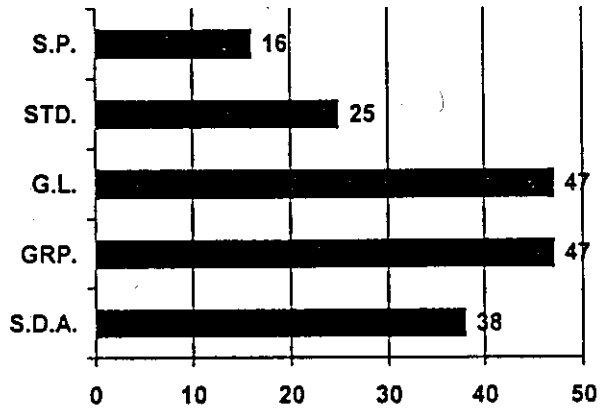
# Student Interest and Involvement

*"Which publishers had the best program and teaching visuals?"*



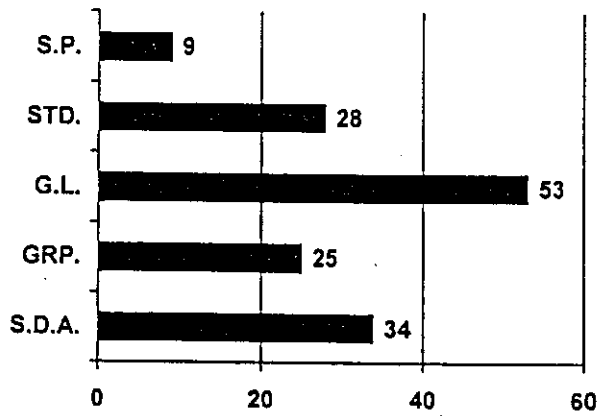
# Visuals and Gizmos

*"Whose materials were most user-friendly?"*

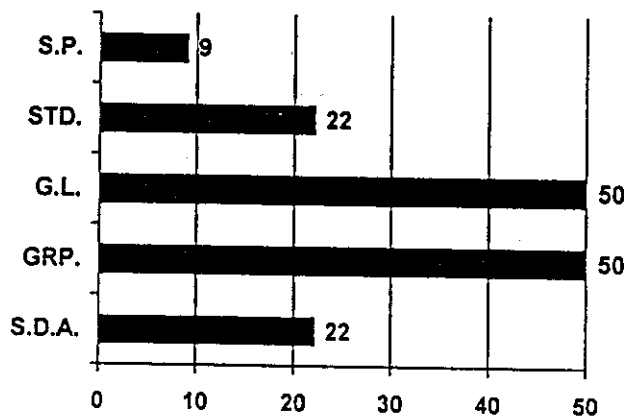


# User Friendly

*“As you reviewed the music components of each curriculum, which publishers did best when it came to quantity?”*



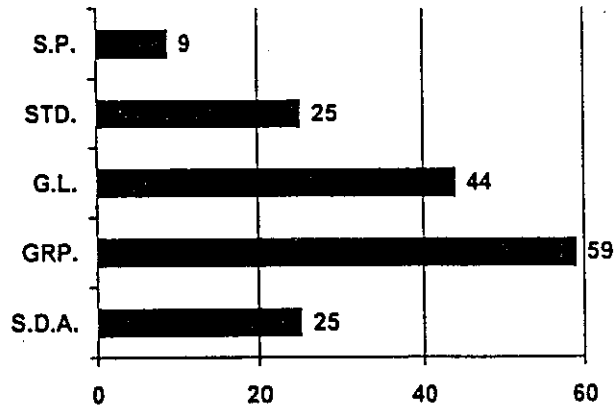
*“Which publishers did the best job when it came to the method in which the music was presented and/or used in the program?”*



## Music

## Quantity and Method

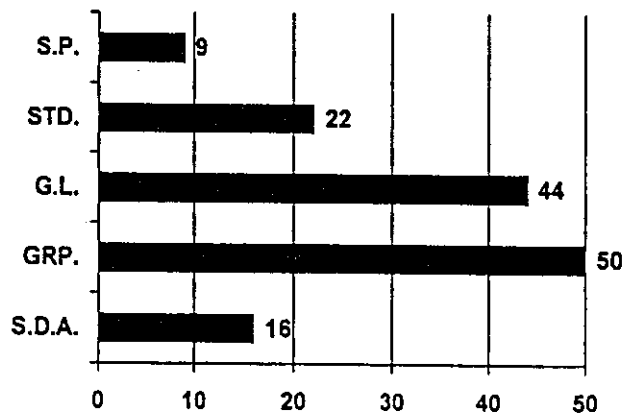
*“Respondents were asked to select two publishers whose music components were most ‘fun.’”*



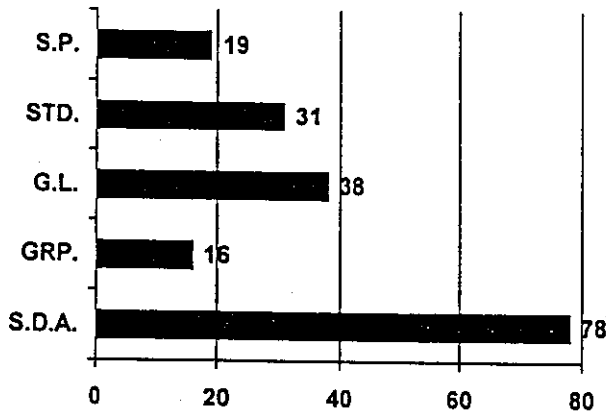
## Music

## Enjoyable - Contemporary

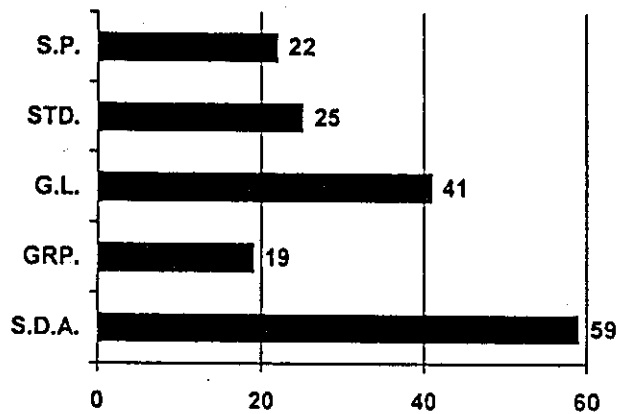
*“Whose music was the most contemporary?”*



*"Which publishers are best in the area of Bible memorization?"*

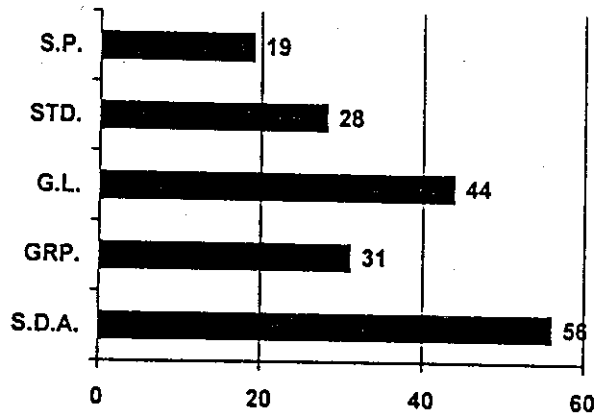


*"Choose the two publishers that do the best job of getting kids into the Bible."*



# Memorization and Getting Into the Bible

*"From a teachers perspective, which two publishers have lesson material that is most easily taught?"*



# Easy to Teach

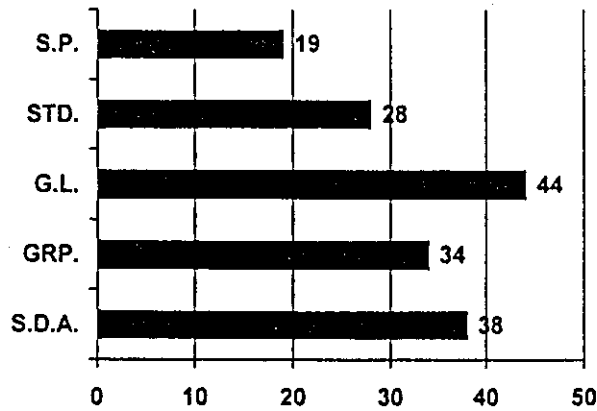
## Focus Group Response:

"I was really impressed with the Group package the most because it was very specific, bullet oriented, easy to follow and we have nothing like that at the church that I come from."

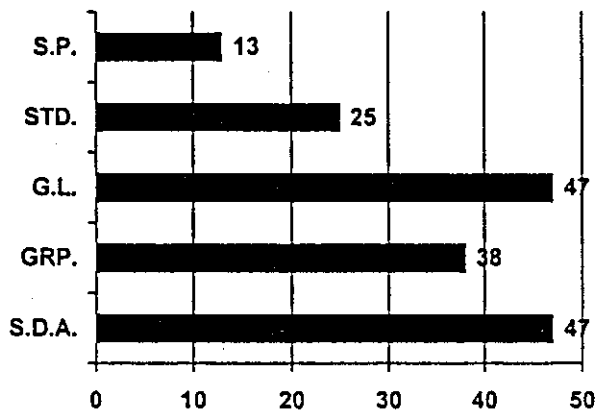
- Portland



*"Which two publishers have produced lessons that are most relevant to a child's daily life?"*



*"Which two publishers have produced lessons that would be most interesting to children?"*



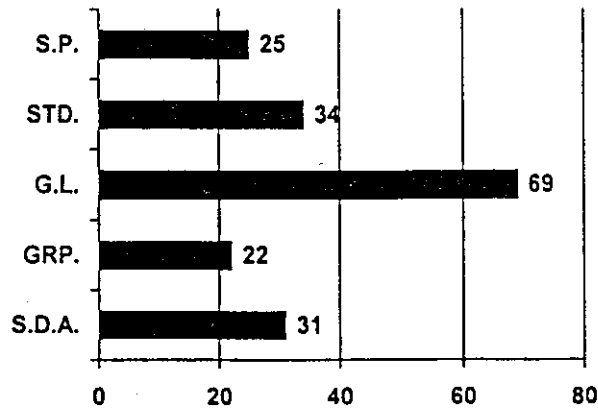
Focus Group Response:

"SDA's are far behind in their marketing and keeping up-to-date in things that attract today's audience."

- Atlanta

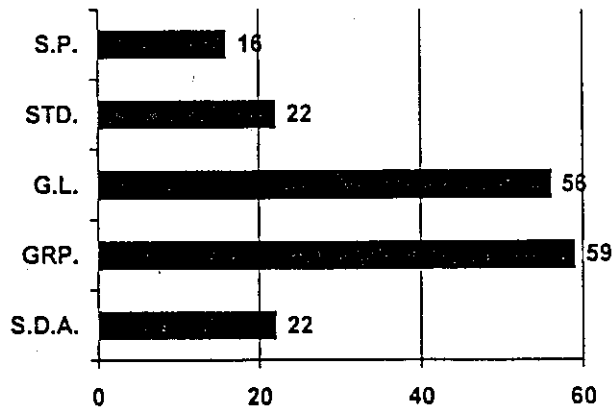
# Lesson Relevance and Interest Factor

*"Which publishers have the best hand-outs and/or activity sheets?"*



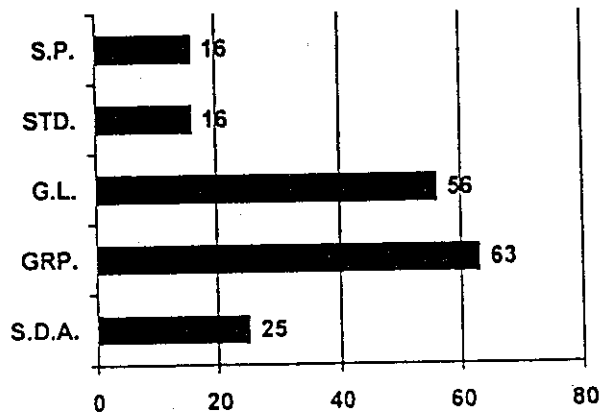
# Handouts and Activity Sheets

*“Which publishers materials are packaged in the most attractive way?”*



# Packaging

*“Whose materials are packaged best when it comes to practicality?”*



"I never would want to get rid of the Cradle Roll Quarterly or the Little Friend. I think that would be a sad loss."

- Portland

"I would really like for them to have every week a practical suggestion of how, 'this is what the Bible says and this is how it works in my life as a kid.'"

- Denver

"I would like to see them definitely include suggestions on how to reach out to parents because there are many parents in there that I need to reach and I have such a burden for them as well as the kids."

- Denver

- Music video and audio tapes
- More craft ideas
- Clearer instructions
- Keep the Picture Roll
- Felts should be pre-cut
- Better quality of paper
- Give us some "Big Books" like the others have
- Keep the Little Friend, but have the stories correlate better with the lesson.
- Put color in the pictures
- Keep the good memory verse system

# What Do You Want In The New Curriculum? Beginners

## **Gospel Light**

"I chose Gospel Light. I like the way it was packaged. It was very colorful. It also involved the family. Things for them to sit down and go through when they're at home. I just like the way the whole thing was put together."  
- Hinsdale

"I did vote Gospel Light for #1, but really in my heart, #1 is still ours."  
- Atlanta

"Gospel Light, I think mainly because of the color and as an adult if the color attracts me, I know that it's going to keep the attention of two- and three-year-olds."  
- Silver Spring

"I like the music, I think that's easy to follow and fun for the kids to follow. In our own I feel like I do a lot of preparation or bringing in materials. With Gospel Light it is already there for us to just get."  
- Denver

## **Group**

"I do like the Big Book of the Group Publishers. I thought that was good."  
Portland

"I liked Group best. I like the ideas they have. They were inexpensive and easily prepared to illustrate the stories. The story was condensed into one sentence that was very concise, like, 'God is powerful,' and the whole story, the whole lesson point was built around one idea."  
- Denver

"I like a large Ziplock bag (Gospel Light) because they're easy to see and easy to use. I'd also like a box like Group Publications because you can stack it and write on the outside what they are."  
- Hinsdale

## **Scripture Press**

"I would like to see more of the take home stuff that Scripture Press had I think. They had the nice memory verse cards with the story on the back and I liked that."  
- Silver Spring

# **Additional Focus Group Responses**

## SDA

"...And keep the music biblically oriented. Don't water it down. Keep all the material biblically oriented. Don't water it down to something that it's just good to be a Christian and that's what we all want to be."

- Hinsdale

"I like our cradle roll quarterly, but I have felt that there are some lessons that are not adequate for the age group we are dealing with. Some of them are way over their heads and are not stressing the things that they relate to. If we stick to the obedience, and the kindness, and God loves you and God cares for you, pretty much straight through 52 weeks that's great, but sometimes we throw in some that are just not right for children."

- Denver

"I really have a burden that when I go to Sabbath School and take my one year old and my 3 year old who go to the same Sabbath School at our church, that they come away learning something about Jesus. They don't need to learn something about our church. They don't need to learn something about healthy food. Those are things that can be sent home for the parents to teach."

- Portland

"Our timing is so disjointed. Like in the Cradle Roll Sabbath School you learn in October about Christ's birth or at Christmas time you're in Jonah."

- Atlanta

"Our felts are very good. They're beautiful and exceptional, their reuse is excellent, but how many kids at home have felts? And many of these paper items that they're using, either paper with a little bit of felt on the back of it or corrugated cardboard, or even, if you will, the coloring book concept I think a child would relate a little bit more to."

- Hinsdale

"I feel we have not progressed a long with the times. There are two groups that I would have chosen over ours, although ours is very scripturally based, that's very excellent. But you have to conform with the change of the times. Not lacking your spiritual connections with God and the Scriptures."

- Denver

"There was also better multicultural emphasis with many of the other lessons. I feel ours lacks that."

- Atlanta

"It has been given to us and, 'You will do 9 weeks. Come up with your own program—voila!' And so I was very impressed with everything I saw here, even our own programs, because, frankly, I had never seen the majority of the SDA material before."

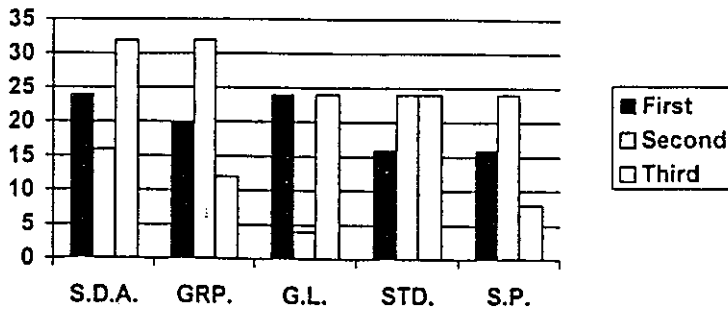
- Portland

# Additional Focus Group Responses (continued)

**Survey  
Findings**

**Kindergarten**

*“You have now reviewed curriculum materials from 5 different publishers. Please rank below the 3 publishers whose materials you liked best.”*



**Table 3**

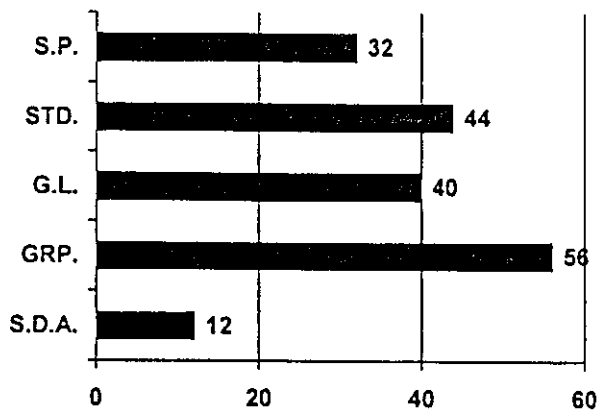
	1	2	3
SDA	24	16	32
GROUP	20	32	12
GOSPEL LIGHT	24	4	24
STANDARD	16	24	24
SCRIPTURE PRESS	16	24	8

Percentages of First - Third Choices

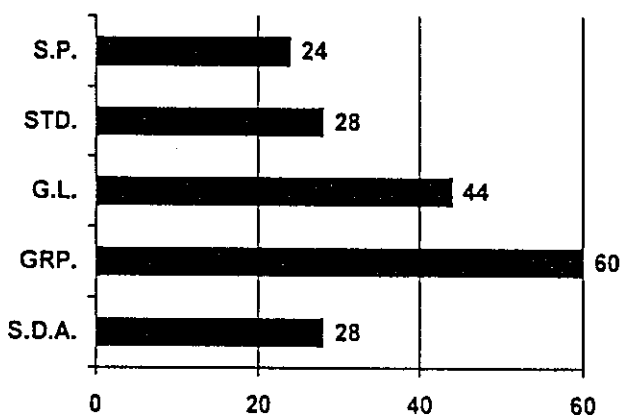
# Overall Favorable Impressions



*“In your opinion, which of the publishers produced materials that would be most interesting to children?”*



*“Which materials are most likely to foster student involvement?”*



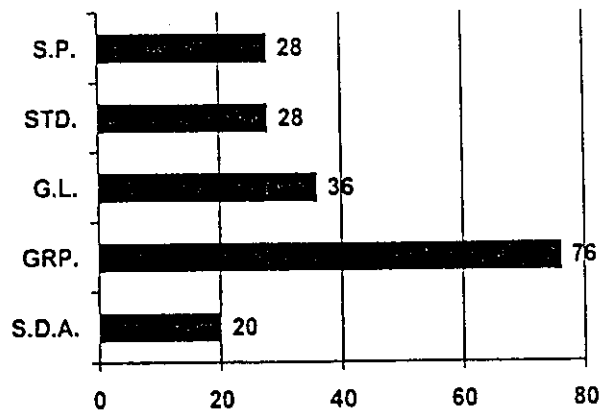
Focus Group Response:

*“I will tell you that my kids never ask me to read the Little Friend, but if they brought home a paper that looked like some of these do, they would be going through it themselves.”*

- Silver Spring

# Student Interest and Involvement

*“Which publishers had the best program and teaching visuals?”*



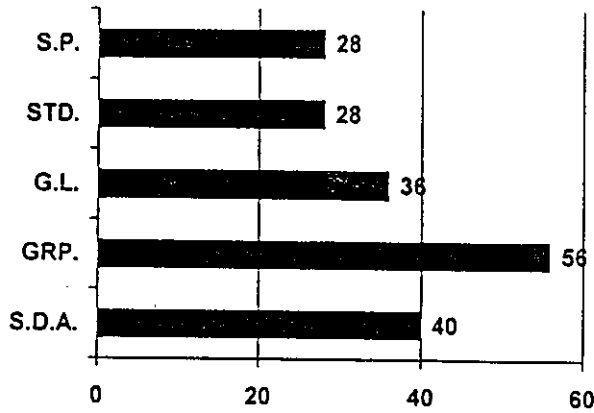
# Visuals and Gizmos

Focus Group Response:

"Gospel Light was so interesting because it did have a video that went along with it. Kids are into videos—more visual aids as far as our lessons are concerned would be better."

- Silver Spring

*"Whose materials were most user-friendly?"*



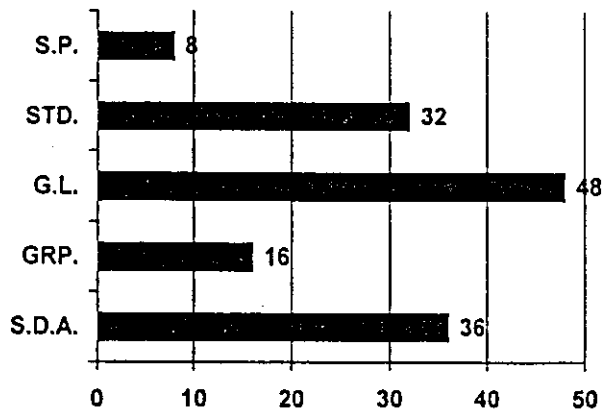
# User Friendly

### Focus Group Response:

"I voted for Group because it was all—I am a teacher myself, and maybe I'm just more used to the teacher focus. Here's the teacher's guide, here's the students handbook, and here's everything... 1,2,3,4,5 and boom! That's what you use.

- Portland

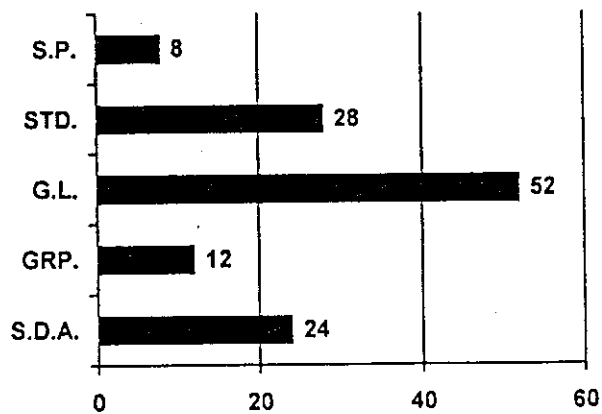
*“As you reviewed the music components of each curriculum, which publishers did best when it came to quantity?”*



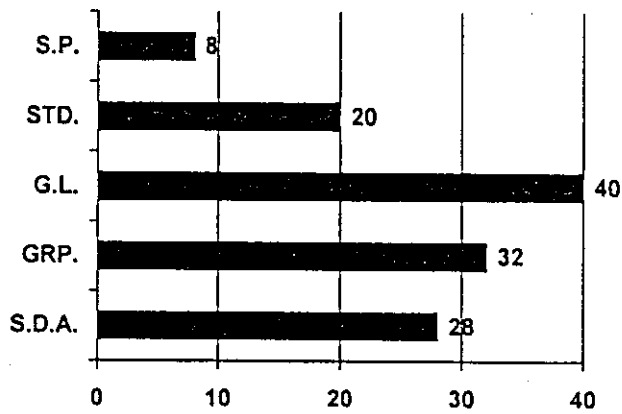
## Music

## Quantity and Method

*“Which publishers did the best job when it came to the method in which the music was presented and/or used in the program?”*



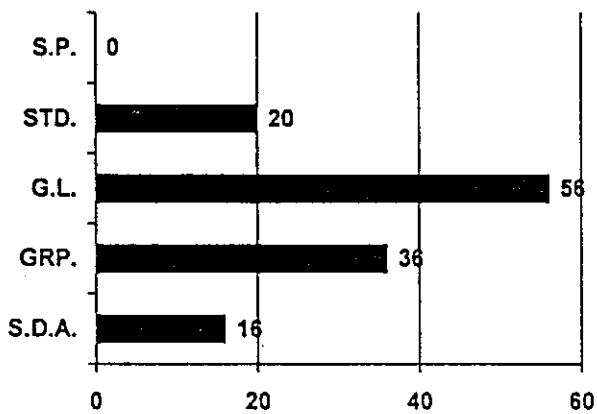
*"Respondents were asked to select two publishers whose music components were most 'fun.'"*



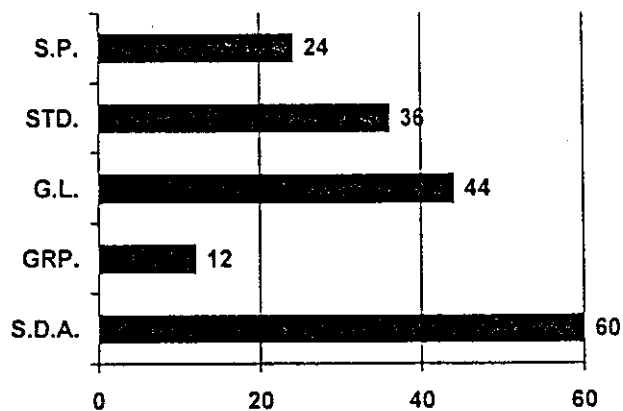
## Music

## Enjoyable - Contemporary

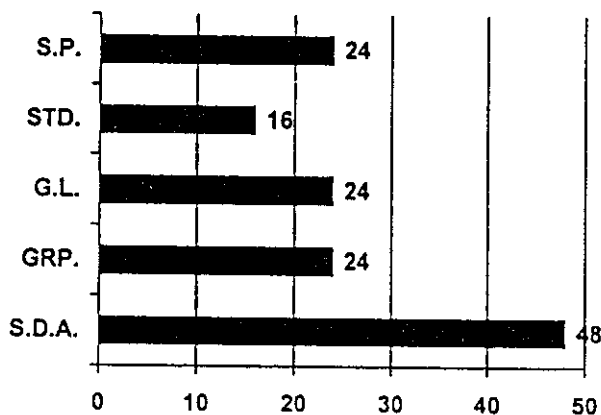
*"Whose music was the most contemporary?"*



*“Which publishers are best in the area of Bible memorization?”*

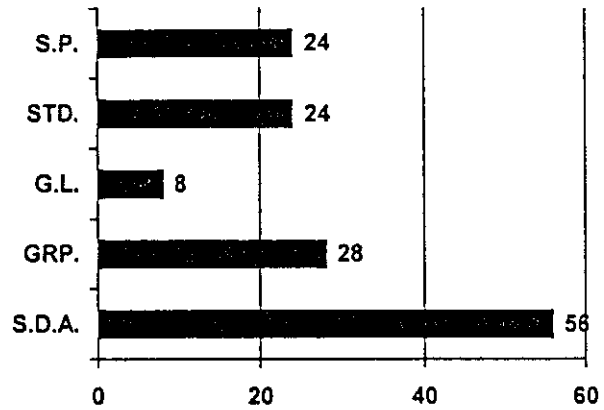


*“Choose the two publishers that do the best job of getting kids into the Bible.”*



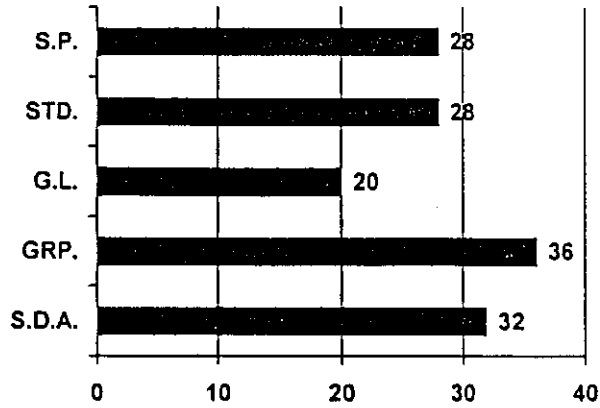
# Memorization and Getting Into the Bible

*“From a teachers perspective, which two publishers have lesson material that is most easily taught?”*

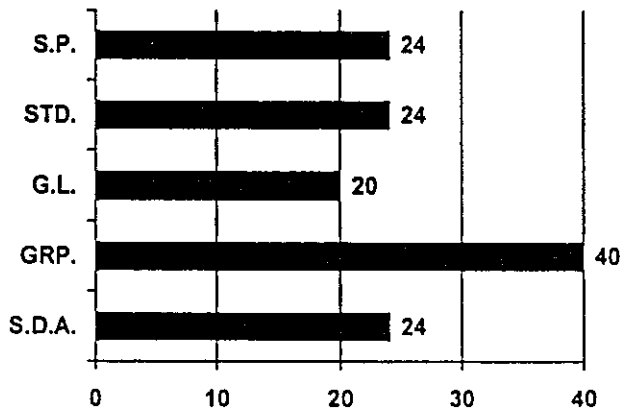


**Easy to  
Teach**

*“Which two publishers have produced lessons that are most relevant to a child's daily life?”*



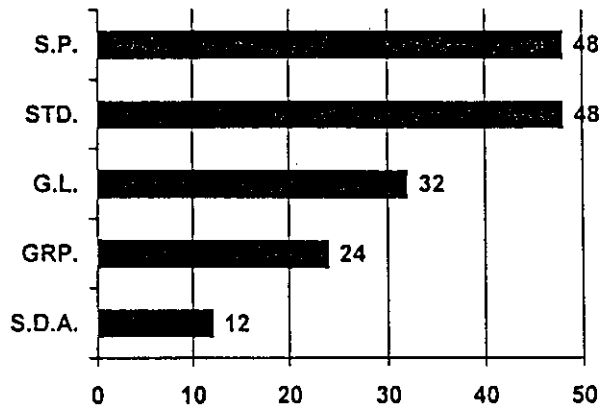
*“Which two publishers have produced lessons that would be most interesting to children?”*



# Lesson Relevance and Interest Factor

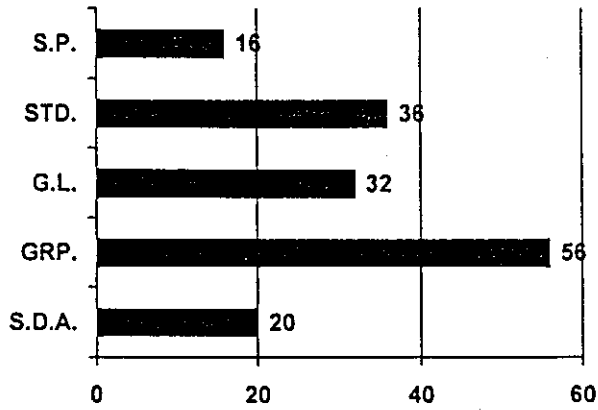


*“Which publishers have the best hand-outs and/or activity sheets?”*



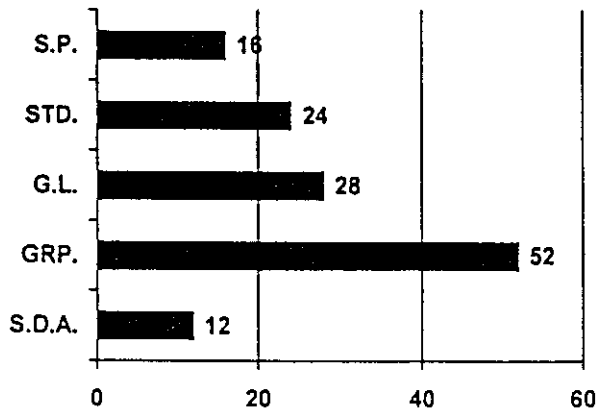
# Handouts and Activity Sheets

*“Which publishers materials are packaged in the most attractive way?”*



# Packaging

*“Whose materials are packaged best when it comes to practicality?”*



"I would like to see the music provided. If you are a small church you are unable to get all the music books, provide us with that music. Or a cassette tape. A cassette would be perfect. And let it take us through the lesson. Maybe even with the lesson, when they're in the desert have the sound effects tape to go along with the lesson, and I was thinking more of the younger children, for the four and five-year-olds. Something to make it more real to them. That's what I would like to see.

- More relevant lessons
- More color in everything
- The three-year cycle
- Give us some help in helping the parents
- We need tapes, videos, and all kinds of "hands-on" material
- Forget this felt stuff!
- How about an activity packet for the kids to take home?
- Crafts tied to the lesson
- Keep the Quarterly so the kids can go back and review their memory verses
- Pictures—give us BIG pictures

# What Do You Want In The New Curriculum? Kindergarten

## **Gospel Light**

"Size of print—I liked the print on Gospel Light. It was big enough that the kids could read it if they're beginning to read."

-Silver Spring

"I was most impressed, though I'm a little partial to the SDA program, but I was a little bit impressed, as a matter of fact, I was quite impressed at the Gospel Light curriculum. They did it in a comic strip kind of situation, and I thought the young people, the children, would be quite involved with that. I know mine are. And I thought that, well, it really captured me."

- Atlanta

## **Group**

"I liked Group. There are different ways to bring out the point in the Bible Story, sometimes a craft, sometimes a snack, an activity, many things that would bring in all the symptoms in that Bible story."

- Silver Spring

## **Scripture Press**

"I liked Scripture Press. It was my #1 and my #2 was Group. The one thing that I liked about this and some of the others as opposed to ours, is that everything for the whole program ties into the lesson and ours isn't like that."

- Denver

## **Standard**

"I like the Adventist, but I sure stand with the Standard. It has more. I'm dealing with colors, how children grasp with colors. They like to be more involved with their material. I like their layout, their lesson plans. I also like the Gospel Light layout plans, too, where you do have more of a variety."

## **SDA**

"I have not been overly impressed with the Adventist material. I guess I'm in the minority. In our church we've done a lot more on our own. So these other ones really appeal to me. Now I like our lessons. I think the Adventist lesson's the best. Absolute bar none. But I like how the others kind of follow through. You know all the activities, the play acting. You had like an hour's worth bringing the lesson all together."

- Silver Spring

# **Additional Focus Group Responses**

"I am so used to using our program, that it was hard for me to look at the other programs and be objective, but I see in the other programs that they're upbeat, they're contemporary, they're colorful. Their lesson is geared towards things that children see and do everyday. Our lessons are geared toward the Bible story and the theme doesn't always go with the Bible story."  
- Hinsdale

"I am partial to the SDA materials. I find that sometimes the other materials tend to trivialize the information. We want it to be something that they're truly knowing they're learning about God. We don't want it so secular, so commercial looking that it loses its effect, because Sabbath is a special day. The other denominations present in a way that it's like Barney or whatever. And that makes a concern for me. Sure, they have some good ideas, they have some great ways to package things, and there's interest here for me as far as repackaging some of the Adventist materials, but as far as the way we give it out to the children I think our way is best."  
- Atlanta

"I would like to be able to pick out an Asian Dad and Mom and put them up on the board."  
- Denver

"I voted for the SDA materials. I'm not really looking for somebody to present me with a package of materials and tell me exactly what to do with it."  
- Hinsdale

"One thing that I feel kind of strongly about is that I wish that some of the lessons could be rewritten. I know of children who don't want to go to the lesson because the story is too scary for them. I think that there are a lot of things for four or five year olds that could be left out that are in there and I would like to see that changed."  
- Portland

"I think the lessons can be more precise because they have a tendency to be long and . . . I noticed some of these others—the lessons were shorter and give more activities that we can do."  
- Denver

"Why do we have to teach the kids about the Sanctuary? I'm not sure I understand it myself."  
- Hinsdale

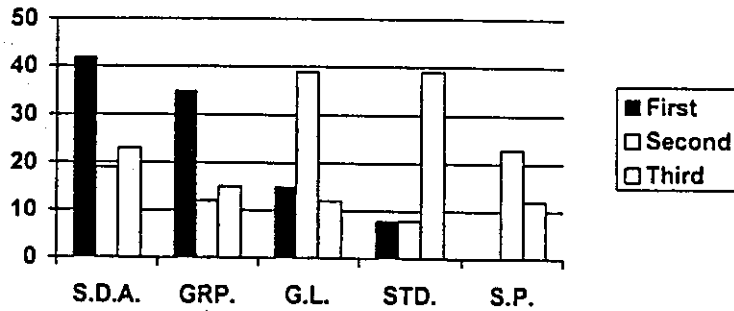
"One thing I like—I like to be realistic. I don't teach children make believe, fairy tales. And when I looked at the other material (non-SDA) it would be Mama Bear did this and Papa Bear did that—I didn't like that. I like teaching them truthful things with real people and I find Adventist publications do that."  
- Atlanta

## Additional Focus Group Responses (continued)

**Survey  
Findings**

**Primary**

*“You have now reviewed curriculum materials from 5 different publishers. Please rank below the 3 publishers whose materials you liked best.”*



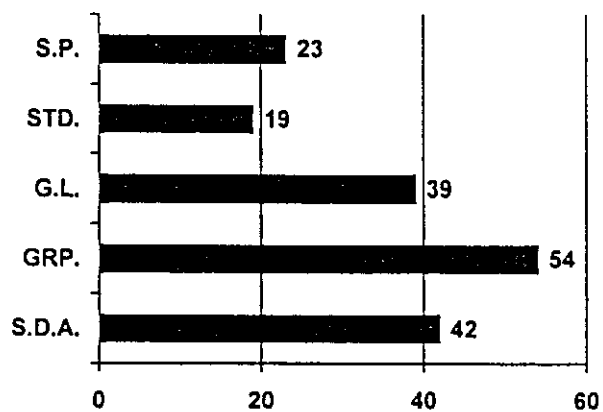
**Table 4**

	1	2	3
SDA	42	19	23
GROUP	35	12	15
GOSPEL LIGHT	15	39	12
STANDARD	8	8	39
SCRIPTURE PRESS	0	23	12

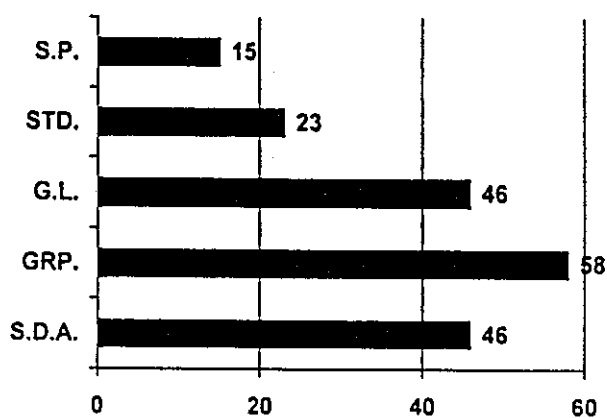
Percentages of First - Third Choices

# Overall Favorable Impressions

*"In your opinion, which of the publishers produced materials that would be most interesting to children?"*



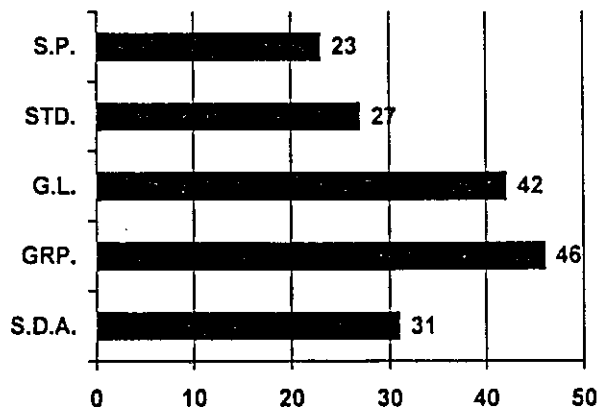
*"Which materials are most likely to foster student involvement?"*



# Student Interest and Involvement



*"Which publishers had the best program and teaching visuals?"*



## Visuals and Gizmos

### Focus Group Responses:

"I like the eye-catching things—the bright colors."

- Denver

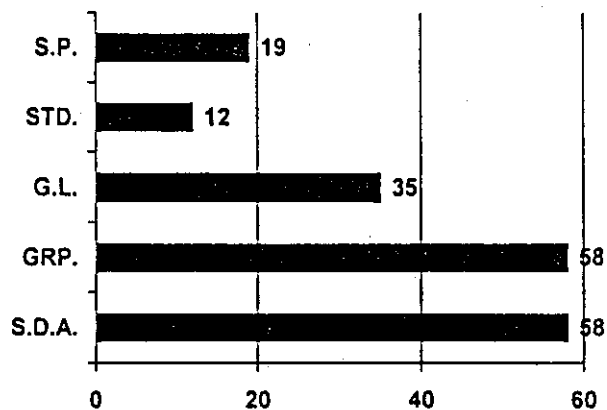
"I want 4 color. I like where the children look like modern day children. Some of our stuff is so old."

- Silver Spring

"I like the way ours (SDA) is laid out in sequential Bible stories, but we should have something that is audio and visual for the children. Our materials can be brought up to date better as far as visuals are concerned."

- Atlanta

*"Whose materials were most user-friendly?"*



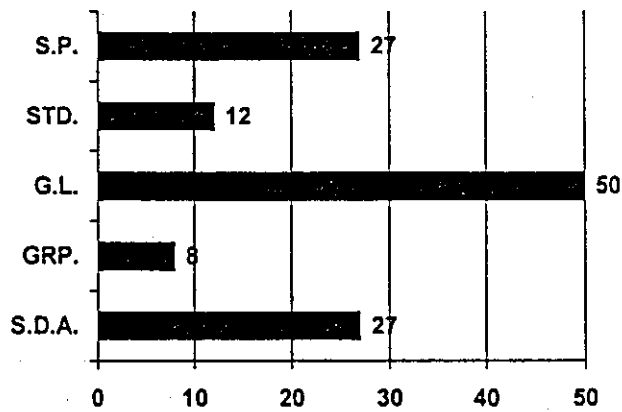
**User  
Friendly**

Focus Group Response:

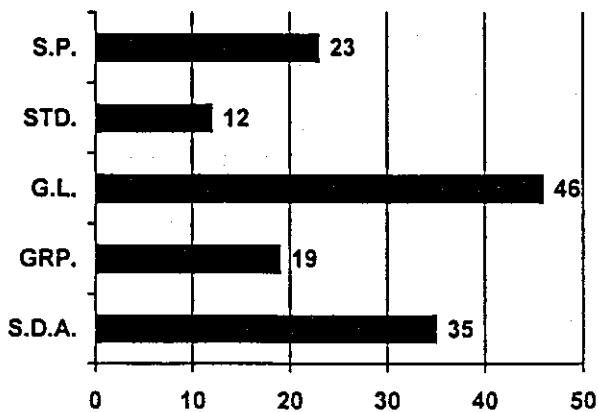
"I like Gospel Light because their whole package is brought together and makes it very easy to put together to present to the children."

- Silver Spring

*"As you reviewed the music components of each curriculum, which publishers did best when it came to quantity?"*



*"Which publishers did the best job when it came to the method in which the music was presented and/or used in the program?"*



Focus Group Response:

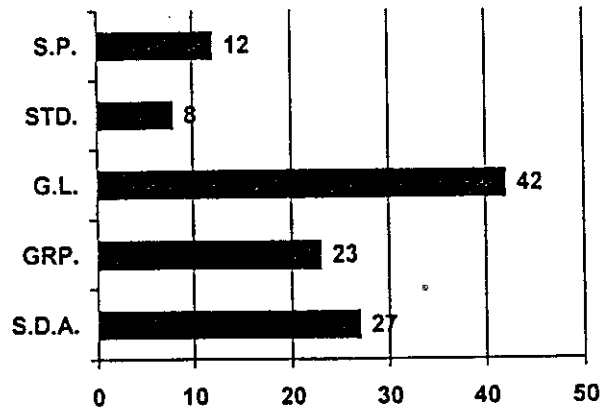
"And I liked the idea of having the music on the tapes because we have a hard time finding a pianist and when you don't know the song to begin with it's like 4 weeks before you get finally somebody to play for you."

- Atlanta

**Music**

**Quantity  
and Method**

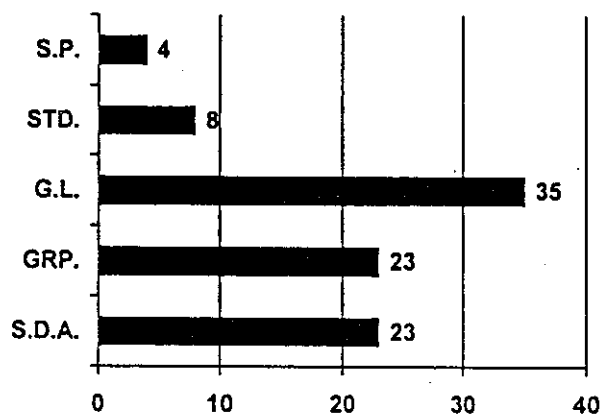
*"Respondents were asked to select two publishers whose music components were most 'fun.'"*



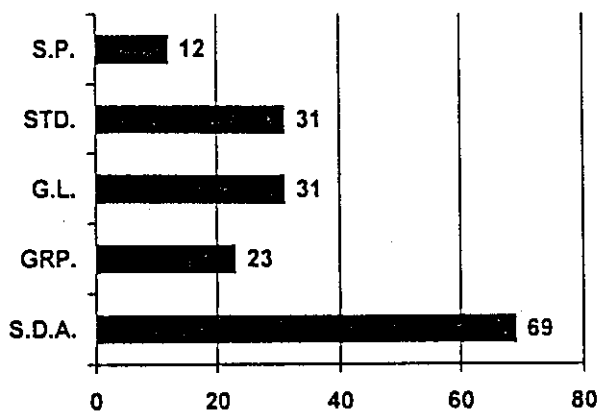
## Music

## Enjoyable - Contemporary

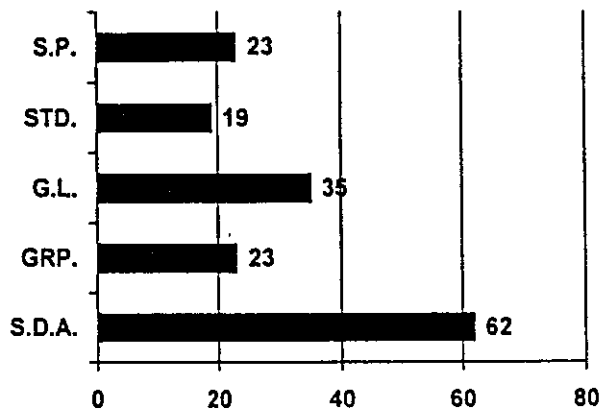
*"Whose music was the most contemporary?"*



*"Which publishers are best in the area of Bible memorization?"*



*"Choose the two publishers that do the best job of getting kids into the Bible."*



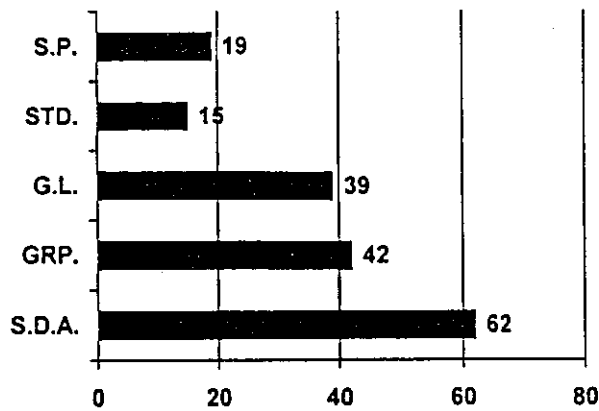
Focus Group Response:

"The reason I chose Group is because they had a theme, you had your memory verse. I feel in ours, for instance, we give them a different verse each week. With Group, they kept on that verse and things that went along with it for several weeks at a time."

- Portland

# Memorization and Getting Into the Bible

*"From a teachers perspective, which two publishers have lesson material that is most easily taught?"*



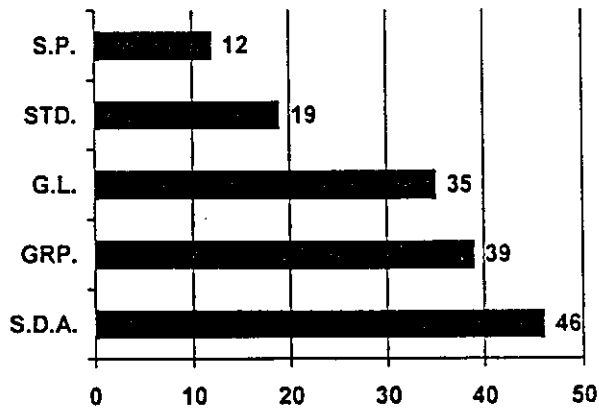
# Easy to Teach

Focus Group Response:

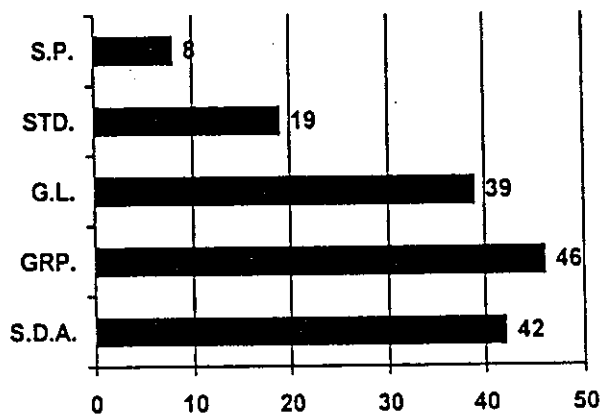
"Gospel Light was so specific with regard to what a leader had to do. They could pick up the book even if they weren't a professional teacher and teach that lesson effectively because it was very very specific."

- Silver Spring

*“Which two publishers have produced lessons that are most relevant to a child's daily life?”*



*“Which two publishers have produced lessons that would be most interesting to children?”*

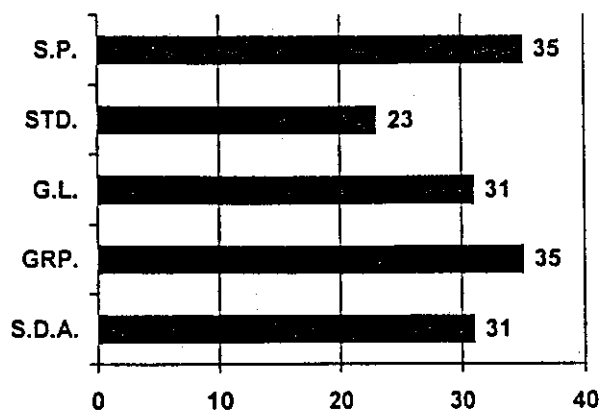


Focus Group Response:

“I picked Group because I really like the fact of getting kids more involved with tangible lessons—stuff that they can see and apply to their own lives. That excited me. - Atlanta

# Lesson Relevance and Interest Factor

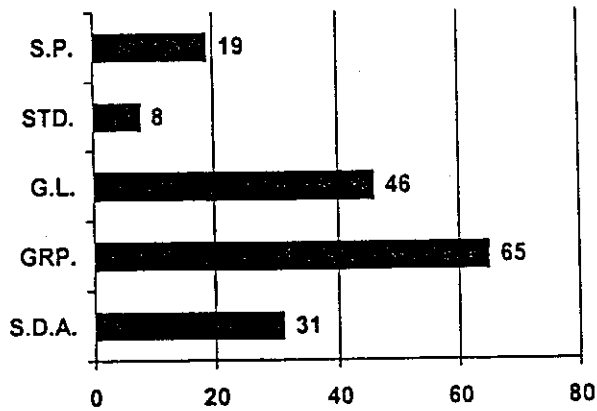
*“Which publishers have the best hand-outs and/or activity sheets?”*



# Handouts and Activity Sheets

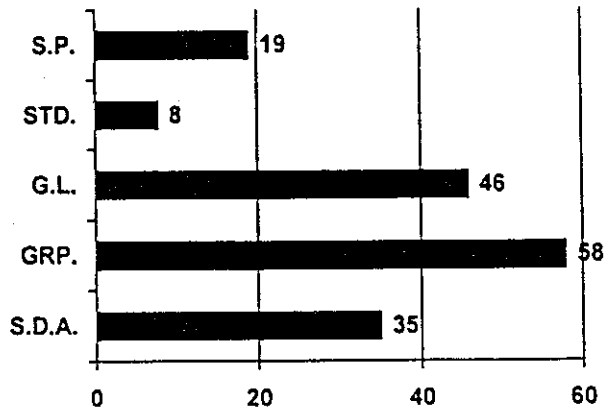


*"Which publishers materials are packaged in the most attractive way?"*



# Packaging

*"Whose materials are packaged best when it comes to practicality?"*



Focus Group Response:

"I like the packaging of Gospel Light and Group and I think that will lend itself for the material to stay in place and also the packaging won't get ripped up."  
- Portland

"I think that I can visualize this Primary program with using the Spirit of Prophecy and using the Bible and using the stories and make it active learning. Get the kids into it and teach them how to study the Spirit of Prophecy actively. And apply it to their life."

"I really like the way we do the mission quarterly. It has all sorts of activities in there that like for instance this coming Sabbath we're cooking a recipe in this mission quarterly so I think we need to continue doing that and there are little take home things that you can copy off."

"The quarterlies, the Primary Treasures are excellent. I like the stories in them. The program helps are helpful. Just add some readiness activities, you know, some getting involved things and the Bible applications and I'd be happy."

- Keep stories in Primary Treasure, but color them up
- Break down the week's activities by single days
- Keep the memory verse packets, but enlarge them, and use larger print
- 8 1/2" x 11" picture roll-type memory verse cards for bulletin boards
- Put some color into the Primary Treasures and the Quarterlies
- Keep the mission feature
- Be more sensitive to ethnicity with the felts
- Music tapes and/or videos
- Put the lesson on cassette tapes so the kids could study them themselves if need be
- More activities
- Put everything into one package
- More colorful illustrations
- Make more user friendly for teachers

# What Do You Want In The New Curriculum? Primary

## **Gospel Light**

"I was also impressed with, on the back of the teacher's guide, how to lead a child to Christ, and I imagine that is probably in every quarter's helps and I just think that is beautiful." - Silver Spring

"I think the biggest thing with our Primary group is it's very hard to keep them contained, interested you know. So it's very important and I was impressed with Gospel Light I think they have a very good emphasis on that." - Denver

"Group Publications and Gospel Light, those are the ones that caught my attention, because their activity sheets are up to date and colorful and catch the attention." - Denver

"I liked Gospel Light because of how colorful it was and how it would attract the kids, and the video cassette." - Atlanta

"The large print, the bright colors, and the slick paper. My choice was Gospel Light." - Portland

## **Group**

"I think Group has a little more play than really concentrating on learning the Bible" - Atlanta

"What I would do in my Primary Class is to take the Group activities and the attention grabbers shift it to the Primaries and put it right with the lessons, but I wouldn't take their Bible lessons. I just want their activities, because I love that three year cycle." - Atlanta

"I think if you could put the lesson in the program like Group has done it's a good idea. Not only can they hear the lesson but see the lesson." - Portland

"We have a lot of nonreaders in Primary and we're really not addressing their needs, and that's one thing I really liked about Group." - Hinsdale

"Thumbing through Group Publications, they had a newscast where kids would play act and I just think things like that are so creative and that's what's going to keep their attention. And then the video cassette. I'm just so impressed with that—that's the best way to learn is to see some people in action. I think ours is well put together, but the pictures look like what I grew up with. They are so outdated and I think that's so important that they bring that up to date." - Hinsdale

# **Additional Focus Group Responses**

"I was impressed by Group Publications because I think it's important to get kids more involved."  
- Portland

### **Scripture Press**

"I also liked that package (Scripture Press), the memory verse had a letter to the parents. I think parents need to be involved in the Sabbath School lessons."  
- Denver

### **SDA**

"My #1 choice was the SDA packet because that's the one I am most familiar with."  
- Atlanta

"Our mission quarterly is excellent. But see, our mission quarterly is separate and there's not mission in anything that they do."  
- Denver

"We need some better activities, some hands-on activities where the kids are really taught to think more on their own individually rather than just being part of the group answering a question and playing a game of boys against the girls and all that stuff."  
- Atlanta

"We have a small church. Sometimes we have three primaries, sometimes we have six primaries, sometimes they are all boys and we need a lot of things for their hands, to keep them busy. And we need simple, simple applications."  
- Atlanta

"Busy teachers do not have time to go home and make a lot of things. There was one example that had felts that you could use on your felt board, but they were punch-out felts so that you didn't have to spend three hours cutting out your felts. Most Primary teachers that I work with all work. We can't just work on Primary preparation all week, you know, burning the midnight oil. So, having user friendly materials is important."  
- Silver Spring

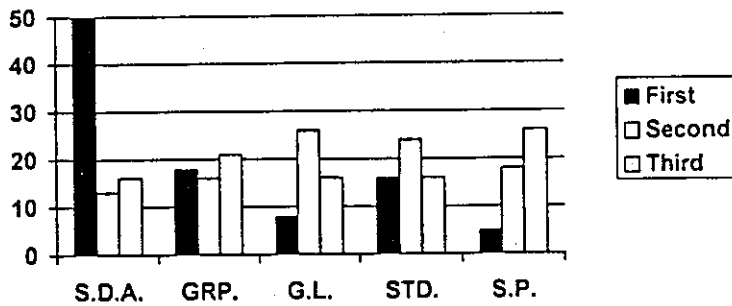
"My first choice was Group, but only in reference to that particular feature of the hands on. That was the only reason I chose it. But I prefer the Adventist material for Bible. Group rated #1 because you retain something that you're doing, seeing, touching, when you're using all the senses and it's a good application of Scripture, the different activities, the attention getters that they had and it was very self explanatory for the teacher."  
- Portland

# **Additional Focus Group Responses (continued)**

**Survey  
Findings**

**Juniors**

*"You have now reviewed curriculum materials from 5 different publishers. Please rank below the 3 publishers whose materials you liked best."*



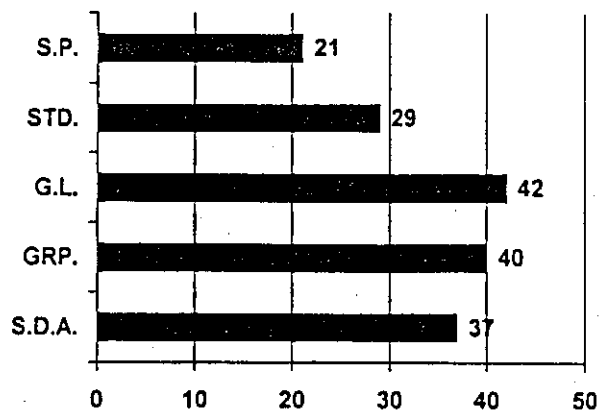
**Table 5**

	1	2	3
SDA	50	13	16
GROUP	18	16	21
GOSPEL LIGHT	8	26	16
STANDARD	16	24	16
SCRIPTURE PRESS	5	18	26

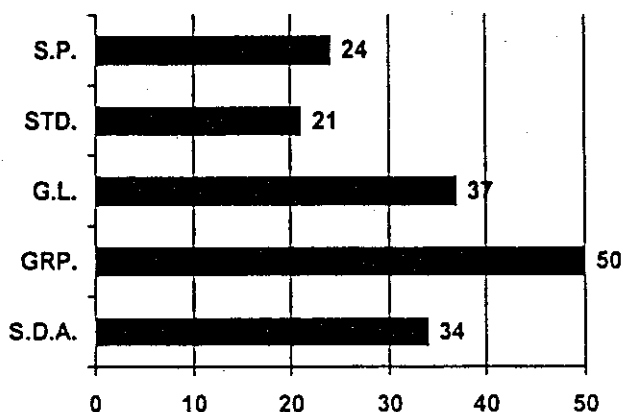
Percentages of First - Third Choices

# Overall Favorable Impressions

*"In your opinion, which of the publishers produced materials that would be most interesting to children?"*



*"Which materials are most likely to foster student involvement?"*

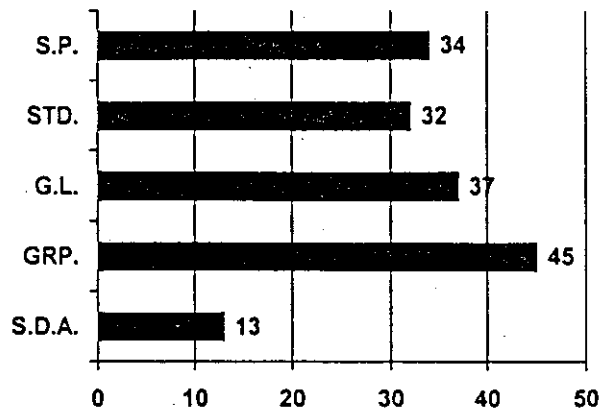


Focus Group Response:

"I wanted to be loyal to SDA but I did choose Group because I think that the more a child is involved, the more senses they use, the better they learn and take with them." - Atlanta

# Student Interest and Involvement

*"Which publishers had the best program and teaching visuals?"*



# Visuals and Gizmos

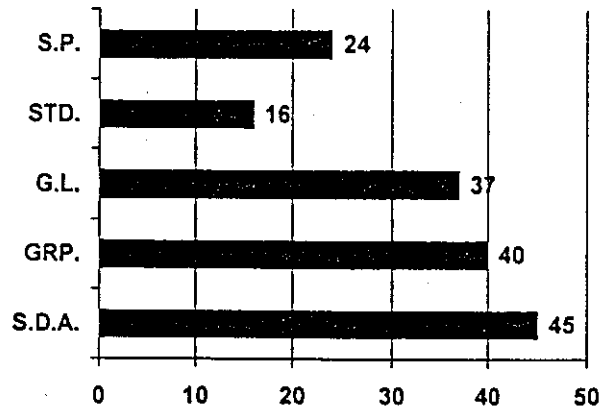
## Focus Group Response:

"I'd like to see a colorful activity page for use during the Sabbath School lesson time in addition to the activities that are in the Sabbath School lesson quarterly for them to do. Gospel Light and Scripture Press both have good things for that."

- Hinsdale

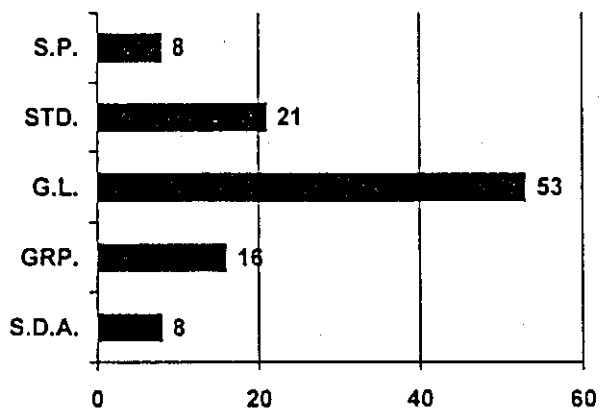


*"Whose materials were most user-friendly?"*



**User  
Friendly**

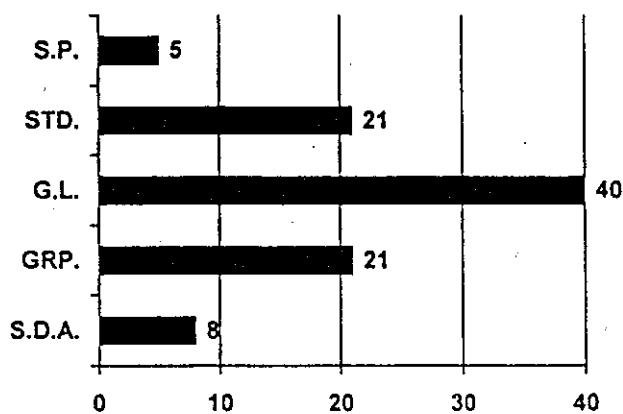
*“As you reviewed the music components of each curriculum, which publishers did best when it came to quantity?”*



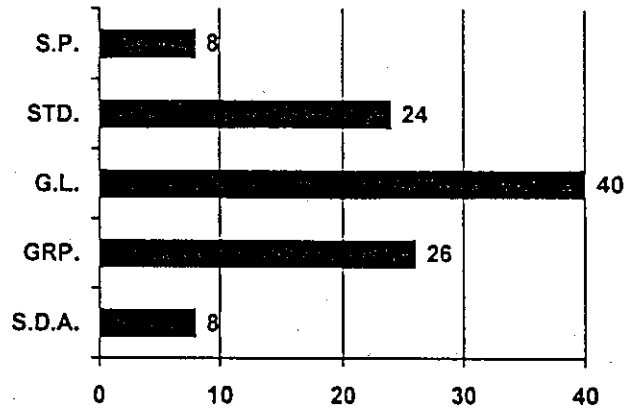
## Music

## Quantity and Method

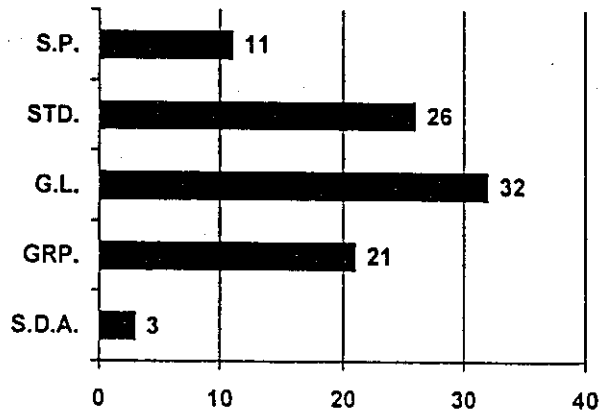
*“Which publishers did the best job when it came to the method in which the music was presented and/or used in the program?”*



*"Respondents were asked to select two publishers whose music components were most 'fun.'"*



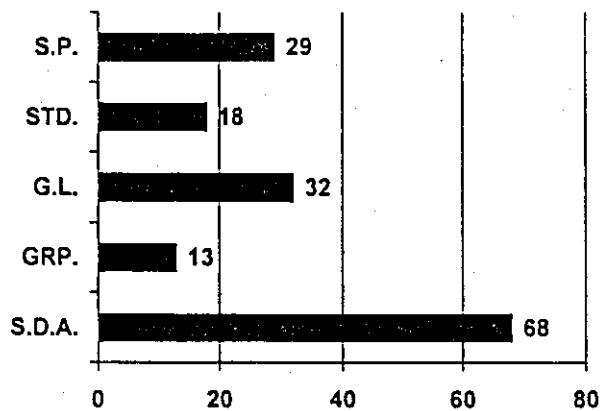
*"Whose music was the most contemporary?"*



**Music**

**Enjoyable -  
Contemporary**

*"Which publishers are best in the area of Bible memorization?"*



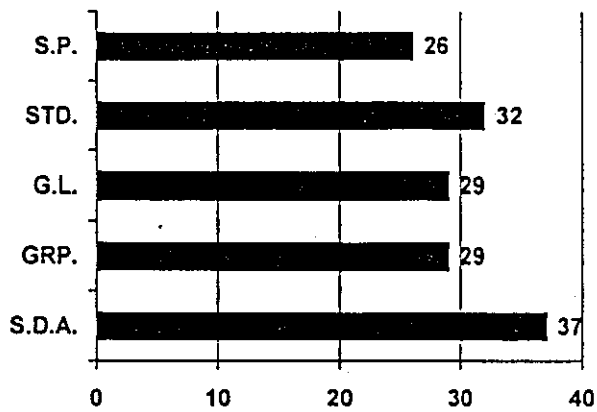
# Memorization and Getting Into the Bible

Focus Group Response:

"The Bible has stories that they all know by heart but they don't know them as reality. The kids need to learn Jesus as their Creator, Redeemer, and Life-giver. Personally. Not entertainment. Teaching them how to prepare for the kingdom, how to live.

- Atlanta

*"From a teachers perspective, which two publishers have lesson material that is most easily taught?"*



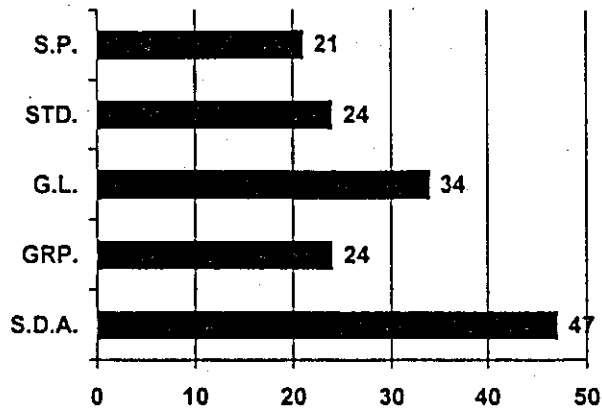
**Easy to  
Teach**

Focus Group Response:

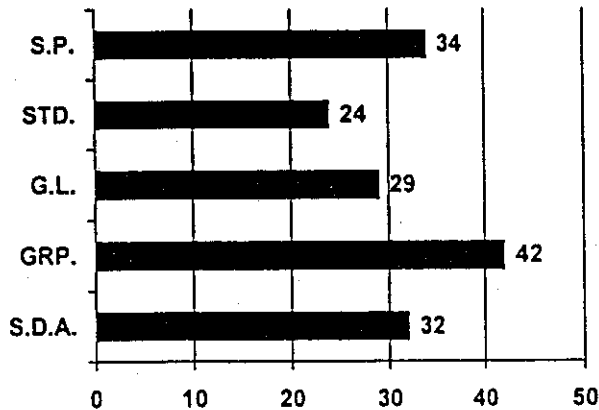
"With Group Publications one of the things I liked was the lesson at a glance, everything was right there. I like the idea of getting everything that I need in one packet."

- Silver Spring

*“Which two publishers have produced lessons that are most relevant to a child's daily life?”*

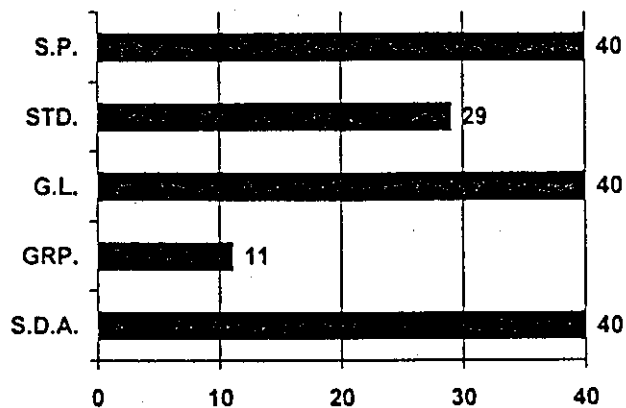


*“Which two publishers have produced lessons that would be most interesting to children?”*



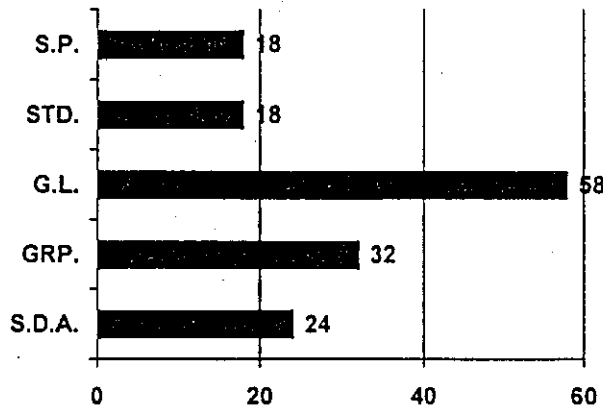
# Lesson Relevance and Interest Factor

*“Which publishers have the best hand-outs and/or activity sheets?”*

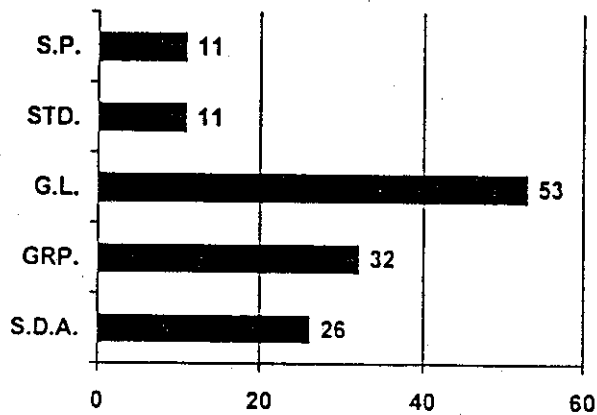


# Handouts and Activity Sheets

*"Which publishers materials are packaged in the most attractive way?"*



*"Whose materials are packaged best when it comes to practicality?"*



# Packaging



- Ethnic sensitive pictures
- Don't make the material so boring
- Colorful visual aids
- Put everything in one package so we don't have to go gather here and there
- Skits and contemporary activities
- Put back the daily lesson studies in the quarterly
- We need a better Teacher's Guide
- Keep the mission story but don't make it so long and boring
- We want activity sheet handouts to use at lesson time
- Keep the materials affordable. We can't afford the Junior Guide.
- Make the lessons more relevant
- We need something to involve our parents
- Keep a global emphasis
- Keep the Junior/Teen Plus
- Give us more "hands-on," more student involvement
- Bible memorization
- Keep our distinctive SDA message
- Give us some props, and package them all together
- I'd like all of it to be easy for the teacher to prepare
- Use and active learning style
- Give us some scripture songs

# What Do You Want In The New Curriculum?

## Juniors

## **Gospel Light**

"I like the skit book in the Gospel Light. Because students love those kind of things."  
- Atlanta

"I like Gospel Light and Standard. Certain portions of them are a little elementary, but I like the activities. I definitely think we need more activities."  
- Portland

"I've been a SDA for seven years and the Gospel Light I particularly liked. I'd still have to choose the SDA over it because it was the only one that had the Spirit of Prophecy in it."  
- Portland

## **Group**

"I chose Group and the reason why is the packaging, the activities, and they seemed to be able to capture the children."  
- Silver Spring

"I chose Group also. They showed you better ways to get the student's attention and get them involved and I think a lot of time when you get students involved they learn better."  
- Silver Spring

"I chose Group Publications because it was activity based and I like the Teacher's Guide."  
- Hinsdale

## **Standard**

"I chose Standard because of the high involvement and activity level for the children."  
- Portland

## **SDA**

"I chose SDA because I like the methods we use to teach our children. I've been teaching for 25 years, but I do think we need some help in some areas."  
- Hinsdale

"I voted SDA because I felt I could trust it."  
- Silver Spring

"I'd also like to see the Spirit of Prophecy taught more in our Sabbath School. I don't think we do that anymore. I think our children should learn to appreciate the gift that we have in the church."  
- Silver Spring

# **Additional Focus Group Responses**

## IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

- ◆ The Seventh-day Adventist Church continue to produce its own curriculum as opposed to publishing supplemental materials to be used along side that of other publishers. Leaders want material that is "doctrinally specific" rather than "doctrinally generic." Many feel more confident using only materials that have been "cleared" by the Church.
  
- ◆ The Church and its publishers commit themselves to development of an "Active Learning, Hands On" curriculum. That such developments are carefully done, but "fast tracked," and with a sense of urgency given the expressed needs of leaders, and to maintain market share.
  
- ◆ Our system of using multiple entities to produce components for Children's Sabbath Schools should be scrapped. The Church and its publishers must commit themselves to viewing their materials from a Sabbath School room perspective as opposed to that of the institutional board room, or treasury office.
  
- ◆ Creators of Children's Sabbath School materials should be more accountable to the total program. They should think "package" more than "component," and be expected to produce integrated materials. All directors charged with developing components for a given Division should work in proximity to each other. Further, they should work under the direction of one individual who is held responsible for development coordination and the quality of materials used in the Sabbath School room.
  
- ◆ Greater emphasis be placed on making Teacher and Program Leader materials more easily understood and user friendly. The Church should deliver as complete a package as possible, with all components together in an attractive container. There should be greater sensitivity to the amount of time needed to prepare programs.

## Recommendations

or integrated

- ◆ The NAD Children's Ministry Taskforce give thought and specific guidance to curriculum developers concerning age appropriate programs and lesson topics.
  
- ◆ The total Sabbath School time focus on the lesson topic. A specific period should be identified as the "lesson time," during which there will be discussion and processing of previous activities.
  
- ◆ Bible texts used for lesson study and/or memorization purposes should receive the same treatment in all components. Use the same translation/s.
  
- ◆ All materials should be carefully evaluated for contemporary use of color and design. Our materials should look more "alive" and colorful.
  
- ◆ The church should be more creative. In addition to the 8 1/2" x 11" printed materials, consideration should be given to providing items such as "Big Books," puzzles, crafts, and other visuals.
  
- ◆ That leaders be provided with audio and/or video tapes to assist in the music program. Where possible printed words and music should be included.
  
- ◆ An ongoing evaluation process be developed to measure progress in providing materials that have greater participation opportunities for children, and are of high interest to them.
  
- ◆ *and independent*  
Significant market research be conducted measuring attitudes of Sabbath School leaders and parents toward our "take home" papers.

## Recommendations (continued)

- ◆ That Customer Service 800 numbers be prominently displayed on packaging and program materials. These numbers should be clearly identified as to purpose (i.e. ordering information, Help Desk). Every opportunity to remind the leader and/or parent that their Church is a full partner in providing spiritual benefits for its children should be taken.
  
- ◆ A marketing plan be developed in tandem with the new curriculum development.
  
- ◆ An annual census of local church Children's Ministry leaders should be conducted throughout North American for the purpose of developing a mailing list to be used to acquaint leaders with available product, training, and support structures.

## Recommendations (continued)