



INSTITUTE OF SCHOOL & PARISH DEVELOPMENT

*Bringing People, Process, and Ministry Together to Build the  
Kingdom of God.*

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## **Enrollment Talk**

### **“Anatomy of a Prospect Information Packet”**

**By**

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As you roll into another year of recruiting for 2011, it is essential that your Catholic school have a quality prospective family information packet. Prospective families that are interested in your school expect something of substance when they inquire about your school. Don't leave them asking, “Is this all that there is to this school?”

1. Use large, colored, pocket folders. You can pay to design a glossy folder with eye-catching images on the cover. You can also save money and print a message on the cover like “Cooper Family – Welcome to St. Example Catholic School – We want to be your school family!” Use a color printer and you can include an image or picture on the cover that conveys a welcoming message. Personalization is the big thing in marketing today. You don't have to spend big dollars to make the folder personal.
2. Along with the packet, there should be a personalized letter from the school administration or admissions office. This letter should NOT lead with a salutation such as “Dear Prospective Family.” Rather it should be personalized with salutations such as “Dear John, Dear John and Kate, or Dear Mr. & Mrs. Cooper.” Make sure the letter closes with a strong call to action like “Call the school office to make an appointment.” Sign the letter in blue ink. Write a personal note somewhere on the letter. Write something like “I can't wait to meet you and your child!”
3. When you open the pocket folder, the pages should be stair step inserted with clear headline titles for each inserted page. Big picture type information should be organized on the left-hand side of the folder. Nuts and bolts type information should be inserted on the right-hand side.
4. What should be included in the pages relating to the big picture (left-hand side of the packet)?

- a. ***What Our Mission and Vision Is for Your Student***  
Basically take your school mission and vision and personalize it for the family reading it. Everything in the packet should focus on “What’s In It for Me (WIIFM).”
  - b. ***What Your Student Will Learn and Experience***  
This is your opportunity to explain through concrete examples what your students learn and experience that differentiates your school from the rest.
  - c. ***What Our Faculty & Staff Have to Say to Your Student***  
Through age appropriate quotes, talk to the student. Tell the student that he/she is going to love your school and why. Make sure to have the quotes focus on various aspects of what’s important to a student. The quotes should come from several different faculty and staff. If the packet is going to a family with a student who is not yet old enough to read, remember that the parents will be reading it.
  - d. ***What Our Parents Have to Say to You***  
In the same way that your faculty and staff address messages to the student, this page does the same thing and has current parents speak to prospective parents. Have your current parents address typical concerns of prospective parents.
  - e. ***What the Numbers Have to Say to You***  
Not all people act solely on their feelings. A lot of prospective parents want to read what the numbers have to say about the investment in a Catholic school education. Load this page with evidence of how well your Catholic students perform. You can also include national research on the subject.
5. What should be included in the pages relating to the nuts and bolts (right-hand side of the packet)?
- a. ***Ways for You to Learn More about St. Example School***  
Start with practical ways that prospects can learn more about your school, e.g. schedule a visit, attend an Open House, watch a school play, go to the school’s website.
  - b. ***Admission and Enrollment: Your Next Steps***  
Stay away from “turn-off” language like “admissions policy.” Opt instead to use this page to take the prospective family step-by-step through the journey toward enrollment. Don’t assume that the prospect knows anything about enrolling.
  - c. ***Admissions Application for You to Complete***  
You might be saying, “We accept everyone and so there’s no need for an admissions application.” Well, you are wrong. Your admissions application could look so similar to your registration form that it also serves as the registration paperwork. Filling out an application for admission is a step in the process. Some people are not ready to register at this point. Receiving a completed admissions application helps qualify the prospects interest in you so much so that they move to being called an “applicant.”
  - d. ***Financing Your Student’s Tuition***

- You are welcome to enclose a tuition assistance application behind this final stair stepped insert, but just don't enclose an application. You need to take time and explain step-by-step the process of financing tuition. Everyone finances tuition, even the person who writes one check, once a year. Explain in-depth the options available for financing tuition.
6. Obviously, pictures tell a story in ways that words never can. You are welcome to include pictures and images in the packet to make it "pop." Graphs (bar and pie) are also very helpful in capturing the attention of the person who is scanning the folder.
  7. Never, think that just because you addressed something about your school in your information packet that your job is done. People tend not to read. Many don't retain what they read. Does this mean that your information packet is not necessary to provide. Absolutely NOT. Consider yourself an enrollment sculptor and with the information packet you have just begun chiseling away at the rough edges that keep prospects from enrolling. There is still much more chiseling that needs to take place over time.
  8. On the road, I have cringed several times when school secretaries say, "I don't send prospects a packet of information unless they really sound interested." It goes without saying that every prospect deserves an information packet.

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## **Spiritual Thought**

My spiritual thought this August is a prayer for you and your school as you begin a new school year. Feel free to share it with your staff.

Almighty God,

As Catholic school educators, our Trinitarian tradition tells us that God loved us into being. Jesus came to witness the depth of that love and the Holy Spirit empowers us to share that love with the world. Our Catholic school tradition follows this action of the Trinity. Generations before us loved our school into being. Students, faculty, and staff witness the depth of that love each and every day. School spirit empowers all of us to share that love.

Year after year, faculty and staff take the lead in loving our school into being. Without students, the love we express in our school is meaningless. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each and every faculty and staff member to act in support of our effort to enroll and retain a student body that is of optimal quantity, quality and diversity. Amen.