

# Getting the kids in school: Q&A with John Cooper

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John Cooper, an associate at the Institute of School and Parish Development, a national development consulting firm, has helped many institutions across the country by successfully linking faith to the actions of enrolling in a Catholic school.



Cooper

Cooper started working with schools in the Tristate in October 2005, and has since presented seminars and met with school and diocesan officials. Recently, Cooper has branched out and started working with schools in Illinois, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and West Virginia.

The Community Press was able to speak with Cooper about his outlook on enrollment in the Cincinnati area.

A: Catholic schools in the Archdiocese represent one of the greatest ministerial efforts within the church. The opportunity that Catholic schools throughout the Archdiocese have to positively impact children in their faith is greater than anyone realizes.

**Q: In your opinion, what is the importance of a Catholic education?**

A: To answer this question, I look to the rescue of people like Father Andrew Greeley. His research over the years has shown the following about Catholic schools.

1. Catholic school students outperform students from other educational systems academically, even when social economic indicators are taken into account.
2. The main influence of this success is the social network created in Catholic schools (a collaborative community effort that facilitates shared values).
3. The Catholic faith is best shared in the context of this social network. In other words, faith is not only taught in our schools, but it is caught in them as well.

**Q: What is your favorite part of your job?**

A: I love assisting Catholic schools in their enrollment and marketing efforts because I believe that I am helping them show parents just how life changing the gift of a Catholic school can be for their children.

**Q: How would you describe the Catholic schools within the Archdiocese of Cincinnati?**

cially. Within the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, the CISE (Catholic Inner-city Schools Education Fund) program in the inner-city is an example of how to address this problem and keep Catholic schools open. CISE raises funds so that those who live in these low-income areas can afford a Catholic school education.

**Q: How do you feel about being able to help Catholic schools is this community set enrollment goals?**

A: I feel very optimistic about the future of Catholic schools. I have faith that Catholic schools in the community will rise to the challenges ahead. However, the enrollment work ahead must be rooted in strategic thinking.

Catholic elementary and high schools are most strategic when they think outside the box.

**Q: For many schools, this is a time of declining enrollment. How do you think schools can attract more students to enroll?**

A: Catholic schools must change direction.

They must employ best business practices in conveying the full benefits of a Catholic school education one family at a time. An education in a Catholic school is a transforming experience.

Parents, students, and alumni of Catholic schools know this best. A comprehensive marketing approach that includes technology must be in place to fully present this message.

**Q: What are the biggest challenges for Catholic schools in areas of little or no growth?**

A: It is a challenge for Catholic schools in areas where population is declining and where the people who remain there struggle finan-

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