



August 2009

## ***Catholic School Enrollment Talk***

ISPD is your Catholic School Enrollment Solution for maintaining and/or increasing the quantity, quality, or diversity of your elementary or secondary Catholic school enrollment.

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### **Enrollment Questions You Should Ask as You Begin a New School Year**

**By John Cooper, ISPD Enrollment Specialist**

In reflecting on the past year's Enrollment Management program at your elementary or high school, how would you answer the following questions? Yes? Somewhat? No?

- Was there a general attitude of openness to change present in your school's approach to enrollment?
- Did your school meet its enrollment goals relative to quantity?
- Did your school meet its enrollment goals relative to quality?
- Did your school meet its enrollment goals relative to diversity?
- Were you able to reach those enrollment goals by involving all the key players - administration, staff, faculty, parents, students, and alumni?
- In terms of marketing and promotional campaigns, were you able to realize a return on the investment?
- Were you able to best leverage your tuition assistance discount rate so that your bottom line net revenue improved?
- Can you honestly say that you rolled out a seamless, systematic relationship building effort with each and every person who expressed even the slightest interest in your school?
- Did your web site serve as a 24/7 marketing tool for your school?
- Did you maintain the types of detailed monthly enrollment reports that will allow you to assess and benchmark progress for years to come?
- Did your teachers embrace an "Enrollment Management mindset" when it came to the classroom?
- Did you regularly measure satisfaction and levels of self-promotion throughout the school?

year?

- Did your Enrollment Management core team understand its role and embrace a "let's get it done" sort of attitude?
- Did the breadth and depth of talent on your Enrollment Management core team grow this year?
- Did your key administrators appropriately delegate the Enrollment Management related work load?
- Was Enrollment Management a "regular" part of the agendas at school board, faculty, parent, and alumni meetings?
- Did you do a good job of keeping all the key players that impact enrollment informed through a monthly Enrollment Talk Newsletter?
- Did you use the ISPD Enrollment Talk Newsletter as a starting point for discussion within your school?
- Did you compile and analyze any trend data related to enrollment?
- Were those associated with your school or parish better able to appreciate and articulate the important ministry of a Catholic school education?
- Was pastoral support (diocese and/or parish levels) sufficient to sustain and grow the ministry of your school?
- Do you better understand your school's "brand" image?
- Were you able to help people identify, aspire, anticipate, and experience your school's brand?
- Did you have retention goals broken down by grade level and embraced by faculty? If so, did your school reach those retention goals?
- Do you plan to find out why those who expressed an interest in your school (inquirers) decided not to enroll?

How many of these questions did you answer "no?" In many cases you probably felt that "somewhat" was a more appropriate answer. Managing enrollment in your Catholic school is no easy job and it is unlikely that we will ever return to the days when it was less challenging. Effective Enrollment Management is an all out team effort with the goal of being able to answer "yes" to most of these questions.

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## One School's Paradigm Shift to Enrollment Management

Here's an email that I recently received from a school that attended some ISPD Enrollment Management workshops in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. In both 2008 and 2009 ISPD spent the better part of a week working with the Office of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh to deliver workshops to elementary school administrators, teachers, staff, and school parents. The following reflects the return on this investment.

*Dear John Cooper,*

*We began our new marketing focus in the fall of 2006. We started by creating a marketing committee which has since been renamed Enrollment Management, thanks to you. Our first step was to create a form for the secretary to take call in information on our prospective students. We then recognized that our initial contact material was merely a stack of old copied dittos. A formal marketing folder was developed. Myself and another parent volunteered to follow up with each family who inquired within two weeks of them visiting or receiving information about the school.*

*After attending the seminar we started a more formal tracking system with an excel spreadsheet of all prospective students for the next school year.*

*The seminar also made us aware of some fundamental changes that needed to be made to our website. Check out [www.stursulaschool.org](http://www.stursulaschool.org) to see how we did. Key to the changes was separating the menus for current and prospective students. We since added a financing Catholic education piece to both our website and our marketing brochure.*

*Internally, we restructured our volunteer committees under one general advisory council and regularly talk about how the other key components of our school's athletics, finance, student life, and the like impact our marketing goals and vice versa. Prior to this, the focus of our planning and discussion was always money.*

*Most recently, after much market research and competitive analysis, we began a full day Pre-K program. The class for this fall was filled by May 1st. Our old traditional preschool program had floundered and closed two years ago because of lack of enrollment.*

*Overall, we added 31 new families/47 children to the school this year. We are still experiencing a less than desirable retention rate, so our net growth is only about 15% over last year. However, this will be the first time in almost 10 years that the school has experienced an enrollment increase.*

*I am hopeful we can continue this trend and focus this year on fixing some internal issues to improve retention. I am looking forward to hearing more sage advice from you and your team on the topic of enrollment management.*

*Best Regards,  
Susan McKee  
St. Ursula School  
Parent Volunteer*

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## **Be Proactive with Your Recruiting Rather Than Reactive**

Let's stop being defensive about Catholic school tuition. Go on the offensive. Tell believable stories about how your current school families sacrifice to make a Catholic education affordable. See the story below as an example.



**We Drive this  
"Clunker" So That  
We Can Afford to  
Give the Gift of a  
Catholic School  
Education to Our  
Children**

St. Michael School parents,  
Kate and John Cooper, are

holding onto this 1998 Dodge Caravan in order to make tuition fit into their family budget. With them in this picture are William (8th grade), Joseph (2nd grade), and Beauty (the family dog). If you would like to contact John and Kate about why they sacrifice to include Catholic school tuition in their family budget, you can reach them at (937)392-4113 or email them at jcooperispd@aol.com. To schedule an appointment about how St. Example Catholic School can help you in financing your child's tuition, contact the school at (123)456-7890 or email stexamplecatholicschool@aol.com.

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## Spiritual Thought

What can the Saints tell us about evangelizing a Catholic school education? St. Ignatius of Loyola talks about "discerning the spirits." If he were with us today, I believe Ignatius would say that promoting our Catholic schools means helping prospective families choose between feelings of "desolation" and "consolation." Let us pray that the choice of a Catholic school education brings much "consolation" for our school families this school year. God bless you in your preparation. Amen.

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## ISPD Announces New Webinar Series

Beginning in July, ISPD will offer a year-long series of \$39 Webinars on Catholic Development. There will be one Webinar held each month.

Listed here are our upcoming Webinars:

- ***"The Role of the Pastor and/or the Principal and/or the President in Catholic Development"***  
August 24, 2009
- ***"The Value and Roles of the Development Core Team"***  
September 22, 2009
- ***"Organizing and Implementing a World Class Annual Fund for Your Catholic School and/or Parish"***  
October 26, 2009
- ***"Enrollment Management: Attracting and Retaining Students in Your Catholic School"***  
November 18, 2009
- ***"25 Ways to Engage People into the Life of Your Catholic Institution"***  
December 8, 2009
- ***"Organizing and Implementing the Total Stewardship Process"***  
January 14, 2010
- ***"How to Invite the Gifts"***  
February 22, 2010
- ***"Getting Your Parish and/or School Ready for a Capital Campaign"***  
March 9, 2010
- ***"Integrating Total Quality and Customer Service into Your Catholic Development Efforts"***  
April 22, 2010
- ***"Hosting a Gift Reception"***

May 5, 2010

- **"How to Effectively Host Input Sessions and Town Hall Meetings"**

June 8, 2010

- [Please visit our website for Webinar details & online registration](#)

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## Fall 2009 Development Workshops

### ISPD Workshops Delve Into Depth

One day workshops presented by ISPD offer Catholic leaders throughout the country an in-depth experience on a specific topic. For more than twenty years, ISPD has been this country's leader in offering process-driven workshops that are practical, affordable, and interactive. 98% of all ISPD workshops receive a rating of 4 or 5 (out of a 1-5 rating system) by those in attendance. Please visit our web site at [www.ispd.com](http://www.ispd.com) for the latest information and also to register on line.

#### Fall 2009 Workshop Schedule

Two Day Development School  
September 2-3 in Portland, OR

**"Become a More Welcoming, Engaging & Affirming Parish"**  
September 17th in Philadelphia, PA

**"Building a Strong Catholic Development Effort in Tough Economic Times"**  
October 21st in Cincinnati, OH

**"Long Range Strategic Plan for Catholic Schools"**  
November 3rd in Lafayette, LA

**"Long Range Planning for Catholic Parishes & Schools"**  
November 18th in Chicago, IL

### ISPD Also Conducts On-Site Workshops

Offered to Catholic schools and parishes within a single diocese, these workshops are designed to meet your specific needs. Please contact us for details.

- [Check Here for More Information on ISPD Development Workshops](#)

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## Development Directions

*Development Directions* is our free monthly online newsletter for anyone engaged in the ministry of Catholic development. Hear about success stories in your neighboring schools and parishes

that will give you the confidence to take the first step necessary towards successful development.

- [Subscribe today!](#)

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## Visit our ISPD Web Site for Free Resources

- One Day Development Workshops across the country
- Educational DVDs on Catholic Development
- Development Job Postings across the country
- Monthly Newsletter Archives
- Library of Development Articles

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Visit our web site for free resources and valuable information. The Institute of School and Parish Development (ISPD) is a national, Catholic development consulting firm created to serve Catholic schools, parishes and dioceses in the areas of planning, marketing, fund-raising, and resource development.

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to anyone you think could benefit from this information. If there are any topics you would like to see covered in a future newsletter, please contact us.

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