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INSTITUTE OF SCHOOL & PARISH DEVELOPMENT

Bringing People, Process, and Ministry Together to Build the

Kingdom of God.

January 2010

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.

STEPHEN COVEY'S PRINCIPLES APPLIED TO ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

by John Cooper, ISPD Enrollment Specialist

As a new year begins, we turn to thoughts of what we want to change or do differently. I was recently reviewing Stephen Covey's best-selling *Habits of Highly Effective People*. This month's newsletter takes those 8 habits and applies them to your school's enrollment management program in 2010.

Be Proactive.

More Catholic schools will suffer enrollment decline or stagnation this year because they are in a reactive mindset. In other words, some schools will play it safe and wait until prospective families contact them. Not too long ago, a principal asked me whether it would send the wrong message to have a lot of proactive contacts with prospects. She said, "You know word is out that we are hurting for students and I don't want to feed into that perception." I told her that there might be one or two people out there who would get the wrong impression from her school being more aggressive in its recruitment. I added, "You can't let those naysayer type individuals (who probably wouldn't have enrolled in your school anyway) stop you from being proactive in your enrollment efforts." This is what noted author Ken Blanchard calls "stinkin' thinkin'."

Begin with the End in Mind.

Why would you make proactive contacts with prospective families in the first place? The short-term answer for doing so is to improve your chances of enrolling them for the 2010 school year. This type of short-term thinking is not the end you should have in

mind. Rather your school's long-term goal should always be to build lasting relationships. Every proactive contact, interaction, and communication you have with prospective families should have the end goal of relationship building. That's why I often tell workshop attendees that we don't practice enrollment management simply to get more students in the door. We implement the best practices of enrollment management because it is the right thing to do. To do otherwise leaves your school vulnerable to treating prospective families as a means to an end. If that type of "means to an end" mentality doesn't turn them off before enrolling, it most certainly will impact their being retained.

Put First Things First.

We all know that there are only so many hours in a day. We can't do everything. We choose to put certain things first. When I hear principals, teachers, staff, and school parents say, "I don't have time to help recruit students," I interpret what they are saying as, "I don't believe that helping in recruitment is as important as other things are in my life." If the end goal is to form and build lasting relationships with prospective school families, what can be more important? The stronger the relationship, the more involvement the principal can hope to have from the parents. The stronger the relationship, the more support the teacher can hope to have with what he/she is trying to teach in the classroom. The stronger the relationship, the more likely the staff can expect parents to comply with things like paying tuition on time. The stronger the relationship, the greater sense of community parents will experience among each other.

Think Win/Win.

"Where two or three are gathered in my name so I am in their midst," is what Jesus said 2000 years ago. Unfortunately, where two or three Catholic schools are close in proximity to one another today, the potential exists for competition. I would be the first to argue that healthy competition among Catholic schools has resulted in better marketing, recruitment, and retention efforts. However, as the Catholic school market continues to tighten, the potential for unhealthy competition exists. The Christian message is one of win-win. Rather than focus our attention on getting a higher yield from a shrinking market, why not look in 2010 to spread-out to other markets. One such market to strategize around would be the growing Hispanic population in our communities.

Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood.

Every moment of the day, current school families are either growing closer to us or further away. Feelings get hurt, misunderstanding breeds contempt, and actions are sometimes taken that create unsatisfied students and parents. Do we exist as a Catholic school to make everyone happy? No. Are we obliged to assess on a regular basis why some people like our school while others do not? Yes. I often refer to the Office of Enrollment Prevention to describe an attitude that is not open to understanding how our school policies, decisions, and communication drive people away from us. The longer it takes us to understand these disgruntled individuals, the more likely they will take other parents away with them. Misery loves company!

Synergize.

Now more than ever, Catholic school leadership must be synergistic. The silos of responsibility for enrollment must overlap. The task of increasing or maintaining enrollment in our schools is too great for all players not to be on the same page. Managing enrollment must be the number one priority for any Catholic school today. Without students, there is no tuition. Without students, there is no case to be made for development. Without students, there is no school. Pastors, presidents, principals, teachers, staff, parents, alumni, and volunteers must fuse together their diverse talents to sustain realistic and achievable enrollment goals and initiatives.

Sharpen the Saw.

All of your school's enrollment efforts can be improved. Here's a list of things that can be improved in 2010 in your school.

- Websites - content, ease of navigation, and interactivity with prospective families
- Financial aid - should be used to leverage increased enrollment.
- Satisfaction - must be at a high enough level to propel growth.
- Communication - consider the right timing, the right message, and the right medium.
- Retention - tangible, quantifiable goals and strategies must be set.
- Repetition, repetition, repetition - people don't pay close enough attention to what we are communicating; repeat yourself often.
- Team effort - having the principal do everything is a dying organizational model in Catholic schools.
- Marketing - tell a compelling story through those who are most believable, e.g. parents, students, faculty, and alumni.
- Enrollment reports - use them to monitor progress on at least a monthly basis, if not more often.

From Effectiveness to Greatness

Tax payers expect public schools to be effective. Those tax payers who also pay Catholic school tuition expect greatness and nothing less. How do your pastor, principal, teachers, students, alumni, parents, and supporters define greatness in a Catholic school education? Ask them.

Spiritual Thought

In keeping with this more introspective kick off to the 2010 Enrollment Talk Newsletter, I suggest reading Psalm 139. God's complete knowledge and care surrounds our efforts to sustain Catholic school education. For the Psalmist writes, "You are all around me, on every side; you protect me with your power. Your knowledge of me is overwhelming; it is too deep for me to understand." May the good God bless you and keep you close this

New Year!

ISPD Upcoming Events



In case you haven't heard, we are bringing back the most popular three day workshop ISPD has ever introduced - the ISPD Mardi Gras Development School - which will be held at De La Salle High School on February 3,4 and 5, 2010.

[Click here](#) for more information!

ISPD Webinars

ISPD now offers \$39 sixty minute Webinars on Catholic Development.

Listed here are our upcoming Webinars:

- **"Organizing and Implementing the Total Stewardship Process"**
Januray 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

Spring 2010 Development Workshops

ISPD Sponsored Workshops

One day workshop 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 for the latest information and also to register on line.

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- [Click Here](#) for More Information on ISPD Development Workshops and Online Registration
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