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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.

“Application for Admission”

By John Cooper, ISPD Enrollment Specialist

In the last Enrollment Talk Newsletter the advice was given that every elementary and high school should have and use an application for admission in the process of enrolling students. Some schools don't have an application for admission. Others who have an application often don't utilize it in the most productive way possible. Enrollment processes are important. Any process can either work for you or against you.

In our sacramental Church we have processes or rituals leading up to important steps we make in the life of our faith. Part of the answer as to why an application for admission is so important for marketing is found in the definition of a sacrament. A sacrament can be defined as an “outward, visible sign of an inward, invisible reality.”

When a parent applies for admission, their action is making visible what until then was more of an invisible reality. With these words and signs (the completed application) your school can then follow-up with more words and signs that affirm the gesture that has been made with the offer of more assistance.

Many of you have asked what important elements should be included in an application for admission. Here are a few suggestions:

- Student Information including name, preferred name, regular mail address, phone, email address, sex, date of birth, grade applying to enter, current school, church affiliation, siblings that have previously attended, and who they reside with.
- Parent Information including name of father, name of mother, if not in the care of a parent, the name of guardian, (for each parent/guardian) regular mail address, phone, email address.
- After basic demographic information is covered ask them the following:
 - How did you hear about St. Example School or better yet, what prompted you to apply today? Give a list that can be checked off as well as open-ended other responses with room to write in something

- o not on the list.
- o As you are applying to St. Example Catholic School today, what are you most interested in knowing more about? Give a list that can be checked off as well as an open-ended other response with room to write in something not on the list.
- o At this time, what additional information do you need answered about St. Example School before you can make a decision about enrolling? Give a list that can be checked off as well as an open-ended other response with room to write in something not on the list.
- o In providing you with more information, what is the best day/time and method (phone, email, or regular mail) of following up with you?
- o What other educational options are you considering in addition to St. Example School?
- o Would you like us to provide you with scholarship and other financial aid options available at St. Example School? Yes or No.
- It is important to explain the next steps in the process. If there is a chance that a person may not be admitted, now would be a good time to explain how the selection process works.
- It is recommended that you don't charge an application fee. Save the use of a fee in sorting out serious applicants for the enrollment deposit. At this point your main goal is to load as many prospects into the applicant funnel as possible. Remember the goal is to surface visible signs of an invisible reality.
- Applications should be available both in hard copy and on-line (make sure that if you place it on-line that the form is fire wall protected).
- Applications should be proactively used year round. There is nothing wrong with someone wanting to apply a year or two in advance!
- Keep in a database a running total of how many applications you have in hand each week.

ISPD Enrollment Blog for Catholic Schools

Admission Applications

We welcome your thoughts and insight on this important topic.

- What would you include on an admissions application that we may have forgotten?
- How do you use admission applications?
- Why don't you use an admission application?

Email your feedback confidentially to me at jcooperispd@aol.com or share your thoughts with other Catholic school leaders by joining our blog.

- [Click here to join the ISPD Enrollment Solutions Blog](#)

Don't Buy into the Idea that Catholic Schools Compete with Each Other

A recent front-page article in the Cincinnati Enquirer got it wrong. The title of the

article read "*Catholic Schools Compete for Kids*". The news piece focused on the impact that dropping boundaries for Catholic High School recruitment would have in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. It's a statement from the media that doesn't fully appreciate the Catholic faith. Unfortunately, many Catholic elementary and high schools see themselves as being in competition.

Here are a few reasons why competition can be an unhealthy viewpoint in enrollment among Catholic Schools.

1. **Theological or Faith Perspective:** In the early Church, Christians were referred to as following "The Way." People outside the Church would remark at "the way" that the early Christian community loved and cared for one another. This loving characteristic of the early Church was most attractive back then and it still distinguishes the Catholic community today. Viewing our enrollment efforts as competition can run counter to the Gospel message to love one another.
2. **Strategic Planning Perspective:** Catholic elementary and high schools are most strategic when they think "outside the box." If Catholic schools look in their planning to only a limited number of available prospective students/families who are likely to choose Catholic education, then one can see why the situation could be viewed as competitive. Unless our planning expands outward to Catholics who possibly might choose Catholic education, to Catholics who have fallen away from the Church, to Christians who desire a faith based education, and to non-Christians who desire value based education, then one can see why the media would view enrollment as competitive.
3. **Marketing Perspective:** When Catholic elementary and high schools both collaboratively and individually promote the value of Catholic education, the overall effort can yield positive results. Marketing is most effective when the message is repeated often in a variety of ways. The real competition is coming from a cultural mindset that no longer sees the value of Catholic education much less the sacrifice often required by families to send their children to a Catholic school.

Father Andrew Greeley underscored the necessity for Catholic schools to expand marketing efforts in a speech he delivered on the 100th anniversary of the National Catholic Education Association. He said, "American culture is as biased as it ever has been against Catholic schools. Despite Tony Bryk's proof that Catholic schools are really the Common Schools, Horace Mann and John Dewey still reign supreme. Public education in American culture is still the sacred ideal."

4. **Win-Win Perspective:** See the enrollment task ahead of us as a win-win situation when a prospective student/family chooses to enroll at a Catholic school. It only means we succeeded in helping that prospective student/family to identify, experience, aspire, and anticipate what a Catholic education can mean for them. Catholic schools in the 21st century should seek to connect and engage with ever-larger numbers of prospective students and families. Marketing Catholic schools by employing proven principles of marketing consequently helps schools fulfill the message of the Gospels which call us to assist others to identify, experience, aspire, and anticipate what our faith promises.

A Catholic School Web Site to Watch Ursuline Academy in Cincinnati, Ohio

Beginning with this edition of Enrollment Talk, a different elementary or high school web site will be featured each month. Those who have attended an Enrollment Solutions seminar know that Ursuline Academy's web site has often been shared as an example for its quality design and content. Their home page offers a great example of "brand" marketing. There is a box on the home page that alternates between alumni, parent, and student testimonials. It is "branded" in a heading "I am Ursuline." What a strong statement Ursuline is making to all their web site visitors (most importantly their prospective students/families) through the people who we most believe - those who have or are currently benefiting!

- [Click here to visit Ursuline Academy](#)

Spiritual Thought

St. Faustina Kowalska said, "Great love can change small things into great ones." Let us move forward in our enrollment efforts looking for ways to spread the unique charisms of our schools in the most loving way possible. Let love and not competition be our message to the world. In so doing, we can't go wrong. Have a great Advent!

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