



INSTITUTE OF SCHOOL & PARISH DEVELOPMENT

Bringing People, Process, and Ministry Together to Build the

Kingdom of God.

May/June 2011

Development Directions

CAN WE DO ANYTHING ABOUT “GUARDED KINGDOM” AND COMPARTMENTALIZATION IN OUR PARISHES AND SCHOOLS?

by

Frank Donaldson, President

June 2011 begins our 23rd year as a national Catholic consulting company. As I pondered that history, plus the subject for this newsletter, and as I thought about the recent NCEA Convention here in New Orleans, one thought kept coming back to mind: Based upon our work for the past 22 years, and what we are hearing around the country, there continues to be a great deal of “compartmentalization” in our Catholic parishes and schools. I heard it at the Convention this past April; I hear it in many parishes and school planning efforts; I hear it when we seek input from an entire Diocese. Here are some of the questions we hear:

- Why does the school keep draining our parish budget leaving us with little money for our ministries?
- Why doesn't the parish realize the value of our Catholic school and want to support us more?
- Why are the Religious Education families treated like “second class citizens” by the Catholic school families?
- Why don't the Youth Minister at the parish and the Religion teachers in the school collaborate more?
- Why is it ok for any group in the high school to put on a fund-raiser when they want to?
- How can I ever get involved in that school/parish? There is an inner circle of volunteers who simply do not invite and accept any “outsiders” as they call us.

- Why does the football team (band boosters, cheerleaders, yearbook staff, dance team, etc.) not have to abide by a unified set of rules and regulations that would benefit our entire school when it comes to creating a Master Plan for Fund-Raising events?
- Why does the administration/finance committee tell the athletic department that they are responsible for financially supporting themselves? Where is the communication and accountability? They are left “scot-free” to financially support themselves.

Does any of this sound familiar? Sometimes these are questions that are talked about in small groups or in the parking lot after meetings or in the bleachers at athletic events. For some parishes and schools, these questions are the “elephant in the room” that no one wants to mention or no one wants to address. What I heard just in the last week from a school leader was, “Why address all of this now? It is just going to tick people off, and it will separate us further.”

One thing I do know after 23 years of Catholic consulting: A parish, elementary school and/or high school will always have the best opportunity for success when all the messengers share the same message and when all of the leaders of that Catholic institution are on the same page. When it is *us vs. them* that permeates, then chaos will reign.

As we presented and heard over and over again at the NCEA Convention, Catholic institutions face many challenges today:

- Revenue and resources
- Enrollment
- Personnel
- Leadership
- Parish and school collaboration
- Vision, mission, plans for the future
- Facilities
- “Guarded Kingdoms”

Everything begins with leadership. Here at ISPD we believe that there are key steps that need to be taken in order to navigate through the labyrinth and mazes of compartmentalization. We will be devoting other newsletters to these steps, but here is the Roman Numeral outline:

- I. Understanding and commitment to a *quality, team –oriented culture* by the school’s leaders (pastor, president, principal, board, faculty/staff, parent leaders, alumni leaders, parish leaders);
- II. Creation and articulation of a *clear vision and mission* for that Catholic institution – one that is created and shared by all of the stakeholders;
- III. Clear and clean set of *operational guidelines* in regards to building a team-oriented, quality culture;
- IV. *Education, in-service and training* on the culture, the vision/mission and the operational guidelines for the school and/or parish to operate as one unit and not a bunch of “guarded kingdoms”;
- V. The establishment of an *accountability process* to make sure all components of that Catholic institution continue on the same page
- VI. Consistent *reinforcement and affirmation of the quality culture and non-compartmentalization stance* that is being lived day to day and hour to hour in that Catholic institution.

With the many challenges that we do face today in Catholic schools and parishes, it does indeed seem counterproductive to not have all of the paddles paddling in the same direction. As old as the adage is, it still makes so much sense: **T-E-A-M: Together Everyone Achieves More.**

We would enjoy hearing from you in regards to this topic. Please e-mail me at ispd@aol.com and share your views. In my opinion only, we really need to straighten out our own “home” in order for us to successfully invite and engage others.