



April 2008

## *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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### Questions for that April "Come to Jesus" Meeting About Your Catholic School's Enrollment

By John Cooper, ISPD Enrollment Specialist

Managing enrollment in your Catholic school is a complex endeavor. When I first started working with schools, I would say at the end of a seminar, "just go out and take some baby steps and you will see a difference in your enrollment." I no longer make this statement. There are times when a few changes or tweaks to your current mode of operation can bring about growth. However, the more I work with schools on enrollment, the more I see the need for greater change in operation.

It is not too late for your school to continue to enroll students. In fact, many of you will be enrolling students in your school right up and until the start of classes in August. Nothing frustrates me more than an attitude that it's over before it's truly over. Don't give up. Have that "Come to Jesus" meeting with yourself and others close to your enrollment program right now. The following questions are intended to guide that conversation.

**1. Enrollment Management.**

Has a comprehensive approach to enrollment management been embraced within your school community? Does the custodial person know how he/she manages enrollment? Do your school parents know how much they impact enrollment management, if even just through the comments they make within the community about the school? Would your school principal boldly say that enrollment management (using a broad approach) is the #1 priority of the school? Would your 1st grade teacher or biology instructor view their teaching role as the most important way they keep enrollment management as their #1 priority?

**2. Involvement.**

How many people have you involved in your school's enrollment management program this past year? Has the secretary understood his/her role? Have individual faculty members asked you lately if their classroom performance is helping or hindering enrollment? Most importantly, do you have a core enrollment management team that is made up of a diverse group of faculty, staff, students, parents, alumni, and volunteers? Is this core team meeting regularly and reviewing enrollment numbers (both new and returning)? Are individuals

within the core team "stepping up to the plate" and assuming responsibility or are they simply pointing out what the principal and/or admissions director should be doing?

**3. Expanding Input about Enrollment.**

Has your school conducted planning processes that focus solely on the area of enrollment management in the past year? If you are attempting to solidify market segments that have always been important for your school, have you involved people from these segments and asked for their input in a thoughtful way? If you are attempting to enter new markets that have not traditionally been a part of your school, have you involved people from those markets and asked for their input in a thoughtful way? Has your enrollment planning yielded new persons for the core enrollment team or have participants in this planning process stepped forward to help with a particular enrollment strategy?

**4. Customer Service.**

Are you systematically collecting prospective student enrollment information? Can you honestly say that your school has obtained the basic contact information for 99.9% of those who have inquired (by phone, email, or walk-in) over the last year? If you have the basic information for contacts, do you know what age their child is? Do you know what the contact's wants, needs, and desires are relative to their child's educational experience? Do you have phone numbers for these contacts, particularly those that would better respond to verbal communication? Do you have the email addresses for these contacts, especially those that are busy and would respond better to on-line communication? Does everyone in your school community understand and appreciate that the collection of this prospective student information is not only essential in running your enrollment operation, it is also fundamental in treating prospects with dignity and respect?

**5. Telling Your School's Story.**

Do you believe that you can tell the complex story of your school in one communication such as a packet of information that is mailed out upon someone inquiring about your school? How many prospects have contacted you this past year expressing frustration about how much information you have shared with them about your school? Have you embraced the position that you have not done your job in telling your school's story to prospects until you possibly receive some negative feedback regarding the amount of communication you have shared? Are you prepared to be "thick skinned" when one or two persons say that they have received too much communication? Regarding communication, have you mixed your communication between snail mail, phone, and email? Are you using technology to help you deliver these communications? Are you using a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database to organize your school's communication?

**6. Person-to-Person Communication.**

Did you measure your school's net promoter score at least twice (fall and spring) this academic year? How are you measuring the level of self-promotion that exists within your school? If you have measured this level of satisfaction, what have you done to address the issues that your students and parents indicated which kept them from being highly satisfied to the point that they would recommend your school? Have you employed nomination and/or referral campaigns this year to encourage involvement and self-promotion of your school? Have you had current parents and faculty telecounsel prospective families on a regular basis? Have these telecounselors been properly trained to engage and relationship build with those they contact?

**7. Your School's Web Site as a 24/7 Marketing Tool.**

Would a prospect even be able to find your school's web site when conducting a Google search? Is your school's web site simply a "warehouse" of information for current students/families? Have you embraced the idea that your web site needs to be heavily focused on the prospect? Does your web site make prospects search for information that is relative to them or is the navigation from the home page obvious for prospects? Does your site provide meaningful content for prospects or is it comprised a fluff and surface type information? Are you using on-line forms so that prospects inquire, apply, and register on-line? Are you driving prospects to your web site via email and advertising?

8. **Marketing Strategies.**

Did your marketing campaigns touch the desires, needs, and wants of your prospects in a way that made them enter your enrollment funnel this year? Were you direct in your school's marketing effort to lead prospects to take that next step? Was your marketing planned in such a way that frequency of the campaign was not sacrificed for the reach of the campaign? Did you pack your marketing materials full of benefits, stressing the main benefit prominently? Would your marketing pieces meet the "masking tape" test for the scanning audience? Were testimonials from parents, faculty, students, and alumni spread throughout your marketing efforts? Did you spell out the next steps for the prospect to take in all of your marketing pieces?

9. **Financing Tuition.**

What is the perceived or real "value" that prospects and current families place in your school or said differently, do people believe that your school is worth the tuition you charge? Do you know the important numbers relating to financing tuition? Who are your prospective and current school families from a "financial perspective?" What type of family financial make up are you most successful in recruiting and retaining with financial assistance? What type are you least successful? How successful is your school in rolling out a tuition program that is easy to understand? Are you timely in getting financial assistance awards to applicants? Did you attempt to have face-to-face meetings with all those who applied for financial assistance? Do you offer enough "front-end" hope for the prospective family so that they at least identify themselves to you and enter into a dialogue about tuition? Are you truly leveraging the financial assistance dollars that you currently have to offer?

10. **Retention - Every Student Matters.**

Was there an effort made to "front-end" community building activities at the beginning of the year? Did the staff and faculty understand the retention averages by grade going into the school year? Using those averages, did staff and faculty identify retention goals by grade? From these retention goals, did staff and faculty identify and implement strategies to achieve those goals? Is there an appropriate level of ownership of retention within the school community? Was every effort made to contact and understand why families left the school during this past year or are not coming back next year? Have you conducted mini-retention campaigns in grades where your school is particularly "bleeding" the most from retention? Did these retention campaigns involve satisfied parents reaching out to dissatisfied or ambivalent parents?

In answering these questions it becomes obvious that managing enrollment is an involved process. Taken individually, answering these questions can seem daunting. However, there is a lot of overlap when answering these questions. In other words, something that is created in one area can be used in another area of your program. More than anything, the answers to these questions need to be placed into a comprehensive system. Enrollment management can be overwhelming without a system in place. The goal is to walk into school each day knowing that the system your school has in place is answering these questions. My prayer is that your school enjoys that peace of mind!

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**A Place for You to Announce Job Openings**  
**in Catholic Development & Advancement**

ISPD now offers a free service to any Catholic parish, school or diocese. We have a new button on our website at [www.ispd.com](http://www.ispd.com) entitled **Development Job Postings**. By clicking on this button, visitors can go directly to this page and view job announcements and opportunities from area Catholic institutions. Twice per month in our two e-newsletters, ISPD will mention this opportunity and invite readers to view these announcements. These newsletters reach over 6,500 Catholic leaders by e-mail each month.

Each announcement should be no more than 200 words and should invite candidates to submit a resume to your specific address (e-mail or physical). We ask that you mail new requests (with the announcement attached in a Microsoft Word document) to [ISPD@aol.com](mailto:ISPD@aol.com) , including the name of your contact person and a telephone number where we can reach you, just in case we need clarification on the announcement. Announcements will be put in alphabetical order by institution. This month there are eight Catholic institutions that will begin this new service.

- [Click here to read more about these job opportunities in Catholic development](#)

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## Spiritual Thought

Parker Palmer is a highly respected writer, lecturer, and teacher. In his book *Let Your Life Speak*, Palmer reveals an essential Christian concept that many in our own Catholic tradition have written about. Our lives are speaking to us each and every day, calling us to contemplation, to listen, and to act. Institutions like the Catholic schools we inhabit are also speaking to us. May the Spirit of our risen Jesus help us to hear what our schools need during these challenging times and may we have the courage to respond accordingly. Amen.

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## Spring 2008 Workshops for Schools

*Dynamic presenters share proven strategies and discuss Catholic school enrollment issues during one and two day seminars. These workshops are conveniently held across the country at an affordable price of \$69-\$250 .  
We hope you'll join us soon!*

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### TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Catholic School Enrollment Solutions - Strategies That Deliver Immediate Results
- Best First Steps to Take in Beginning Your Catholic Development Efforts
- Best First Steps / The Annual Fund
- Capital Campaigns That Produce Results
- Long Range Planning
- Customer Service in Your Catholic School

- Catholic School Enrollment Solutions - Strategies for Catholic School Enrollment Growth
- Charge Up Your Development Battery

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

- [Check Here for Spring 2008 Schedule and More Information on ISPD Development Training Workshops](#)

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