



October 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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Two Year Anniversary Report

By John Cooper, ISPD Enrollment Specialist

Since November 2006, ISPD has worked with 32 schools in an extended, long term consulting relationship. This relationship has been either in the form of a one-on-one consult or with groups of schools in a cohort type arrangement.

Here's how these schools did from an enrollment perspective to begin the 2008-09 school year when compared to 2007-08:

- Overall enrollment increase - 18 schools
- New student increase, but due to several factors, no overall increase - 6 schools
- Flat enrollment - 1 school
- Overall enrollment decrease with no increases in new students - 4 schools
- Closed - 1 school
- Have not heard back from - 2 schools

In light of the terrible economy, we were pretty satisfied with how our schools did in 2008-09. Some of these schools struggled with a "melting" enrollment over the summer, particularly as gas prices reached well over \$3.00/gallon. When viewed from an "enrollment doctor" perspective, each of these schools came into the consults at various "stages of enrollment health". There were schools that needed the enrollment management "emergency room". Many needed the equivalent of a hip or a knee replacement. A few desired what amounted to cosmetic surgery. Some were better able to carry out their prescribed "wellness plan". True to the real world our Catholic schools live in today, we even lost a school to closure.

In most cases, these school's enrollment management systems are still a work in progress. Those schools referenced above that experienced no overall gains in enrollment must continue to push forward with "perfecting" their system of enrollment management. Stay the course. Systems take time to work. Another reality of enrollment management is that schools that did experience overall enrollment growth will probably face "glass ceilings" in the future. In order to remain on the increase, these schools will require nuanced strategies and measures in breaking through those glass ceilings.

There are no one time fixes in the field of enrollment management. The great basketball coach John Wooden quotes the novelist Cervantes as saying, "The journey is better than the inn". Coach Wooden understood that teams are better off focusing on their journey rather than some end product. There is never a true end point for enrollment in your school.

Anatomy of an Enrollment Management Consult

We have learned so much from working with schools in a long term enrollment consultative relationship. It is one thing to talk the talk. It is another thing to walk the talk. ISPD has worked with both individual schools as well as groups of schools. The largest cohort of schools that we have worked with at one time is eight. Working as a cohort through the process is more cost effective for schools, but there is an inherent challenge in giving the individual attention some schools need in moving things forward.

Right now we are working with several individual client schools (elementary and high school). The focus and support we can offer an individual client school is far greater in a one-on-one consult. In a one-on-one setting we are able to have more frequent and more personalized contacts with staff, faculty, core team, and administration at schools. In other words, we are in a better position to go into the "trenches" of a school's enrollment program. It is in these "trenches" that enrollment is either won or lost.

A Case in Point

In all cases, whether in a one-on-one or a cohort setting, the effectiveness of the enrollment consult is greatly impacted by the willingness of the "players" to step up and respond. Let me use as an example a school that I am currently working with in a one-on-one consult. Prior to beginning, I asked the principal if she was prepared to make the types of changes necessary to grow a healthy enrollment. She answered in the affirmative. Thus far she has been open to trying anything that I have put on the table. In the first two months of the consult, the word "*can't*" has not been part of our vocabulary. I would describe this principal as an "agent of change".

She has not only given me access to her faculty for one meeting, but next month will mark my third monthly meeting in a row with them. Her faculty is "blowing me out of the water" with their can do attitude. Before I was even through with the first meeting, one of her teachers asked, "What assignments do you have for us?" At our last meeting, the faculty took *ownership* of the enrollment we hope to have for 2009-10. We even started reviewing the letters that each of them have written to recruit new families as well as retain current families. Can you believe it? This faculty even agreed to produce four press releases each month. Given the right encouragement and guidance faculty make a tremendous difference in your enrollment management effort. The words that come to mind to describe this faculty are "dynamically collaborative".

This principal and the school secretary have embraced the proactive relationship building strategy that we refer to as "Operation Connect". The secretary is working with me each month to learn how to use a customer relationship management database to make this happen. This school secretary is present at the faculty and core team meetings. She understands the type of communication system we are attempting to build and she is ready and willing to make the personal *sacrifices* necessary to make it happen. The best way I can describe this secretary is that she "truly loves" her school.

This principal has formed a terrific core team of school parents and teachers. The core team members have agreed to meet monthly with me. This month we went class by class and looked at where we are today with enrollment and where we want to be this time next year. In doing so we recognized the level of recruitment that is going to be necessary to bring in new students as well as the retention activity necessary to retain them. I already have two wonderful parent letters generated by the core team. We have core team members who have volunteered to be on the school web site, to make phone calls, and to edit the press releases mentioned earlier. The word that comes to mind when I think of this core team is "awesome".

I can't end this discussion without mentioning their pastor. He works very effectively with the principal. During each of my visits to the school, he has joined the principal and I for dinner to discuss the progress of the consult. He has agreed to allow us to conduct a parish satisfaction

survey in the pews on a Sunday this November. I have a focus group scheduled with the parish religious education parents. He even agreed to run every press release generated by the faculty in the parish bulletin. "Extraordinarily supportive" would best describe this pastor.

Periodically, throughout the months ahead, I would like to use *Enrollment Talk* to keep you informed of this school's progress - kind of like reality TV with an enrollment flare.

The Limited Enrollment Management Engagement

Thousands of pastors, administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and volunteers have participated in ISPD enrollment workshops over the last two years. One week in September, I gave eight presentations in a diocese to parents and faculty in four different locations with over 1000 participants. The ISPD office staff is still trying to process all the evaluations from that week long engagement.

These short-term enrollment management engagements ignite feelings of optimism, hope, and excitement to move forward. After a short-term engagement like a workshop, we often get the question, "How can I pull this off?"

I was recently speaking with a mentor of mine in the field of enrollment management. We were talking about all the different strategies and tactics a school needs to employ in order to grow and maintain a healthy enrollment. He made a comment that deep down I know to be true, but like many of you, I don't want to recognize. Tom said, "John, you have to do it all?" "Doing it all" refers to a multi-faceted approach you have to employ in growing and sustaining your school's enrollment. We all have a tendency to underestimate the amount of effort and strategy required to recruit and retain a student.

What am I talking about? You can develop and market a clear brand, but still fall short in leveraging financial assistance to make the brand a reality for that financially strapped family. You can utilize technology to its fullest extent, but still fall short of addressing a lack of self-promotion within your school. You can be more direct in your marketing language, but still fail to capture how faith and academics come together within a Catholic school so that it is viewed as the best educational option for a Catholic family. I can go on and on with these scenarios.

Many of you have emailed us to say that the strategies we offer have worked for your school. We appreciate and gain much from hearing the challenges and successes you have experiencing. If over the last two years you have participated in one of our short-term enrollment engagements like a workshop or have used an idea shared in this newsletter, please email me an update at jcooperispd@aol.com.

A Service You Might Find Helpful

If you have not analyzed your enrollment management program, then you are like a football coach who without reviewing the "game film" heads into the next game. ISPD's enrollment specialists are available for one or two day enrollment management assessments. The assessment helps your school to drill down into your enrollment numbers looking at new students trends, retention averages, fluctuations in zip codes, percent of parish families choosing your school, financial assistance wins and losses, and discount rates, and the list goes on and on. The assessment looks at how both human and monetary resources are being used in your enrollment management effort. Your web site is evaluated from an enrollment management perspective. We examine how your school is collecting prospective student data and what you are doing with that data. At the conclusion of this short-term engagement, your school receives a written summary report. Contact John Cooper at jcooperispd@aol.com or Frank Donaldson at ispd@aol.com, if you are interested in this assessment.

Spiritual Thought

At this point in the school year a sense of community is essential to the experience you are creating. Mary understood the importance of community. With her "yes" to the angel Gabriel's announcement that she would give birth to the Son of God, she makes Christian community possible. She initiates this community when she visits with her cousin Elizabeth. She makes come alive the divine reason for this community in the confines of a stable. She shares Jesus with the community in presenting Him in the temple. Even when Jesus is lost within the community, she hangs in there and finds him. May we who work in Catholic schools follow Mary's example in building community within our schools.

ISPD 15 MIN Educational DVDs on Catholic Development Free upon Request

- ***An Introduction to Long-Range Planning for Catholic Parishes***
(available now)
- ***An Introduction to Long-Range, Strategic Planning for Catholic Schools***
(available now)
- ***An Introduction to ISPD's Total Stewardship Process***
(available now)
- ***Creating the Strategic Plan for Development for Parishes and Schools***
(available now)
- ***Inviting, Involving, and Engaging More People into the Life of Your Catholic Parish***
(available now)
- ***Getting Ready for a Capital Campaign, Part I***
(available now)
- ***Implementing a Capital Campaign, Part II***
(coming November 2008)

To receive your free 15 minute DVD, please visit the [Resource Center](#) on our website.

Fall 2008 Workshops for Schools

Dynamic presenters share proven strategies and discuss Catholic school enrollment issues. These workshops are conveniently held across the country at an affordable price of \$75-99. We hope you'll join us soon!

[Register on-line](#)

or call us today at 1-800-299-2393

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
- Charge Up Your Development Battery

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.

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

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!](#)

Job Openings Across the Country 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 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 10,000 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, 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.

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

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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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