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OFFICE OF
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Student Recruitment Guide



Recruitment

Enrollment management should be the Number One priority of the school and the most important part of that is recruitment. If your school is to succeed, it is the very first job that must be accomplished and it is everyone's job to accomplish it. The reason we say this is that without students there is no tuition and no Catholic school!

There are several factors that directly affect your enrollment and your ability to effectively recruit students:

1. **OVERALL POPULATION**
The overall population in the 26 counties of the Peoria Diocese has actually increased slightly. However, the number of children per family has declined somewhat. The total number of children is projected to grow through 2050.
2. **CATHOLIC FAMILIES**
The total number of Catholic families is growing only slightly. This may start to trend upward as more and more Hispanic families move into our diocese.
3. **CHURCH ATTENDANCE**
Data is only available on a national basis, but after several years of being flat it has ticked up a little in recent years.
4. **OTHER SCHOOLS**
In general, the public school system in the Diocese of Peoria does not match the quality of our Catholic schools. A few private and charter schools are somewhat more competitive.
5. **THE ECONOMY**
From 2007 to 2013, the economy in Illinois and elsewhere was in a major recession. Parents found it more difficult to afford the tuition for a Catholic education. Since 2014, the economy has improved and made it more feasible.
6. **REPUTATION OF YOUR SCHOOL**
The public schools are free and Catholic schools are not! So the quality and reputation of your school means everything to a prospective family when you are recruiting. The better your reputation, the easier it is to recruit families.

What follows is a thorough and proven methodology for conducting your recruitment program:

STEP 1: Create an enrollment management core team.

- Principal is in charge, but not a member of the team.
- Include representatives of the school community, including faculty, staff, parishioners with expertise, and parent volunteers. In a small school, this core team may be responsible for marketing, recruitment and retention.
- Core team determines what actions are needed to attract families.
- You need to have somebody in charge as core team leader and a line item in the budget.
- SMART goals need to be set.

STEP 2: From the moment of inquiry, a timeline of activity is triggered.

Every prospect is assigned to key personnel with one goal:
to build a personal relationship

- Secure contact information with an in-depth form.
- People taking the calls must have a fact sheet and be scripted.
Do not transfer to somebody who may not be in the building.
- Make sure you get back to them and follow up.
- If the administrator has to meet with them, make sure you have their calendar.
- Have a welcome sign with their name on it.
- Provide them with a professional packet of information.
- Make sure they are invited to tour and the faculty knows they are coming
and what their names are.
- Script your meeting—do not adlib a prospect visit.

STEP 3: Create a database of prospects.

Names of prospects in the parish.

Names of prospects at every grade level

Names of prospects that have inquired.

Names of prospects that have applied.

Names of prospects requesting financial aid.

Number enrolled, deposited, withdrew.

Comparisons year over year.

STEP 4: Always make it personal!

Treat all prospects with the utmost courtesy, just as you would a guest in your home.

New families are looking for a warm, friendly “new home” for their children.

Create your own system for your own school.

STEP 5: Actively seek out and recruit Hispanic students with a
specific campaign targeted to them.

- Adopt the Madrina’s Model of Parent Ambassadors.
- Understand cultural issues.
- Try personal approach with priest.
- Use Spanish language materials.
- Use testimonials.
- Create a welcoming school environment.

- Make hours convenient.
- Awareness of scholarship.
- Tell them
 - grades will be better.
 - far more likely to graduate.
 - college more likely.
- Set goals

Successful recruitment ideas

1. Pastor should be scripted with statements in support of the school. Add his own personal invitation to come and tour the school.
2. Make sure all inquiries are responded to personally—not an email or Facebook or letter, but a warm personal call or visit.
3. Hold an Open House and invite families from private schools, religious schools and non-school parishes.
4. Host a “bring a friend” pizza event to introduce public school parents to your school.
5. Make sure all realtors have your school brochure to pass out to new families moving into the area.
6. Send congratulatory note to each new Baptism with a gift with your school logo on it. Consider sending it for all births in the community.
7. Send information to all newly registered members in the parish, regardless of their potential for enrollment.
8. Host a luncheon at school for local business and civic leaders. You have a great story to share with them—most don’t know how good you are.
9. Once you have birthdays of any child, send a yearly birthday greeting until they are too old to attend.
10. Everyone who has contact with prospects has a fact sheet and script with Q&A to handle objections.
11. Send a special invitation to home schoolers with Value Propositions including subtle aspects of what they are missing.
12. Drive prospects to your website where parents receive a video or virtual tour.
13. Invite parish finance council to school for their meeting. Make sure they know value propositions of Catholic education.
14. Contact area day care centers and invite them for coffee and a tour. Inquiring parents should be told about your school.
15. Host a free donuts get-together at the school for all CCD kids.
16. All current parents get a letter to send on to a friend or new prospect to recommend the school or contact the school for a tour.

17. Make sure your website is not an “information warehouse.” It must be a recruitment/marketing tool with student testimonials, academics, and your Value Propositions, presented in a persuasive and creative way.
 18. If you have negative stereotypes, you need to be aware of them and then correct them immediately.
 19. Celebrate your success. When families enroll, make sure to make everyone aware via social media, emails, school newsletter, and parish bulletin. Success breeds success.
 20. Have a prominent family (in the school or in the parish) host a reception in their home. Add your most successful alumni. Create the atmosphere of “successful lives” of your graduates. Purpose is to have all guests specifically and personally invited to take a tour.
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Incentives to enroll

Sometimes it takes more than just being aware of a school or hearing about its values—no matter how good they are. Occasionally, an incentive (financial or otherwise) is all that is needed to get a parent to enroll. Here are a few that have been effective:

1. A current family who gets a new family to tour and enroll in kindergarten gets a \$250 tuition credit; \$300 for a first grader.
2. New students for kindergarten receive first semester free.
3. Non-Catholic high school students enroll at same rate as Catholic students if there are open seats at the school.
4. New high school prospects receive gift certificates at restaurants just for filling out application and taking the tour.
5. Any high school student attending public, charter or other religious schools receives \$2,000 first year, \$1,000 second year tuition credit. Could also apply to key transfers for grades 1 to 7 elementary school of \$1,000 first year and \$500 second year.
6. New student registration fee is forgiven if completed by certain date.