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## Juggling the Many Hats of a Principal: When the Principal, Advancement, Enrollment and Marketing Directors are One and the Same



How many times have you been at a workshop or conference for Catholic schools and the following scenario plays out?

*Raise your hand if you are the Principal. **Your hand goes up.***

*The Admissions or Enrollment Director; the Advancement Director; Marketing Director; Communications Director. **You just keep your hand up!***

First, you are not alone. Second, there is a way to manage your multiple roles effectively.

Many principals in small to mid-sized Catholic schools find themselves wearing these many hats, which are often staffed in larger schools and systems. The purpose of this issue of *CSML* is to help you maximize your effectiveness in the areas that can lead to an increase in your enrollment.

While each school has a unique population, set of circumstances and parish relationships, there are some universal helps for you. As the writer of this *CSML*, I live this scenario in a parish school with approximately 450 PreK–8 students. The strategies shared have been gathered from workshops, research and on-the-job experience. There are two main strategies that will improve your enrollment and admissions program:

- putting systems into place, and
- creative use of human resources, both paid and volunteer.

The most important strategy is to put systems in place for recruiting, admissions, enrollment management and marketing. While no *CSML*

could cover all those areas in depth, here are a few quick fixes that can transform your enrollment picture while lightening the load for the principal.

This begins with examining current practices, putting together a plan in the areas of marketing and enrollment, then creating procedures that will keep the programs from relying on one person, specifically, the principal. A broad view of marketing is the best place to begin. Marketing has many functions, with one of them being to increase enrollment. According to NCEA...

Why market your school?

- Retain current students and attract and welcome new students.
- Encourage a sense of pride among staff and attract the best educators.
- Foster community support to help drive fundraising efforts.
- Assure that your school will continue to fulfill its mission of providing a faith-filled and academically excellent education to all who come to you.

Building a successful marketing plan will help communicate your strengths, drive enrollment and proclaim the good news of Catholic education.

### Marketing Committee: The Top Priority

If you have a marketing committee, that is great! Pull them together to begin a plan or recommit. If you don't have a marketing committee, your first goal is to create one. This may take time, but you must go slowly in the beginning to ensure impact later.

- **Start small** with 2–3 volunteers. Your committee can build as you go. It is a best practice to have your marketing committee as a subcommittee of your Board. This can take some pressure off the principal. The Board member can set up and facilitate the meetings. The principal takes on a more consultative role rather than always being in charge of everything.
- **Form a diverse committee.** The marketing committee should be comprised of parent, alumni and faculty/staff volunteers. Parents and alumni often have careers in the marketing and communications fields, or if successful small business owners, they have a multitude of experiences that can be valuable. Faculty and staff members provide insight into the internal audiences and can provide mission and message-focused content, photographs, ideas, etc.
- **Identify people** in your community who have applicable skill sets in communication, photography, graphic design, marketing small businesses and so forth. You need

a combination of idea people and worker bees. All of one or the other can derail your committee.

- **Set up regular meetings.** To start, your meetings will be focused on assessing current practices; move to strategy, planning and implementation.
- **Be mission focused.** The first task of the committee is to promote the mission of the school and consistency of messaging surrounding the mission.

### Assessing Your Marketing Program

There are many examples of toolkits available online to assess your marketing plan, and most center on the same areas using similar models. If your school doesn't have one, these tools can be the start of your formal marketing plan.

- Begin by looking at all marketing activities within the school, those that market to both external and internal audiences. Consider audience, objective, venues, vehicles and experiences.
- List out the name of the activity, when it occurs and the target audience.
- Does your plan include recruitment, enrollment and retention? It will also help with advancement, a topic for another time.
- Analyze the activities focusing on how to maximize what you already have in place and looking for holes.
- Further develop your plan making goals for the marketing program based on the needs that have come to light.

### About the author ...



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Dr. Delaney earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Iowa in 1983 in elementary education. In 2006 she earned a master's degree from Western Illinois University in educational leadership, and her Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska in 2016, in educational leadership and higher education. Her research focuses on turnaround school leadership.

Dr. Delaney has presented nationally on the topics of turnaround leadership, women in leadership, and moral and spiritual leadership. Her second love, after Catholic education, is science education. In this area she has conducted numerous teacher workshops and presented at national conferences on environmental issues instruction.



## Recruitment Programs and Procedures

### Websites

To maximize recruiting efforts, gathering information from your website and other websites and social media is key. Do you have a way for interested families to complete an inquiry form on your website that comes directly to you and a staff member with a notification? Having a form connected to your website to gather potential student information is expected by prospective parents and takes one more thing off your plate.

Your social media sites should link people to your website. There are other websites that promote Catholic schools. Make sure your school information is up to date on those sites. A few of the websites include [www.greatschools.org](http://www.greatschools.org), [www.privateschool-review.com](http://www.privateschool-review.com), and [www.niche.com](http://www.niche.com). This can be delegated to a staff member or volunteer. Another great use of a volunteer is to enlist an external observer, someone unaffiliated with the school, to visit your website as a prospective parent. The external observer can click through the relevant info and note where...

- gaps in information occur or are missing completely,
- links don't work,
- it's difficult to navigate,
- info is out of date.

When an inquiry comes in from one of these websites, a procedure in place for how it is handled makes a world of difference.

- Who checks for inquiries? Principal, secretary, other staff member?
- What information is collected?
- What information is sent to the family and how are they contacted?

- Who sets up the appointment with the principal, the tour, the follow-up call or video meeting if it is not a local inquiry?
- If more than one person checks the information, how is that communicated to the other people involved?
- All inquiries should be documented, ideally within your database, with a process to track follow-ups, up to and including enrollment, and new family check-ins during the first year.

### Social Media

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn are great tools for marketing to both internal and external audiences. This is an area that can be easily taken off a principal's plate. Give access to the school social media accounts to a trusted member of the marketing committee and faculty members. Easy ideas are below.

- Use social media management software to be more efficient. Examples are Buffer, Sprout Suite, Hootsuite and Zoho. Through this software, posts can be scheduled and posted to multiple platforms.
- Parents and grandparents love to see what their children are doing in school and once that feedback reaches faculty, teachers come to love posting about their classroom activities.
- A trained parent or alumnus can be given access and keep posts up to date and relevant. A person on the marketing committee is ideal as he/she will know and understand the mission and desired messaging.
- Make posts interactive. For example, ask families to post their first day of school pictures, pictures of their children reading at home, athletic events, art work, spirit day, etc.

- Highlight faculty and staff members. Give families the opportunity to learn about and thank their children's teachers.
- Use relevant hashtags. Hashtags can bring your posts up in searches. For example, #yourcityelementary #catholicschools.
- Know your audience; 27.3% of Instagram users are between the ages of 25–34, 23.5% of Facebook users are between the ages of 25–34 and 18% are between the ages of 35–44 (Dixon, 2022).

### Parish Recruiting

Another great recruiting source is your school's parish or other local parishes. Who is the gatekeeper for the parish office? Is it the secretary, pastor, parish administrator? Establish a relationship with this integral stakeholder. Once that is done, arrange to receive parish census data monthly, especially baptisms and new parishioner information. This can be from a single parish or several parishes from which you draw students.

Having a good relationship is key. The parish secretary and the director of evangelization can be points of contact to give new families information about your school. If you have a program such as Baptismal Bears or a baptismal gift/message for families, the parish secretary can be the one to ensure the priest or deacon has the school's gift to present at the Baptism. Once that practice is established, it becomes routine. The parish(es) census provides a recruiting list for preschool and kindergarten each year so that mailings can be sent out to educate parents about the school. It also provides a list of school age children new to the area to recruit as transfer students.

<b>CSM SERVICES</b>	<b>Strategy</b>		<b>Planning</b>		<b>Leadership</b>	
	School Assessments Program Audits Enrollment Marketing Mission Clarification	Advancement Alumni Capital Campaigns Feasibility Studies	Enrollment Technology Annual Fund Development Marketing	Communication Social Media Plans Strategic Planning Financial	Governance Administrative Structure Search Board Training/ Development Professional Mentoring	Workshops and Webinars Retreat Facilitation Keynote Presentations Individual Seminars and Series



### Referral Programs

A family referral program is a perfect way to use word of mouth marketing. Parents are the best marketers Catholic schools have. Give them some incentive to spread the good news about your school. An example of this is a Family Referral Campaign that gives a current school family a tuition credit if they refer a family who enrolls and stays for the entire year. The referring family receives the tuition credit the following school year or the last month of the current year's tuition collection. Have a place on your enrollment inquiry form to note the referring family or how the new family learned about your school. It is a great way to collect data on your recruitment programs and inspire current families to spread the good news.

### Recruitment and Enrollment Management

Increases to your enrollment are a direct result of marketing how you deliver on mission. When it comes to managing recruitment and enrollment, having a process in place will be much more efficient and productive. The use of shared documents,

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whether via Google Drive, Dropbox or One Drive, is key to establishing the process and to getting the information into the hands of appropriate users. Your shared documents should include:

- enrollment inquiries,
- kindergarten and preschool round-up inquiries,
- registration tracking,
- transfer in and transfer out data, and
- parish census data.

The data should be user friendly and have basic information all in one place. Information to include on internal forms is listed below. Much of this can be easily gathered from website forms and phone inquiries. Secretaries can have forms at hand for inquiry calls.

- Family name
- Father's name
- Mother's name
- Address
- Email
- Phone (home and cell)
- For each child – name, date of birth, grade level and year student will be in that grade (This allows you to gather information about siblings not yet school age.)
- Religion
- Parish Membership
- How they learned about your school

- Date of Inquiry
- Information Packet sent – Yes/No and date
- Tour with Principal – Yes/No and date
- Enrollment – Yes/No. If no, why not?
- A place for notes from phone conversations and the tour

The ability to follow up, track and search this data takes recruiting and enrollment out of the principal's head and hands, and allows tasks to be delegated to other staff or volunteers. Use a tickler system to keep the recruitment and enrollment process from getting lost in the day-to-day business. Enrollment is one of the most important factors in maintaining and growing a vibrant school.

The strategies presented in this *CSML* scratch the surface of what can be done with the effective use of a marketing committee and types of systems to put in place. The most important thing to remember is that you must ask for help and then give those willing the freedom to take on significant responsibility. As principals, we often don't want to burden staff or volunteers, so we keep tasks on our plates. It's amazing how easily we can find people within our school and parish community with the expertise, time and passion to help us. I've learned over the years; people want to help their schools succeed. We just need to take a step back and let them.

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