

Parent Ambassador Program

Guidebook

Name

School Name

PARENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM GUIDE BOOK

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PARENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM GUIDE BOOK

Forward

Catholic schools have a powerful story to tell parents of prospective students. It is a story of faith, focus and achievement and there is no better person to tell that story than a parent of a current student. Local research validates that parents of current students are key influencers in a prospective parent's decision to send their child to a Catholic elementary school.

The Parent Ambassador Program is designed to increase enrollment at Catholic elementary schools by harnessing the power that parents of current students represent. This guide book will help you create a Parent Ambassador Program for your school and will serve as a resource you can consult throughout the year.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this powerful strategy and for the work that lays ahead in implementing the Parent Ambassador Program. With your support, not only will this program be a success, but we can measure it: more kids in great Catholic schools.

PARENT AMBASSADOR VERSION 2.0

In 2010, we launched a new initiative called Parent Ambassadors with the goal of increased parental involvement in the recruiting process and achieve our overall goal of *more kids in great Catholic schools*. This version of the Parent Ambassador guidebook takes a look at best practices and practical suggestions that will strengthen your school's Parent Ambassador Program. If you are thinking about implementing Parent Ambassadors at your school, we hope that this book gives you the necessary tools to start your own program. If your school has developed a program, we hope this guide can provide some new ideas or insights that will strengthen your efforts.

WHAT IS A PARENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM?

A Parent Ambassador Program:

- Is proven to help schools with their recruitment efforts.
- Organizes parents of current students.
- Prepares them to be part of the school's recruitment team.
- Sends them out into the community to invite, connect, and build relationships with parents of prospective students with a simple set of compelling messages about the school.
- Tracks the progress of the parents that the Parent Ambassadors touch.

CREATING A PARENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM —OVERVIEW

Step 1 is to **COMMUNICATE**. In this step:

Communicating the Parent Ambassador program will be critical to its success. You'll want to have the best possible attendance for your "kick-off" session. We strongly suggest identifying your top prospects for the program and calling them individually to invite them to be a part of the program. Local research has shown that calls are much more effective in recruiting ambassadors.

The principal should also send out a **school wide communication to all parents of current students and anyone else involved in recruiting** asking them to become an ambassador for the school's recruiting efforts. This will ensure that no one feels excluded.

At this point you'll also want to designate someone as your "lead" parent. This parent will be more involved in the program than others. You'll ask the lead parent to follow up with other parents and make sure everyone is on track. Consider offering a stipend or incentive for the lead parent.

Step 2 is to **TRAIN**.

In this step:

The principal works with a lead parent to put together an impactful 1 to 1½ hour training session that will:

- Appreciate school parents and describe the Parent Ambassador Program.
- Set recruitment goals.
- Discuss 3-5 action items.
- Allow parents to share ideas.

Step 3 is to **FOLLOW UP**. In this step:

1. The **Lead Parent** follows up with the other Parent Ambassadors two weeks after the training at your school to make sure everything is on course and to answer any questions the Ambassadors may have.
2. **Principals monitor parent progress through whatever they're using as a tracking system** and provide any direction on course correction as needed directly to the Parent Ambassadors. The principal and administrators will have access to someone in OCS who can help them with questions or issues.

CREATING YOUR PARENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

STEP 1: COMMUNICATE

The best approach to communicate the Parent Ambassador program is through personal outreach. Phone calls are a great way to invite your parents to join the program. This personal touch will make the parents feel special and appreciated from the start. Even if they can't help, they will value the fact that you identified them as an asset to the school. Please edit this script as necessary to call your parents.

SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR CALLS

- Hello! My name is **[Principal Name]** and I am the principal at **[Name]** School. I'd like to invite you to be part of a very special program at **[NAME]** School called the Parent Ambassadors. I decided to invite you because you are a wonderful asset to our school. You are involved in **[name involvement if any]** and would be a tremendous spokesperson for all that our school has to offer. The Parent Ambassador Program is a way for parents to help in the recruiting and marketing process and won't take much of your time. Our first meeting will be on **[Date]** from **[Time]**. We would love it if you joined us. Do you have any questions? A letter with an RSVP slip will be going home in a few weeks. We'd love to have you join this new parent group. Please let me know if you have any questions.

-COMMUNICATE-

In addition to the personal calls, the principal (or other designated administrator/recruitment director) will create a school wide communication for parents of current students and others involved in recruitment. The suggested channels of communication are a letter, email, and flyer. Information should also be posted on your school's website. The following is the suggested copy for a letter:

Sample Letter

Dear Parent of _____ Student:

I know that you are very busy, but I need your help with our recruitment efforts. I would like you to become a Parent Ambassador for our school, inviting you to reach out to parents you may already know, as well as parents who you do not know, to tell the story of Catholic education and our school. Research conducted shows that parents of current students are key influencers in a prospective parent's decision to send their child to a Catholic elementary school.

We have created this Parent Ambassador Program for our school so that we can increase enrollment. Growing enrollment means that we will have a stronger school because we will have the budget to hire more teachers, further improve our curriculum, and offer more extracurricular activities. Increased enrollment benefits everyone—our students, our school, and our community.

We will provide you with _____ as an incentive* for referring a parent that enrolls their child in our school. It is our way of saying thank you for spreading the word about our school and helping other parents discover the difference that our school can make in the lives of their children.

If you are interested in becoming a Parent Ambassador, please contact _____ at _____ and let _____ know. We will be conducting a training session on _____, from ____ to ____ in _____, where you will learn how to reach out to parents, deliver a consistent message, and how to record your progress. If you feel comfortable, we invite you to bring your address book or a list of contacts you may know who may be interested in the school.

Thank you for considering taking on this important role for our schools.

Sincerely,

Principal

** Option to consider (some ideas include tuition discount, t-shirt, gift cards)*

_____ Yes, I'd like to be a part of the Parent Ambassador Program. I will attend the first meeting.

_____ Yes, I'd like to be a part of the Parent Ambassador Program, but I will not be able to attend the first meeting.

_____ No, I am not interested in the Parent Ambassador Program.

-COMMUNICATE-

Sample Flyer-
Thank you to St. Pascal for sharing

**Top 5 Reasons
To Become A
Parent
Ambassador**

5. You will meet a lot
of great new
friends.

4. It is a great way to
earn participation
hours.

3. You will learn
things about the
school that you
never knew.

2. You will be playing
an active role in the
growth of the
school.

1. You will get a cool
Ambassador t-shirt.

ANNOUNCING!!!

NEW

The St. [Name] School Parent Ambassador Program

2012-2013

THIS PROGRAM IS:

- a new way to communicate with St. [Name] families
- encourages involvement in St. [Name] activities
- offers assistance for St. [Name] parents navigating challenges that may arise each year
- an opportunity to recruit new students to the school

PARENT AMBASSADORS ARE:

- a resource for new and current St. [Name] families in need of information
- a way to create unity within the St. [Name] family by making sure everyone is up-to-date on school-wide events with personal contact ahead of time
- involved with outreach out to new families and recruiting

PARENT AMBASSADORS WILL:

- make periodic phone calls and e-mails to new families to see how students and families are adjusting to St. [Name]
- guide new families through the transition to St. [Name]
- attend school-wide events to meet new families and introduce them to current families
- assist current families with any new questions that arise throughout the year
- attend Archdiocesan workshops to stay current with new ways to help families
- assist in recruitment efforts

INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING?

Kickoff Pizza Party on [Date] at [Time]

In exchange for just 1 hour of your time we will provide pizza, drinks and soda. If you are interested in serving as a Parent Ambassador please RSVP [name] [number] or [email].

No sitter? No problem, children are welcome to attend this meeting.

-COMMUNICATE-

Here's a sample interest form that you can use to gauge parent's talents and availability.

Parent Ambassador Program Participation Interest Form

Name: _____

Phone (Home):_____ (Cell):_____

E-mail: _____

At which Parish are you a parishioner? _____

How many years have you been a parishioner? _____

How many children are enrolled? _____

Please describe your involvement with any (local) community service organization:

- _____
- _____

Please let us know how many volunteer hours you are willing to offer as a Parent Ambassador:

- ☐ Less than 3 hours per month
- ☐ 3 to 5 hours per month
- ☐ I am still undecided about my participation but would like to attend the first Training Workshop to get more details about the time commitments.

Please let us know the areas that you might be interested in helping:

- ☐ Speaking at Mass
- ☐ Religious Ed. Outreach
- ☐ Sending Mailings
- ☐ Canvassing Local Businesses
- ☐ Serving as a Mentor to new Families
- ☐ Acting as a liaison to local churches
- ☐ Setting up info tables after Mass
- ☐ Admission Events Ambassador
- ☐ Office Hours

What is your best availability? ☐ Morning ☐ Afternoon ☐ Evening ☐ Weekend

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST!

-COMMUNICATE-

Choosing the “right” parents is very important when creating your Parent Ambassador team. First, you’ll want to identify a “lead” parent that will be able to help you organize the group. Consider offering a stipend or scholarship money for this position as it requires more time and commitment. Next, you’ll want to make sure that your Parent Ambassador team has a mix of skill sets, backgrounds and talents. Consider sending an interest form home with parents to see what aspects of the program most interest them. You’ll certainly want parents who feel confident sharing the school’s message in a large forum, but you might also want someone with graphic design experience or someone who can help in the office during the school day. Everyone has the potential to bring certain skills to your team. An effective team has people of various skill sets working together to bring more families into the school.

Look to identify key traits for Parent Ambassadors—i.e. think through participation on a block by block basis; include a cross section of cultural and ethnic groups, parents of pre-school children, parents reflecting a wide range of grade levels, parents who are part of a community organization, parents representing a diverse community; and leverage people’s unique skill sets (i.e. speaking, design, organizational, and social skills). You want Parent Ambassadors who come from all walks of life and who have something unique to offer.

ASSIGNMENT: Take 4 minutes and in the area below, list these parents or the skills sets you’ll want to include.

Take 3 minutes to outline your plan for communication with potential Parent Ambassadors. For example, who will be responsible? What is the best method for outreach at your school? What time frame would work best for the Kick-Off Session?

STEP 2: KICK OFF YOUR PARENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

At the Parent Ambassador Kick Off session you'll share specific action items and goals with your parents. The tone of the meeting should be celebratory and appreciative. You should be specific in your requests and plans for follow up. Here you'll find eight practical ideas for action items to use with your Parent Ambassadors. As you can see, there are a variety of ways for parents to get involved. Some of these ideas might not apply to your school, but maybe you can find a way to adapt the idea to fit your school. Feel free to be creative and come up with your own action items.

Next we'll take a deeper look at each activity and some tools and resources that accompany them.

- ☐ **MASS PRESENCE**
- ☐ **OUTREACH TO OTHER PARISHES**
- ☐ **ADMISSIONS EVENTS AMBASSADOR**
- ☐ **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OUTREACH**
- ☐ **PERSONAL CONTACTS**
- ☐ **OFFICE HOURS**
- ☐ **COMMUNITY CANVASSING**
- ☐ **OUTREACH TO LOCAL OFFICIALS**
- ☐ **MENTORS**

□ MASS PRESENCE

It is important for your school to have an active role in parish life. Parishioners should hear about all of the wonderful things happening in the school. Ultimately it is the job of the school leader to ensure that there is adequate school to church communications. Parent Ambassadors can help in creating these communications and delivering the message. Parent Ambassadors can also be instrumental in outreach to various parish groups and ministries.

Parent Ambassadors can:

- *Speak at Mass*
- *Set up info tables after mass*
- *Host events aimed at parish families with young children*
- *Submit bulletin entries*
- *Collect information from Baptismal lists for outreach*
- *Serve as liaison between school and church*

Your parents are a tremendous asset in selling your school and parishioners are an integral audience so take the time to connect with your church.

Some questions to consider:

- Who do you contact to speak at Mass? How far in advance should you set this up?

- When are submissions to the bulletin due? To whom? How often do you currently submit stories? Could any of your parents help with this task?

- Who do you contact to set up a table after Mass? How far in advance? What Mass is the most popular?


- What opportunities exist in the parish to reach out to prospective families? Baptism list? New parishioners? Parish groups?


- Parent Ambassadors can *speak at Mass, setting up info tables after mass, host events aimed at parish families*- Brainstorm some other ideas.

-MASS PRESENCE-

- Offer testimonials on behalf of current parents and students or alumni.
- Set up table in school church after mass (check with clergy to make sure this is allowed).
- Make other outreach efforts at the church, including attracting various ministry groups
- If parents cannot attend every Mass, consider a folder with information and binder for prospective families to sign in if they are interested in learning more about the school. Parents can follow up with any names in the binder.

-MASS PRESENCE


schools.archchicago.org




We BELIEVE

IN PROVIDING AN OUTSTANDING EDUCATION—elevated by our Catholic faith and enriched with the values of love, hope and community

IN PREPARING OUR STUDENTS TO BECOME PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY who will strive to make our world a better place to live

We believe **IN ENRICHING SPIRITS**




We ACHIEVE

WITH RIGOROUS ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE built on 150 years of experience

Because of **OUR LEADING-EDGE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES**

WITH HIGHER THAN AVERAGE standardized test scores, a 98% graduation rate and 99% of our students entering college

We achieve **BY ENLIGHTENING MINDS**



We SUCCEED

BECAUSE OF OUR CARING TEACHERS

BY PROVIDING FOCUS, INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION AND DISCIPLINE

BY KEEPING CHILDREN SAFER and teaching them right from wrong and how to cope in a troubled world

We succeed **BY NURTURING HEARTS**

Points to Highlight:

* _____

* _____

* _____

* _____

SAMPLE BULLETIN SCHOOL PAGE
Thank you to Maternity BVM for sharing



SCHOOL NAME

Website
Phone Number

Know a family who is
interested in SCHOOL NAME?
Invite them to spend the day with us!
SHADOW DAY
April 18, 2012
OPEN TO STUDENTS IN GRADES 2-7
Arrival 8:00 AM dismissal 2:50 PM
Please RSVP by April 16, 2012
PHONE NUMBER
EMAIL



☎ STAFF NAME
Principal: NAME
PreK 3/4: NAME
Kindergarten: NAME
1st: MsNAME
2nd: NAME
3rd: NAME
4th: NAME
5th: NAME
6th: NAME
7th: NAME
8th: NAME
Music & Computers:
NAME
Gym: NAME
Secretary: NAME
Secretar: NAME
Aide: NAME

JOIN US FOR SCHOOL NAME
EARLY CHILDHOOD OPEN HOUSE
APRIL 30TH
10-11:30 AM

- ♦ Children and parents are welcome to join our PreK 3/4, Kindergarten or 1st grade classrooms.
- ♦ We will have centers, arts & crafts and much more!

FEATURED CLASSROOM:
1st Grade
Teacher BIO

Upcoming Events:
-May 4: PreK, Kinder, 1st, 2nd, 3rd grade field trip to Lincoln Park Zoo
-May 5: 1st Communion
-May 17: Talent Show
-June 1st: Kindergarten and PreK graduation
-June 5: 8th grade graduation

Upcoming Meetings:
Parent School Assoc. May 4 at 6:30
Mothers Club: May 8th at 7:00
Sports Association: May 12 at 7:30
Enrollment Team: May 14 at 6:30

What's going on in PreK and Kindergarten?
Check us out!
PreK: **BLOG LINK**
Kindergarten: **BLOG LINK**

-MASS PRESENCE-

Suggested Announcement to be read at Masses:

Please feel free to stop by the gathering place after Mass today to talk to your fellow parishioners who have children attending [School Name]. They are here to answer any questions and also have materials about [School Name]. There will be refreshments available at the table. Thank you.

Parish Information Table Instructions

- ☐ Display marketing materials
 - ✓ School brochures
 - ✓ Open House flyers
 - ✓ Flyers for any upcoming school events
 - ✓ School pens
 - ✓ Consider purchasing a tablecloth with school logo
- ☐ Encourage families to attend Open House or Shadow Day
 - ✓ **[LIST DATES]**
- ☐ Encourage Families to Join our Mailing List
 - ✓ Fill out form on table
 - ✓ Place form in box to return to SCHOOL NAME

☐ **JOIN OUR MAILING LIST (sample form)**

☐ Parent/Guardian Name _____

☐ Address _____

☐ City _____

☐ Zip Code _____

☐ Phone _____

☐ Parish _____

☐ Name of Child(ren) & Age: _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ Current School _____

☐ Grades Interested In:

☐ Pre-Kindergarten 3 or 4 _____

☐ Kindergarten – Grade 5 _____

☐ Grades 6 – 8 _____

☐ Email address _____



❑ OUTREACH TO OTHER PARISHES *(without schools)*

Neighboring parishes without schools present an excellent opportunity for enrollment growth. Ideally, the principal and a Parent Ambassador can find time to meet with the pastors at local parishes without schools. It is especially helpful if your pastor* is willing to help in this area.

Here are some step by step instructions for Parish outreach (this same approach can work for Non-Catholic church leaders as well):

- *Introduce yourself and share some background information about your school.*
- *Ask him if he knows any families with children who might be interested in a Catholic education.*
- *Request permission for Parent Ambassadors to speak at Masses or set up information tables after Mass.*
- *Appoint one parent as your local parish liaison and ask that parent ensure coverage on a regular basis.*
- *Consider hosting an open house for local pastors or stopping by their rectory with breakfast or lunch as an appreciation for their time.*

Note: If you are working with a Non-Catholic church leader, you may want to emphasize the ways that your school focuses on faith and values. You'll want to give statistics on the number of Non-Catholic families who attend the school and share that your school is open to children of all faiths. You may also consider asking parents who attend non-Catholic churches to help in the initial outreach.

Developing a relationship with surrounding Catholic parishes without schools can have a significant impact on enrollment growth.

Some questions to consider:

- List the closest Catholic and non-Catholic churches without school?

- Will your pastor help with initial outreach? If yes, how will he help?

- Do you have any parents who are members at another parish or church? If you are unsure, this is a great question to come back to.

- Parent Ambassadors can *act as a liaison to neighboring parishes or churches without school affiliation- ensure bulletin representation, speak at masses, etc.-* Brainstorm other ideas.

-OUTREACH TO OTHER PARISHES-

SAMPLE PASTOR LETTER

Please use this letter ***in conjunction with*** personal outreach to local pastors. This letter on its own will ***not*** suffice, but is a great introductory approach to parish outreach.

October 22, 2011

Rev. _____
_____ Parish
Address _____

Dear Rev. _____,

[Name] School opened its doors in [Date] and during these past [X NUMBER] we have educated many students in the Catholic faith and prepared them for lives of faith, service, success and leadership. We would like to share the value of our school with your parishioners.

Many of our graduates and current students are members of your parish community. (Take this sentence out if not true) Some of our parishioners would like the opportunity to share with other parishioners the value of a Catholic school education and encourage them to attend our Open House events on [Date]. These families would like to set up a table after your weekend masses and be available to meet with fellow parishioners and answer questions. We have identified the parishioners listed below to contact you and arrange to schedule the event and set up the table:

Parent Ambassadors:
[Names]

One of the weekends preceding our [Date] Open House would be an ideal time for us to share the value of continued religious education and service to others. So the weekends of [Dates] would be ideal.

Thank you for your support of Catholic education and allowing your parishioners the opportunity to share with others the value they found in a Catholic school education.

Sincerely,

[PASTOR NAME]

[PASTOR NAME]
[PRINCIPAL NAME] * *Please send from principal if pastor is unwilling*

-OUTREACH TO OTHER PARISHES-

Suggested Announcement to be read at Masses at other Parishes:

Please feel free to stop by the gathering place after Mass today to talk to your fellow parishioners/ parents who have children attending **[School Name]**, a Catholic elementary school located in **[Town Name]**. They are here to answer any questions and also have materials about **[School Name]**. There will be refreshments available. Thank you.

Parish Information Table Instructions

- ☐ Display marketing materials
 - ✓ School brochures
 - ✓ Open House flyers
 - ✓ Flyers for any upcoming school events
 - ✓ School pens
 - ✓ Consider purchasing a tablecloth with school logo
- ☐ Encourage families to attend Open House or Shadow Day
 - ✓ **[LIST DATES]**
- ☐ Encourage Families to Join our Mailing List
 - ✓ Fill out form on table
 - ✓ Place form in box to return to SCHOOL NAME

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST (sample form)

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Parish _____

Name of Child(ren) & Age: _____

Current School _____

Grades Interested In:

Pre-Kindergarten 3 or 4 _____

Kindergarten – Grade 5 _____

Grades 6 – 8 _____

Email address _____

❑ ADMISSIONS EVENTS AMBASSADOR

Parent Ambassadors are essential to successful admissions events (Open Houses, Meet and Greets etc) at your school. Parents can help with each step of the process.

You can ask them to:

- *Create materials*
- *Promote the event*
- *Follow up after the event*

Before the event, Parent Ambassadors can:

- *Invite friends and family*
- *Canvass the neighborhood with posters*
- *Hand out flyers*
- *Post details to their Facebook pages, Twitter, etc.*

At the actual event, Parent Ambassadors can serve as greeters, tour guides, or just mingle with prospective families. Be sure the Parent Ambassadors are easily identifiable with matching shirts, a special pin or something that sets them apart. Following an admissions event, Parent Ambassadors can take part in follow up calls or notes to families who attended the event.

Some questions to consider:

- What admissions events do you have planned for the upcoming school year? If this calendar is not set, set it ASAP.

- How are you currently promoting? Running? Following up after you admissions events?

- How can Parent Ambassadors help with each step of the process?

- Brainstorm events that will draw people to your school? This is not always an Open House. *Some ideas might include: Breakfast with Santa, Easter Egg Hunt, Family Fun Night, Literacy Night, Movie Night, Bingo, Game Night, etc.*

- Parent Ambassadors can: *promote admissions events in advance of the activity, serve as parent rep at the event, follow up with prospective families after the event* - Brainstorm some other ways that Parent Ambassadors can assist with admissions events.

-ADMISSIONS EVENT AMBASSADOR-

Sample Open House:



Take 3 minutes to reflect on your Open House procedures. Are you hosting four or more admissions events each year? What is your typical attendance? How do you currently promote events? Do you have any “outside the box events? What changes could you make?

-ADMISSIONS EVENT AMBASSADOR-



PROSPECTIVE FAMILY INQUIRY FORM

*THANK YOU FOR VISITING [School Name] SCHOOL. IN AN EFFORT TO HELP US SERVE YOU,
PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM.*

Parent/Guardian Name(s) _____

Home Address _____

Will this address be changing shortly? ☐ NO ☐ YES If yes, when? _____

New address _____

Best Phone Number to Contact You: ☐ Home ☐ Cell ☐ Work _____

Best e-mail address to contact you: _____

Name of Child(ren) and birthdates:

Child #1 _____ Birthdate ____/____/____

Child #2 _____ Birthdate ____/____/____

Child #3 _____ Birthdate ____/____/____

Are you a member of [Parish Name]? ☐ YES ☐ NO If yes, what year did you join? _____

Please indicate your current school(s)? _____

Grade(s) interested in:
☐ PK 3 ☐ PK 4 ☐ Kindergarten ☐ Grade _____ Start Date _____

How did you learn about [School Name]?
☐ Website ☐ Friends ☐ Archdiocese Website
☐ Current Families ☐ Local media ☐ Other _____

Which Sacraments have been received?
☐ Baptism ☐ Communion ☐ Reconciliation ☐ Confirmation

What kind of school information would you like to know more about?
☐ Academics ☐ Religious Ed. and Formation ☐ Test Scores ☐ Sports ☐ Extra-Curricular Activities ☐ Tuition and Fees
☐ Facilities ☐ High School Placement ☐ Other ☐ School Board ☐ Extended Day Program

When is the best time to call?
☐ Weekday ☐ Weekday evening ☐ Weekend day ☐ Weekend evening

❑ RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OUTREACH

Many of the schools throughout the Archdiocese have healthy enrollment in their Religious Education programs. In some cases RE programs are double or triple the enrollment of the school. If your school could enroll just 5-10% of these students, it could positively impact your enrollment without negatively effecting the RE programs.

Parent Ambassadors can:

- *Call RE families to invite them to upcoming school/parish events*
- *Host events specifically aimed at RE families*
- *Write testimonial letter to be used in RE outreach*

Reaching out to Religious Education families is not only important from a marketing perspective; it is also a parish ministry. We want to make sure that everyone in the parish feels included and welcome at all events. Religious education outreach can improve enrollment and positive word of mouth. Sometimes schools don't feel the impact in the short term, but the long term results can be valuable.

Some questions to consider when considering RE outreach:

- Have you reached out to your Pastor for approval? Who is your RE director? Is he/she open to school communications with RE families? Where is your RE Director's office?

- When do RE families typically register? What is the process?

- When does RE start? When do they meet? What time?

- What is the best way to contact RE families? Are there any times during the year when parents must attend RE session? Can school/Parent Ambassadors be present?

- Do any opportunities exist for RE families to participate in school events? If not, can you create opportunities?

- List neighboring parishes with RE programs that you might be able to contact.

- Parent Ambassadors can: - *call RE families, send letters to RE, host events specifically aimed at RE families*- Brainstorm other way for Parent Ambassadors to connect with RE families.

-RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OUTREACH-

PHONE CALLS

SAMPLE: Religious Education Outreach Script for Contacting Parents on Lists

- Hello! My name is [**Parent Ambassador Name**] and I have students enrolled at [**Name**] School. I have children in Grades [**number**]. Father [**Name of Pastor**] has asked me to call you to talk about the benefits of Catholic Education. My children have attended [**School**] for [**number of years**] and we are all very happy. We believe that [**School**] is the best choice because [**List Value Proposition**]:
 - Daily religion class and an education rooted in Catholic faith
 - Students receive personal attention in a safe environment
 - The school has high expectations and meets the needs of all learners
 - The environment is safe and orderly and the school is like a family
 - There are many extracurricular activities
 - Scholarship opportunities are available for new families who are active parishioners. The scholarship is based on family need and new families fill out an application and meet with the principal
- Can I send you some information about the school? You can also visit us on our website at [**website address**]. (If they want information the office will send brochure, values proposition page and testimonials. This request should be noted on your tracking sheet.)
- If they seem receptive, share your own feelings and personal story. Let them know how long you've been at [**School**], how you heard about the school and how well your students have done.
- Tell them new families are always welcome and tours of the school are ongoing.
- If they are interested in having a tour and talking with the principal, help them arrange for a time/day. You can direct them to the office number [phone number] or call for them. If possible, it would be great for you to be with them on the tour so you can keep in contact with them encouraging them to register.

* Document your conversations on the tracking sheets by [**Date**] and return to [**Principal/Lead Parent**]

-RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OUTREACH-

SAMPLE: Religious Education Outreach Tracking Sheet

Parent Ambassador Name

Tracking Sheet Due Date:

Family Called:

Phone

Address

Date Contacted

Spoke to Mom, Dad, Other?

☐ Mom ☐ Dad ☐ Other

Do they want information sent?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Names and Grades of Children

Did you have a chance to share your personal feelings about the school?

Is the family interested in having a tour and talking with the principal?

Invitations to school events:

☐ Invited students to shadow on a day when public school is not in session

☐ Invited family to **[school event]**

-RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OUTREACH-

INSERT SCHOOL LOGO

SCHOOL NAME Religious Education Survey, date

We would truly appreciate your feedback. Thank you.

When choosing a school for your child(ren), what were the **top 3** factors that influenced your decision?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Do you perceive any drawbacks or disadvantages of Catholic schools?

What could have made the Catholic school a more attractive option?

If your child(ren) are in public school, was there ever a “decision” process, or was it automatic?

When and how did you decide on a grade school?

Is the decision revisited annually, or more or less often than annually, or ever?

How big a factor was tuition price in the decision?

Would a significant tuition cut or financial aid options affect the decision?

Are both parents Catholic? _____

-RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OUTREACH-

RE survey continued...

Did either parent attend Catholic school in their school years? _____

Did any of your children ever attend Catholic school? _____

Optional:

Parent(s) Name _____

Address _____

Phone/Email _____

Child(ren) Name & Grade _____

Current School _____

Are you interested in receiving information about the [SCHOOL NAME]?

RE Monthly Outreach

Month	Topic/Outreach	Person Responsible
September	Welcome letter/calendar/survey	Principal
October	Halloween/invite to shadow day	Teachers
November	Thanksgiving/invite to Christmas activities	Principal
December	Christmas Card/Save the Date Open House	Parent Ambassadors
January	CSW invites	Parent Ambassadors
February		
March		
April		
May		

❑ PERSONAL CONTACTS

Personal contacts are a great starting point for your Parent Ambassador program. Ask parents to jot down names of families they know with children between the ages of 1-12 who might be interested in a Catholic school.

If your ambassadors can't think of anyone they know, ask them to consider connections to community groups or organizations that might be able to assist in recruiting. For example, an ambassador might volunteer at a nearby health clinic where they could promote the school.

Some schools have found success in asking Parent Ambassadors to come to the first meeting prepared with some names and contact info for prospective families or community organizations.

Here are some potential questions to use at your first training session. Ask Parent Ambassadors to think of personal contacts and to consider family, friends, neighbors, co-workers etc.

- Use own personal networks to identify prospective students and their families (i.e. work, neighborhood, community, church, groups, etc.) and think about:
- Where do parents and children gather?
- Who has children in grades K-8, who are Catholic or non-Catholic and who attend another school, including transfer students and children in junior high school?
- Who has newborns to four year olds and who are Catholic or non-Catholic?
- Who has children in religious education classes and who are 3 to 5 years old?
- What extracurricular activities do we participate in with children?

❑ OFFICE SUPPORT

Parent Ambassadors can also help with projects around the school office as they relate to enrollment management. Mailings can be an effective means to communicate with prospective families and a great activity to involve parents. Parent Ambassadors can help label, stamp and even personalize mailings to families who live in the area.

Parent Ambassadors can follow up with any prospective families who have shown interest in the school. This can be done via mail, email, or phone calls. Parent Ambassadors can also take calls from prospective families and even give school tours. Parents making calls or giving tours should feel confident in relaying the school's message and strengths.

Oftentimes prospective families appreciate the insight that current families can provide and may feel more comfortable asking certain questions to current parents as opposed to school administrators or teachers. Office hours are a great way to engage Parent Ambassadors in some behind the scenes work.

Some questions to consider:

- How are you currently collecting prospect data and following up? How can PA's help?
-

- Assess your Parent Ambassador Interest form- are there parents who might feel more comfortable working behind the scenes?
-

- Develop a schedule and routine for parents willing to volunteer in the office.
Consider a special area for Parent Ambassadors to work.
-

- Parent Ambassadors can: *help with mailings, follow up with prospective families, give school tours* – Brainstorm some other ways they can work on enrollment management in the school office.

- *Create a special area of the school office for Parent Ambassador Paraphernalia. If you have an upcoming event you can alert parents that materials are in the office ready to be picked up and distributed.*

-OFFICE SUPPORT-

Prospective Family Information

Remember: *Always invite family for a school tour
*Reminder to visit website
*Don't allow the conversation to focus only on tuition

Child's Name and Grade:			
Parent Name			
Telephone:		Cell	
How did you hear about us?			
Email:			
Address:			
City/State/Zip:			
Notes:			

Follow-up Tracking System

_____ Date of Initial Contact (*be there for them*)
_____ Date of School Tour (*be sure to let teachers know if tour is scheduled*)
_____ Date of Info Packet Mailed (*immediately*)
_____ Date of Faculty Letter Mailed/Emailed (*grade or subject specific*)
_____ Date of 1st Phone Call made (*Call on different days/times until you connect*)
_____ Date of Parent to Parent Letter Mailed/Emailed (*Make it personal.*)

****Invite Prospective Families to events and email them any news stories or publications.***

Wait until re-registration.....

_____ Date of Financing Tuition Letter Mailed
_____ Date of Call to ACTION Letter from Principal Mailed/Emailed (*"Registration now open! Grade levels are filling up, register today!"*)
_____ Date of 2nd Follow-up Phone Call made (*Do your best to connect.*)

-OFFICE SUPPORT-

MEDIA RELATIONS

- Obtain the school's press release template and send weekly school news and (high-resolution) photos to the local newspapers about school activities or to post ads.
- Assign a parent to communicate via the website, a blog, Facebook and Twitter.

Sample Press Release:

St. Christopher Catholic School

Building a Future Today

14611 S. Keeler Ave.

Midlothian, IL 60445

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Michael Johnson

(708-385-8776)

St. Christopher Celebrates First Day of School

Chicago IL August 24, 2010 – On August 23, St. Christopher School in Midlothian opened its doors for the 2010-2011 school year. Excitement was in the air as students from Preschool to 8th grade entered their classrooms and met their teachers for the first time. Students attended an assembly led by school principal, Michael Johnson, while parents participated in a welcome breakfast.

Teachers and students alike are excited to start the year. Mary Ellen Noonan, the second grade teacher, says, “We are looking forward to a spectacular year with many new initiatives. We are especially excited about the new Rowland Reading Series, the use of the Smart Boards in our classrooms, and the use of TeacherMate along with our developing differentiated methodologies to improve student learning. In addition to our status as an emerging PBIS school, we will be implementing RTI to pinpoint student difficulties and better organize a plan to support student education within our school this year.”

St. Christopher students have a great school year planned for them. Each week students attend computer, art, music, and library classes. Students also have the opportunity to join a variety of clubs and activities including a Weather Club, Student Council and Newspaper. Parents also have the option for their children to attend before or after school care.

St. Christopher boasts an outstanding educational environment and is still accepting students for the 2010-2011 school year. If you'd like to learn more about St. Christopher Catholic School, please contact Michael Johnson at 708-385-8776.

###



Principal Johnson talks to students at the Welcome Back Assembly.

-OFFICE SUPPORT-

SCHOOL TOUR & FAQ

Invite Parent Ambassadors to come in once or twice a week to give school tours. Fill out this Frequently Asked Questions form and share it with your parents.-

What are the school hours? What grades do you offer?

Is child care offered before and after the school day? What are the hours and cost?

******How much is tuition?

What other types of fees/fundraisers are required of parents? *Break down the tuition by month or even week. Try not to let conversation end after discussing cost.*

Do you offer financial aid? If so what is the process to apply?

What are the criteria for acceptance? When are applications due?

What is the student: teacher ratio?

What is the school's curriculum?

How is religion incorporated? Do you accept non-Catholics?

What special classes do you have?

What type of technology do you have?

How much homework will my child receive?

What extracurriculars do you offer?

Do your students wear a uniform? Where can they buy one?

Do you offer a hot lunch program? How much does it cost?

❑ COMMUNITY CANVASSING

Community canvassing may seem like a simplistic approach to marketing, but it works. Even the most sophisticated political campaigns will also incorporate good old fashion canvassing into their strategy. Parents often live and work in the community where their children go to school. They are your best resources when it comes to neighborhood outreach and community canvassing. Parents should canvass local businesses focusing on places children and families frequent such as: parks, libraries, dentist and doctor offices, day care centers, restaurants, specialty stores, etc. Ask parents for suggestions on places to canvass. Plan to canvass the neighborhood up to once a month or when the school has a special event.

Some questions to consider:

- Do you already have a list of local businesses that your school works with on a regular basis? If not, create one- start to list a few businesses that might be willing to work with you.

- Do any of your parents work at or have connections to local businesses in the area?

- Could you appoint one parent as the neighborhood canvassing point person? Who could do this?

- What events would you like to promote? How far in advance would you like to promote them?

- Parent Ambassadors can *reach out to local businesses, parks, libraries, etc., develop relationships with business owners, chamber of commerce, park districts* -Brainstorm some other ways in which Parent Ambassadors can canvass or reach out to the neighborhood.

A note about canvassing: Please think carefully before spending precious money printing materials and precious time handing out those materials. Be sure that your local businesses will actually promote your school. Ask to speak to the manager or even better find parents with connections to these businesses. Don't waste your resources!

-CANVASSING-

COMMUNITY CANVASSING:

- Visit several locations in the area that attract families and children where they could access information about the school: parks, libraries, day care centers, community organizations, real estate offices, local businesses (including Starbucks or McDonald's community boards), etc.
- Distribute flyers, brochures, lawn signs, door hangers, etc.
- Participate and have a presence in community events (e.g. Fourth of July, Labor Day, educational fairs, etc.)

Here's a sample postcard that one of our schools used when canvassing.



-CANVASSING-

Canvassing Form

Name of Business	Parent Ambassador	Business Contact Name/ Phone	Address/Location
Day Care Centers:			
Community Centers/Doctor Offices			
Restaurants:			
Libraries:			

-CANVASSING-

Name of Source	Parent Ambassador	Business Contact Name/ Phone	Address/Location
Park District			
Realtor:			
Salons			
Other:			

❑ Outreach to Local Officials and State Legislators

Why reach out to local officials and state legislators? Simply put, our Catholic schools do the public good and are important entities in each community. Local officials and state legislators need to know the value of our schools. Building a relationship with local officials will make it easier for those officials to be responsive when the school has a local issue, such as the need for a uniformed police officer for traffic control at dismissal or inclusion of students in town and county events. Local officials should know your school well so that they can speak highly of your program, and be able to recommend it to those seeking an alternative to the local public school.

State legislators need to be aware of your school as a vital constituent group in their legislative district. Legislators know that parents represent votes. If a legislator doesn't know about your school, he/she may not realize the value of the school to the wider community, and the need for state aid and meaningful school choice to assist the school in its function as a first rate educational institution with a strong emphasis on civics and community engagement.

It is important that local officials and state legislators be aware that Catholic school graduates are more: civically engaged, likely to vote, tolerant of diverse views, committed to community service than students from other types of education (USCCB, *K-12 Catholic Schools and Parental Choice*).

Some questions to consider:

- Do you know who the local officials and state legislators for where your school is located?

- What other towns/cities are represented in your school? Do you know the local officials and state legislators for those locations?

Do any of your parents have connections to local officials and state legislators, such as work, neighbor, relative, community relationships?

- Could you appoint one parent as the legislative outreach point person? Who could do this?

- Do you know when the local Boards of Education and Town/City Councils meet in your area? Are their proceedings posted on town websites? Who could monitor these meetings and maintain a presence there, enough so that the members realize that a representative of your school is following their meetings?

A note about political activity: As a 501(c)(3) corporation, our school cannot endorse political candidates nor allow campaigning on school and church grounds. While it is good to invite elected officials to your school to get a firsthand look at the wonderful things happening there, please avoid giving the appearance of endorsing them or awarding their work in one area, where their legislative record in another area is in opposition to the teachings of the Catholic Church

Outreach Form

[illegible]

❑ FROM AMBASSADORS TO...MENTORS

Parent Ambassadors can assist in your enrollment management efforts beyond recruitment. They have the potential to play a critical role in retention efforts. Parent Ambassadors can serve as mentors to new families. Mentors can be a built in part of your Parent Ambassador Program. Enlist Parent Ambassadors as mentors once you've fully established your Parent Ambassador program.

Parents can:

- *Reach out to new families before the year starts and answer potential questions*
- *Host a new family welcome event at the school*
- *Meet in advance of the school year for children to meet and parents to get acquainted*
- *Serve as communication liaison between school office and families*
- *Function as "parking lot" monitors- if they hear gossip on the parking lot, they can bring it to a school leader*
- *Act as "Room" parents*

Ensuring the new families feel welcome and appreciated from the beginning will keep them involved at the school and (hopefully) keep them registering year after year.

Some questions to consider:

- What does your school currently do to "welcome" new families?

- How can Parent Ambassadors assist with this process?

- List some parents who might help with this, but won't want to be formally involved in Parent Ambassadors because they are involved in too many other groups.

- Parent Ambassadors can: *act as "first contact" for new families entering the school, serve as a point of contact and friendly face for new families, act as "parking lot" patrol-* Brainstorm a few other ways that Parent Ambassadors can help with retention.

-MENTORS-

New Family FAQ

Oftentimes our new families may feel overwhelmed by school events, traditions, and routines. New families will appreciate answers to these frequently asked questions.

- What are the “can’t miss” events of the school year?
- What is the _____ tradition?
- How do parent volunteer hours work?
- How does the hot lunch program work?
- What is expected at “Family” Mass?
- Any other tips or tricks for the first year at **[Name]** School.
- **Take a few minutes to add some of your own ideas.**

- _____

Script for calls to new families

Hello and welcome to **[Name]** School. I was so happy to hear that you registered your son/daughter for **[grade]**. I currently have a child(ren) in **[grade(s)]** and love it here. I am just calling today to check in and see if you have any questions about the upcoming school year and to invite you to **[New Family Welcome Event: Date/Time]** I look forward to meeting you at this event. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at **[Phone]** and **[Email]**. If you’d like to meet for coffee or breakfast one day this summer, I’d be happy to arrange it or we could set up a play date for **[kids names]**.

Ideas for events

- New Family Picnic/BBQ
- New Family Welcome Session in conjunction with Back to School Night
- Coffee and donuts for new parents on first day
- New Family Mass or prayer service
- New Family Coffee/Survey/Check -In in October or November

❑ DIGITAL MARKETING SUPPORT

Integrating technology into your enrollment management efforts is key. Parent Ambassadors can be critical in assisting with digital marketing. They can help monitor review sites, take photos, help with Facebook postings and offer ideas/suggestions. A parent is always the most authentic voice in social media groups and on review sites.

Parents can:

- *Take photos*
- *Monitor review sites*
- *Be online ambassador*
- *Forward newsletter and invitations*

Parents who can help with digital marketing might not be able to attend all Parent Ambassador meetings, but are key to your efforts.

Some questions to consider:

- What social media platforms does your school use? Who is in charge of taking photos?

- Are there neighborhood groups on social that you could join? Could you identify a few parents to monitor those groups?

- Have you googled your school lately? What comes up? What do review sites say?

- What other opportunities exist within digital marketing?

KICK OFF SESSION

Now that you have a sense of what you will be asking your Parent Ambassadors to do, let's talk about the kick off session. Before the kick off session, you'll want to prioritize the action items from the previous pages. *Choose 1-3 action items and prepare to present them at the first meeting.*

1. Provide an overview of the Parent Ambassador Program.

You will kick off the Parent Ambassador Training Program with a short overview of the Parent Ambassador Program. Your overview should include:

- A clear and simple explanation of the program
- Specific goals
- How it will benefit current students and their families
- What Parent Ambassadors will do and how much time it will take
- Any reward or recognition for a new student's enrollment in the school
- How to keep track of progress

Here's a sample overview that you can customize:
WHAT IS A PARENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM?

A Parent Ambassador Program:

- Is proven to help schools with their recruitment efforts
- Organizes parents of current students to recruit **[X]** new families
- Prepares them to be part of the school's recruitment team- more families means more resources for the school and opportunities for your own family
- Sends them out into the community to invite, connect, and build relationships with parents of prospective students with a simple set of compelling messages about the school- Being a Parent Ambassador should not take more than 3 hours per month, but it can be as much or as little as you'd like
- Parent Ambassadors who recruit new families will **[incentive]** for each family they recruit; all Parent Ambassadors will be invited to a special Mass and luncheon at the end of the school year
- Tracks the progress of the parents that the Parent Ambassadors touch- We'll track the progress of the group by email and a discussion group

Sample Agenda

- Introduction and Welcome
- Overview of Program
- 1-3 Action Steps with Goals
- Instruct Parents on Message to Deliver
- Open Forum for Suggestions
- Follow Up Procedure and Next Meeting Date

Edit this for your school.

Parent Ambassador Meeting Remarks

Welcome to the 2012-2013 recruitment season at **[School Name]** and the kick-off of the Parent Ambassador Program . This year we have X # Parent Ambassadors.

[Intro fill in details about yourself- name how long you've been involved in school etc]. -My focus in our recruitment efforts is on developing **parent** and **community** relationships. I oversee the **Parent Ambassador Program**. I also work on developing **closer relationships with our parish communities**, specifically the religious education program directors. We hope that these relationships will help us in spreading the news about **[School Name]** to families in public schools. As parents of **[School Name]** students, we are all recruiters for **[School Name]**. Things we say about the school influence those around us and shape the reputation of our school. We find that our best tool for recruiting new students is **word of mouth**. Local research done through OCS determined that word of mouth is the number one marketing driver.

All of you in this room have been invited to be **Parent Ambassadors** because you are viewed as parents who have the ability to influence other parents to choose **[School Name]**: you are knowledgeable about **[School Name]** (you have a student here, or a graduate, or you're an alum) and you are connected to your parish. You are a **special group of parents** who will 1) act as liaisons between **[School Name]** and your local community and personal network, and 2) serve as a friendly resource for families who want to know more about **[School Name]**.

We hope that you will be partners with **[School Name]** in promoting the mission of the school and the value of Catholic education. I would like to share with you four of our recruitment goals for this year:

1. Our overall enrollment goal is to reach **[X #]** of students. Our goal is to enroll **[x]** new families from Parent Ambassadors.
2. Increase the number of students who attend our fall open house from **[X to Y]**.
3. ***[Additional goals]***

Tonight we would like to spend some time reviewing with you some of the great things that go on at **[School Name]** that distinguish us from other schools. We want to give you the tools you need to speak to families about why they should choose **[School Name]**.

2. Be specific in how your Parent Ambassadors can help. Provide an overview of the opportunities to assist in recruitment and retention. Choose a few projects for everyone to dive into immediately and a few that will be a focus for upcoming meetings.

3. Instruct parents as to which messages to deliver. If you can't provide a message to deliver, then please contact an OCS representative for help developing your Value Proposition. *See Appendix A for more details on messaging.*

4. Invite Parents to share their ideas and suggestions.

5. Set follow up procedures and the next meeting date.

STEP 3: FOLLOW UP.

In this step:

The **Lead Parent** follows up with the other Parent Ambassadors two weeks after the training to make sure everything is on course and to answer any questions the Ambassadors may have.

The follow up procedure is essential to the longevity of your Parent Ambassador Program. You'll want to ensure that Parent Ambassadors feel both motivated and appreciated for their service. Following up to celebrate successes is important. Here are the ways that some schools appreciate and celebrate their Parent Ambassadors:

- T-Shirts and special paraphernalia for parents
- Bulletin board/space for tracking Parent Ambassador success
- Parent Ambassador Newsletter
- Parent Ambassador appreciation luncheon/dinner
- Parent Ambassador Mass
- Follow Up Emails
- Discussion Board
- Follow Up Calls to Parent Ambassadors

Keeping parents engaged can be a challenge. Making parents feel special, individually thanking them, engendering a feeling of belonging will go a long way towards a long-term successful Parent Ambassador program.

ASSIGNMENT: In the area below, write down how you will connect with the other Parent Ambassadors two weeks after the training at your school to make sure everything is on course and to answer any questions. Take about 3 minutes to complete this task.

2. Principals monitor parent progress and provide any direction on course correction as needed directly to the Parent Ambassadors.

ASSIGNMENT: In the area below, principals should write down how they will monitor parent progress and any databases you create, if applicable. Take about 3 minutes to complete this task.

CREATE A TIMELINE

This page outlines all of the tasks that you will need to accomplish in order to have a successful Parent Ambassador training session. In order to be most effective, OCS recommends that the training is completed by mid-November. Please take a few minutes to complete this schedule. If you'd like to share your timeline with an OCS representative, we will follow up with you to make sure you are on course.

ACTION

COMPLETION DATE

Refine communication to parents and those involved in recruiting

Send communication out

Personally contact active parents and those with a wide personal network

Create materials for training session, using the information developed in the guide book

Co-ordinate logistics of the training

Training

Follow-up with Lead Parent

Monitoring of Progress, as appropriate
