

VAN LUNEN LED PROJECT

Like many schools after 2008, our school experienced a flattening of enrollment. Legacy Christian Academy The school was fortunate during this time; all attrition was replaced with new students yet we did not have a net gain in student. This resulted in two consequences: First, we were losing mission appropriate families. Second, enrollment levels stayed flat, we experienced no growth.

Statistics indicate that Christian Schools typically achieve 70% or more of their enrollment through an introduction by someone they know. Given the power of this statistic, word of mouth is strongest form of internal (retention) and external (admission) marketing. As evidence of this, during the last school year, 52% of our applications were garnered through word of mouth. However, this number was less than desired and we knew we could do better.

According to GFK Roper Consulting, word of mouth referrals are 31% more trusted by school parents than advertising. A very significant margin, and even more significant when compared to the cost of advertising.

Mode	# of Students	\$ Spent	\$ Spent/ Student	Avg. Tuition \$11,558	%
Ads	2	\$16,200	\$8,100	\$3,458 /	1%
Current Family	23	\$0	\$0		11%
Drive by	17	\$0	\$0		8%
Former Student	11	\$0	\$0		5%
Tour & Open House	9	\$8,900	\$989	\$10,565 /	4%
<i>Word of Mouth</i>					
<i>Alumni</i>	4	\$0	\$0		
<i>Heard from Current Family</i>	24	\$0	\$0		
<i>Faculty</i>	8	\$0	\$0		
<i>Friends</i>	45	\$0	\$0		
<i>Staff/BOD</i>	2	\$0	\$0		
<i>Other</i>	29	\$0	\$0		

Word of Mouth accounts for **112** new students

52% and \$0.0

Web	40	\$15,000	\$375	\$11,183 /	19%
TOTAL	214	\$45,000	\$210	\$11,329 /	100%

RATIONALE

The LED project creates a systematic process to increase our student market through the use of Word of Mouth. Currently, LCA gains approximately 52% of our new students through Word of Mouth. Statistics indicate that Christian Schools can typically achieve 70% or more of their enrollment through Word of Mouth referrals.

PROPOSAL

The word of mouth initiative will manifest itself as an Ambassador Program. The Ambassador Program will draw from the many individuals that value Legacy Christian Academy and would effectively serve as promoters. The promoters would be able to identify, engage and articulate the benefits of a Legacy education and refer prospective families for admission to Legacy.

To accommodate that Ambassador Program, 5 goals were developed as guiding principles.

Goal # 1

The initial goal was to develop a list of 50 or more people who would become official Legacy Christian Academy Ambassadors. This group was comprised of teachers, parents, students, grandparents, Board members and local friends of the school. By the initiation of the program, we had 350 people identified as wanting to be involved in our Ambassador Program.

Goal #2

Foster a dependable relationship with the Ambassadors by creating small, personal, and continuous regular communication that encouraged our Ambassadors to prioritize Legacy and interact with their sphere of influence on behalf of Legacy.

Goal # 3

Equip our Ambassadors with the necessary training and resources to increase their effectiveness. This was accomplished by:

- Training Ambassadors to make proper referrals to the school.
- Informing them of the “untapped market” of families who have a need for what Legacy provides, but have not considered the possibility of a Christian school education.
- Training them to develop a short “elevator” talk so that they could articulate the positive benefits of a Legacy education with prospective families.

Goal #4

Provide opportunities for our Ambassadors to interact with prospective families.

- Serving as hosts at Admission events / Open Houses / Parent Coffees, etc.
- Being present at church events / Small group meetings.
- Volunteering to host information tables at local churches.
- Hosting small gatherings in their homes for expressed purpose of introducing Legacy to others.

- Follow-up contact (phone) with prospective families who have inquired about Legacy Christian Academy.
- Distributing brochures, information to businesses, doctor offices, etc.
- Visiting websites such as greatschools.com to leave positive feedback.
- Blogging on parent websites.

Goal #5

Create a Kick-Off event to orientate individuals to the Ambassador program. The event was intended to excite our families and staff about our recruitment efforts and their part in helping grow the school. The event, titled Legacy Night, included testimonials on the schools effectiveness from students, teachers, parents and grandparents. Training occurred where information about the school was presented. The information was intended for use by the Ambassadors for recruitment purposes.

CONCLUSION

The integrity of the Ambassador Program should be established on the guiding principle that the program is a ministry and not just another marketing strategy. The program is an effective and cost efficient way of increasing the awareness of the school while attracting new families. Already, Legacy Christian Academy is experiencing the strongest retention rate in the school's 15-year school history. The applicant pool for new admissions is larger and stronger than any year in school history. Enrollment is projected to rise 10% and retention is 96%. The greatest result has been the increase in parent support for the school.

