Collaborating (not competing) for Student Enrollment Growth

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Project Summary
To meet the mounting challenges of healthy student enrollment and maximizing limited marketing dollars, a consortium of Christian schools in the Greater Pittsburgh area has been assembled.

This collaborative approach to advertising provides cost-effective, appropriate marketplace saturation, promoting the benefits of Christian education to a targeted (mission fit) audience. Prospective parents are directed to a website map showing participant schools and linking to their websites for further exploration.

Other opportunities for cooperation among the regional schools have emerged for greater efficiencies.

Project Results

• Invitation to 55 Christian schools in the region
• Initial website launched with 12 schools on the map
• Currently 24 schools are consortium members, pooling $68,000 annually
• PittsburghChristianSchools.net has steady presence with all local Christian (and some mainstream) media
• Consortium also reaches out through sponsorships and on-site displays
• Marketing message serves as awareness for Christian schools, addresses common misconceptions or objections, and provides parent testimonials in a call to action
• Schools are reporting increases to their website traffic directed from hyperlinks of PittsburghChristianSchools.net
• Schools are highly satisfied with program, citing enrollment growth or stabilization of declining admissions
• Administrators now have a forum for mutual support and idea sharing
• Collaboration is evolving into other efforts such as bulk purchasing, risk management, employee health care, grant seeking, pooled corporate scholarship support

What We Have Learned

• As Christian schools, there is more that unites us than divides us
• A spirit of cooperation and trust is essential
• Regardless of size, each school must be strategic about enrollment and make resource commitment to marketing
• More can be achieved collectively than any one school could achieve individually
• Parents (as customers) need to accept Christian education in general before they will choose any particular school, which is mostly based on proximity to home
• Limit advertising to fewer media outlets with a greater frequency of consistent messaging
• Must establish clear criteria for participation
• Next development is structure as 501(c)(3) organization to leverage other opportunities