

Marketing the Message

*Denise Norman-Van Lunen Fellow 2013-2014
Principal, Emanuel Lutheran School, Patchogue, NY
Consultant: Courtney Lampen*



What I did: Emanuel Lutheran School has been struggling with a declining enrollment. It was determined that a cultural change was needed. An intentional emphasis was placed on partnering with parents to develop Christian character attributes, using the Fruits of the Spirit. As God directed our path, we quickly became aware of the results. It was *urgent* that we get the message to our community....A busy year included giving tours to local pastors, establishing a feeder – school program, hosting our first Harvest Fair where reusable shopping bags were distributed, displaying custom banners/posters/ postcards in stores & offices along Main Street, increasing postings on Facebook and beginning a Twitter account. An “Each One- Reach One” campaign brought a realization for attention on closing leads. A review of procedures for answering phone calls and “following up” included sending thank you notes from the Principal, and making calls from Parent Ambassadors. The staff wrote elevator speeches and reviewed how they greeted new families touring the school. Efforts to increase retention included discussing the attributes noted as important during P/T conferences, maintaining a slideshow of the “Mission in Action”, conducting interviews to gauge satisfaction, creating innovative programming proving the mission’s success through “Smartie Visits” and the distribution of “Fish Tale” certificates. We encouraged Emanuel Church members by increasing their awareness of our intentions by sharing stories during congregational meetings, sending invitations to join us at school events, hosting an Open House on a Sunday after services, and summarizing our mission focus with a Bible verse .
Live a life worthy of the Lord.....bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. Col 1:10

There have been so many lessons learned!!! First, it was crystal clear that God was present during this entire process. He made it possible for the mission moments to create a sustainable enthusiasm. Second, it became incredibly obvious that relationships with all those vested in the school need to be intentionally cultivated during the school year. Parents appreciated the opportunity to meet with me and learn how much I value their input (one of my strengths). Next, as old habits die hard, I need to remember to speak about the specific mission focus at ALL events. This was a year of hit or miss. I have made notes in next year’s folders to not *miss* the opportunity!! Finally, I found it reassuring to see the enthusiasm and support from so many of the pastors that came to visit the school. I am eager to strengthen these relationships.

What difference has this project made? This process of marketing the message has brought clarity to our ministry. Steps have been taken to initialize the unity between Emanuel Lutheran Church and School. We have seen an increase in volunteers, and expectations were exceeded during our banquet and golf outing. As a result, we exceeded our budget for fundraising by \$15,000!! We have had numerous opportunities to explain our unique mission focus. The word on the street is that we have a great reputation. This positive Word of Mouth is significant to our growth, giving us hope for a sustainable future!