

# Is Your Admissions Process Working for You or Against You?



## Session Resources

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FROM TODAY'S SESSION

## Key Takeaways

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These are the big ideas from today's session. Share them with your principal, your pastor, or your team when you get back.

- 1 Your primary recruiting window opens in September, not January.** The families who will choose you first are visiting campuses, asking questions, and forming impressions in the Fall. Catholic Schools Week is your victory lap. It should not be your starting gun.
- 2 Opening applications does not mean offering seats.** An application is not an offer. Every competitive private school in the country operates this way. Opening in October builds a pipeline of mission-fit families so you are never starting from zero in February.
- 3 Your application should be a discernment tool, not a registration form.** The purpose of your application is not to collect data. It is to begin a conversation about fit. Two or three heart questions will tell you more about a family than twenty data fields ever could.
- 4 Filling every seat is not the same thing as building a thriving school.** Families who choose you intentionally stay. They become your best ambassadors. They bring you the next family. Mission fit protects your culture and your retention.
- 5 Follow-up is a discipline, not an afterthought.** Thirty minutes every Monday. Automate your first touch. Recruit your people. Vary your channels. Done consistently, this is genuinely enough to move the needle.



## YOUR APPLICATION

# ♥ The Heart Questions

You do not need to overhaul your entire application to start doing this differently. Add two or three questions that invite families to tell you who they are, not just what their address is. The three questions below are a proven starting point.

### ♥ Question 1

#### “Why do you want your child to attend a Catholic school?”

This question does two things simultaneously. It helps you understand the family’s motivation — are they here because of faith, academics, or because the public school nearby is struggling? All of those are valid starting points. But knowing the answer helps you understand who you are working with. And it signals to the family that your school takes its Catholic identity seriously enough to ask.

### ♥ Question 2

#### “What does faith look like in your home?”

This is not a litmus test. It is an invitation to share. Some families will write something beautiful and deeply personal. Some will write honestly that they are searching, that they want their child to have something they did not have growing up. Both of those answers tell you something real about the family. And both of those families may be exactly the right fit for your school.

### ♥ Question 3

#### “How do you hope to be involved in our school community?”

This question shifts the application from something the school does to a family, to something the family does with the school. It communicates that your school is a community, not just a service. Every answer reveals whether this family sees themselves as participants or consumers. That distinction matters enormously for culture and retention.

**These three questions will tell you more about a family than twenty data fields ever could. And they will tell the family more about your school than any brochure you have ever printed.**



## YOUR FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM

# Your 3-Email Inquiry Response Sequence

When a family reaches out to your school, speed and warmth both matter. This three-email sequence gives you a framework to respond immediately, tell your story, and extend a specific invitation, all without sounding like a form letter. Customize each email with your school's name, voice, and specific details.

**EMAIL 1** *Send immediately when a family inquires*

**Warm, welcoming, personal, and brief. The goal is to make the family feel seen and expected.**

**Suggested opening:** *"Thank you so much for reaching out to [School Name]. We are so glad you found us, and we would love to tell you more about what makes our community special..."*

**EMAIL 2** *Send three to five days later*

**Tell your school's story. What makes you different? Why do families choose you? This email should feel personal and mission-driven, not promotional.**

**Suggested opening:** *"I wanted to follow up and share a little more about who we are at [School Name]. More than anything, we are a community that..."*

**EMAIL 3** *Send two weeks after initial inquiry*

**Extend a specific invitation. A campus visit, an upcoming event, a phone call with admissions. Give them a clear next step.**

**Suggested opening:** *"I would love to invite you to [specific event or campus visit] so you can experience [School Name] for yourself. Families always tell us that once they walk through our doors, they feel it..."*

**Pro tip:** If your school uses FACTS application and enrollment, you can automate these emails with your Email Series Manager. You give FACTS your emails and timing preference, and the Series Manager does all the sending for you, automatically. You're then free to handle the personal follow up while FACTS continues to send the family your series of well-written emails that will assist with keeping your school top of mind.



## WRITE IT IN MINUTES

# Use AI to Draft Your 3-Email Sequence

Not sure how to get started? Copy the prompt below and paste it into ChatGPT, Claude (claude.ai), or any AI writing tool. Fill in the bracketed fields before you paste, and you will have a solid draft of all three emails in about 60 seconds. Edit from there to make it sound exactly like you.

### Copy and Paste This Prompt

You are helping me write a three-email inquiry response sequence for a Catholic school. Here is some information about our school:

**School name:** *[your school name]*

**Location:** *[city, state]*

**Grade levels served:** *[PreK-8, K-12, etc.]*

**One thing that makes our school special:** *[your answer]*

**Our Catholic identity looks like:** *[your answer]*

Please write three emails:

**Email 1** – send a day after the family inquires: warm, welcoming, personal, and brief.

**Email 2** – sent three to five days later: tells our school's story and what makes us different.

**Email 3** – sent two weeks later: extends a specific invitation to visit, attend an event, or speak with admissions.

Each email should feel warm and personal, not like a mass mailing. Use the school information I provided to make them specific to us. Keep each email to three to four short paragraphs.

Fill in the bracketed fields before pasting or fill them in after the prompt is generated and ask the AI to revise. Either approach works.

*AI tools that work well for this: [ChatGPT](#), [Claude](#), [Microsoft Copilot](#). All are free to use at a basic level.*



## TAKE ACTION

# Your Next Steps

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You do not have to change everything. You just have to start. Here are six specific actions -- three you can do this week and three to tackle before fall enrollment begins.

### THIS WEEK

#### 1 Walk Your Website Tonight

Open your school's website on your phone. Navigate it the way a prospective parent would at 9pm when their child is finally asleep. Write down what you find. Be honest about what is working and what is not.

#### 2 Count the Heart Questions

Pull up your current application. Count how many questions gather data versus how many start a real conversation with a family. If the answer is zero, you know exactly where to start.

#### 3 Move Your Application Open Date

Note when applications opened this past fall. Put a reminder in next August's calendar to open six to eight weeks earlier if you've been waiting until January or February. That one calendar note could be your most important admissions decision this year.

### BEFORE FALL

#### 1 Plan an October Prospect Event

An open house, a shadow day, an information night. Put it on the calendar before the school year starts. A date is a commitment. That beats good intentions.

#### 2 Write Your 3-Email Inquiry Sequence

Use the framework and AI prompt on the previous pages. Customize it for your school's voice. That sequence alone will put you ahead of most schools in your market.

#### 3 Set a Priority Application Deadline

October through November. Offer a waived fee or a guaranteed early decision date for families who apply during that window. It rewards early action and gives families on the fence a reason to decide.

**Small, consistent steps taken by someone who is already stretched thin are worth infinitely more than a perfect plan that never gets implemented.**



TAKE IT FURTHER

## Resources and Next Steps

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### Catholic School Admission Planner

The Catholic School Admission Planner is a fully editable Word document that walks you through your complete admissions and enrollment year, month by month. It covers your new student application timeline, current student reenrollment timeline, new student enrollment timeline, and business office and financial timeline.

Save a copy for yourself, edit it to fit your school's calendar and philosophy, and use it as your planning guide for the 2026-2027 enrollment year.

**Download the Admission Planner:** [Click here to access and save your copy](#)

### Enrollment Catalyst Blog

Rick Newberry's blog is free, practical, and written for people in exactly your situation. Subscribe for a steady stream of ideas and encouragement throughout the year.

[enrollmentcatalyst.com](http://enrollmentcatalyst.com) | [Subscribe to Rick's Blog](#)

### Stay Connected with Tracy

Have questions after today? Want to talk through your school's specific situation? Tracy offers concierge-level consultation service FREE to all FACTS customers.

#### Tracy Smith

*FACTS Admissions Consultant*

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