

THE ENROLLMENT **EVENT** PLAYBOOK

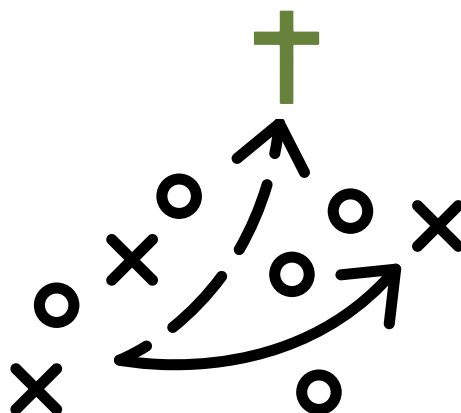
Beyond the Open House: Creative Experiences
That Open Doors and Grow Catholic Elementary Schools



TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE ENROLLMENT EVENT PLAYBOOK

Rethinking Enrollment Events.....	3
Level Up Your Open House.....	4
10 Months, 10 Creative Experiences: Year-Round Ideas to Welcome Families.....	6
Summer Camps & Seasonal Workshops: Creating New Opportunities to Connect....	9
The Strategy Behind the Creativity.....	11
Choose the Right Event for Your Enrollment Goal.....	12
Your 30 Day Challenge.....	13
Admissions Event Planner.....	14



Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.
Proverbs 16:3

RETHINKING ENROLLMENT EVENTS

What if your best enrollment event wasn't an open house at all?

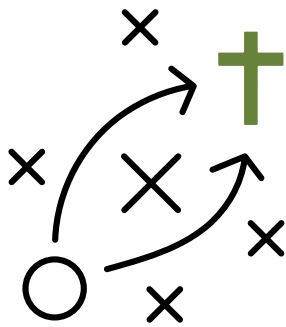
What if it was a Saturday morning with popsicles on the playground?

A student-led science challenge?

A parent bringing a friend to Friday morning coffee?

Or a prospective kindergarten student getting to be a big kid for a day?

The most effective enrollment events are not always the biggest or most elaborate. **They are the ones that help families experience something memorable, build relationships, and picture their child as part of your school.**



The Big Play: Stop planning events to show families your school. Start creating experiences that help families feel what it's like to belong.

Make hospitality part of your game plan! Put your warmest, most welcoming people at check-in, entrances, and key gathering spots. Assign friendly parent and student ambassadors to greet guests, start conversations, and make introductions. Coach your team to smile, learn names, and ensure no family is left standing alone.

Get Inspired. Get Creative. Make It Your Own.

The most memorable enrollment experiences do not just showcase a school—they help families imagine themselves belonging to its community. This playbook is designed to spark creativity, challenge traditional approaches, and inspire fresh ways to connect with prospective families. Think of these ideas as a starting point. Make them your own, reflecting the unique culture, traditions, and spirit of your school.

Our Catholic identity is what sets us apart. Weave faith intentionally and authentically into every experience, giving families the opportunity to see, feel, and celebrate what makes Catholic education so special.

Looking for more inspiration? Explore the Growth Studio Resource Library for holy cards, creative welcome ideas, and other thoughtful touches that celebrate your Catholic identity. There are even some bilingual assets!

Sometimes the smallest gestures make the biggest impression...and a little extra love goes a long way in helping families feel they belong!

LEVEL UP YOUR OPEN HOUSE

Open houses still have a place, especially when you have a strong pool of registered families, a compelling experience planned, and a reliable follow-up system.

But if you are investing weeks of preparation into an event that attracts three prospective families, consider whether some other ideas in this playbook would work better for you.

If a traditional open house has been successful for you consider deepening the experience that builds relationships and drives enrollment.

A great open house is more than a campus tour. It's an opportunity for prospective families to experience your community, connect with your people, and picture their child belonging. Make every moment intentional!



FIVE Winning Plays

1. **Make Registration Easy** (and Capture Every Lead!)

Create a simple online RSVP with a QR code and registration link. Collect parent names, email, phone number, child's grade of interest, and anticipated enrollment year. Promote registration in advance, but always welcome walk-ins and capture their information at check-in. Use this information for personalized follow-up.

2. **Create an Experience, Not Just a Tour**

Give families something to do, not just something to see! Invite children into classrooms for hands-on activities, STEM challenges, art projects, or interactive lessons. Let prospective students experience what makes learning at your school special. Think less presentation, more participation!

3. **Let Your Current Families Tell the Story**

Invite parent ambassadors and student leaders to serve as hosts, tour guides, and conversation partners. Encourage current families to bring a friend! Authentic conversations with families who already love your school are often more powerful than any marketing material.

4. **Showcase Your Signature School Experiences**

Identify three to five things that make your school truly special and bring them to life. Think robotics demonstrations, student performances, faith-in-action projects, buddy activities, or a beloved school tradition. Make these signature experiences memorable, interactive, and uniquely yours.

5. **Have a Follow-Up Game Plan Before the Doors Open**

An open house is the beginning of a relationship, not the finish line! Personally follow up with every family within 24–48 hours. Thank them for coming, reference their child's interests, answer questions, and offer a specific next step—such as a shadow day, personal tour, or enrollment conversation. Track each family in your admissions pipeline.



After the Whistle: 3 Must-Do Moves

The open house may be over, but the enrollment journey is just beginning!

#1 Follow Up Fast. Make It Personal.

Within 24–48 hours, send a warm, personalized email or text thanking each family for attending. Reference something specific about their visit or child's interests. Skip the generic mass email when possible. Make families feel remembered, not recruited.

#2 Extend a Personal Invitation.

Give every family a clear next step! Invite them to a student shadow day, classroom visit, upcoming school event, or one-on-one conversation with the principal. Make scheduling easy with a direct link. Do not just say, "Let us know if you have questions." Give them a reason to come back!

#3 Keep the Connection Going.

Track every family in your admissions system and create a simple follow-up plan. If you have not heard back, make a friendly phone call within a week. Continue sharing relevant invitations, helpful information, and authentic glimpses of school life. Be consistent, not pushy.

Growth Studio Reminder: The goal is not just to get families through your doors. It is to help them see themselves as part of your school community.

The event creates the spark. The follow-up builds the relationship.
The relationship drives enrollment.

10 MONTHS, 10 CREATIVE EXPERIENCES: YEAR-ROUND IDEAS TO WELCOME FAMILIES

Think of this as a menu of possibilities, not ten additional events your already-busy staff must organize. Build on existing celebrations and try one distinctive idea each month.

SEPTEMBER

The Golden Ticket: Bring-a-Friend Fall Festival

Give every current school family a special invitation to share with a friend, neighbor, or parish family. Invite guests to your fall festival or back-to-school celebration.

The unexpected twist: Create a "passport to our school" with three simple stops: meet a teacher, try a student activity, and meet a parent ambassador. Finish with a treat and a personal tour invitation.

OCTOBER

The Great Pumpkin STEM Challenge

Invite children from the parish and neighborhood to build pumpkin catapults, test floating pumpkins, or engineer a miniature pumpkin tower.

The unexpected twist: Pair visiting children with student STEM ambassadors. Let parents watch their children collaborating, creating, and problem-solving. That is a far stronger demonstration than a presentation about your curriculum.

NOVEMBER

Little Hands, Big Hearts

Host a family service morning where current and prospective families prepare care packages, assemble Thanksgiving baskets, or create cards for community members.

The unexpected twist: Invite students to share why service matters to them. Parents experience Catholic identity in action, not simply as a statement on your website.

DECEMBER

Pajamas, Pancakes & Christmas Stories

Invite preschool and kindergarten-age children for a festive morning of storytelling, pancakes, crafts, and Christmas joy.

The unexpected twist: Have the kindergarten teacher lead story time while parents enjoy coffee with current school parents. Children experience their potential teacher; parents experience the community.

10 MONTHS, 10 CREATIVE EXPERIENCES: YEAR-ROUND IDEAS TO WELCOME FAMILIES

JANUARY

The School Experience: Not Your Typical Open House

During Catholic Schools Week, replace passive classroom tours with a series of mini-experiences: a five-minute science challenge, student storytelling, an art activity, or a classroom lesson.

The unexpected twist: Give visiting families a choice of experiences based on their child's interests. Pre-register families for specific time slots and personally confirm attendance.

FEBRUARY

Kindergarten for a Day!

Invite incoming kindergarteners to experience a short, age-appropriate morning with classroom activities, music, stories, and play.

The unexpected twist: While children participate, offer parents a relaxed "Kindergarten Confidence Conversation" with the principal or teacher. Answer real questions about readiness, friendships, learning, and the transition to school.

MARCH

The Great Family Challenge Night

Host a family trivia competition, puzzle challenge, math games tournament, or collaborative engineering contest.

The unexpected twist: Create mixed teams of current and visiting families. Instead of leaving prospective parents standing awkwardly at the edge of an event, help them make friends.

APRIL

Plant a Seed, Grow a Community

Invite families to help plant a school garden, decorate flowerpots, or participate in an Earth Day outdoor learning experience.

The unexpected twist: Children take home something they have planted with a cheerful invitation to return and see how it grows. It is a memorable reason to reconnect with the school.

10 MONTHS, 10 CREATIVE EXPERIENCES: YEAR-ROUND IDEAS TO WELCOME FAMILIES

MAY

The Neighborhood Table

Host a family picnic, parish-school cookout, or outdoor community dinner. Ask current families to invite one household that doesn't attend the school.

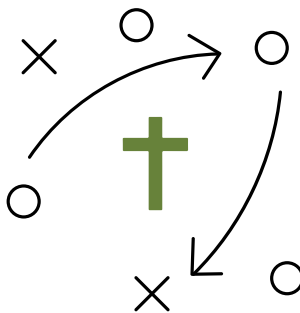
The unexpected twist: Seat or pair visiting families with welcoming parent ambassadors who have children of similar ages. Make genuine friendships the goal—not an admissions presentation.

JUNE

Popsicles With the Principal

Open the playground for a relaxed morning of play, conversation, and summer treats. Welcome newly enrolled and prospective families.

The unexpected twist: Invite children to meet future classmates and families to meet current parents. A casual playground experience can ease concerns about fitting in and starting somewhere new.



Growth Studio Reminder: Make It Your Own!

These ten creative enrollment experiences are just a starting point to get your creative juices flowing! Take the ideas, put your own spin on them, and adapt them to the families and community you serve.

And remember, **our Catholic identity is our greatest differentiator!**

Weave faith into every experience in meaningful, joyful, and authentic ways. Whether it's a simple prayer, a service project, a celebration of a saint, or a favorite Catholic school tradition, give families an opportunity to experience what makes Catholic education so special.

The goal is not just to get families through your doors. It is to help them experience the faith, joy, and belonging that make your school uniquely yours!

SUMMER CAMPS & SEASONAL WORKSHOPS: CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

Keep the Doors Open All Year Long!

Summer camps, seasonal workshops, and experiences that introduce new families to your school

Enrollment does not have a season—and neither should your invitations! Summer camps, fall workshops, and spring experiences are powerful opportunities to introduce families to your teachers, campus, and community before they ever schedule a school tour.

Summer Ideas: Come for the Fun. Discover the School.

Summer Discovery Labs GRADES K–6

Offer themed half-day camps like Slime & Science, LEGO Engineering, Art Lab, or Junior Chefs. Invite neighborhood families, not just current students. Let children experience your teachers and school culture through creativity and play.

Skills, Sports & Summer Vibes GRADES 3–8

Host basketball, volleyball, soccer, theater, music, or coding camps. Partner with school coaches, teachers, and older student leaders. These are especially appealing to families considering a transfer for upper elementary or middle school.

Little Explorers Summer Club AGES 3–6

Offer short, parent-friendly morning sessions with bubbles, sensory play, music, and stories. Help young children become comfortable on campus while parents meet teachers and discover your early learning program.

Fall: Fresh Starts & New Connections

Pumpkins, Paint & Play PRESCHOOL–GRADE 3

A Saturday morning pumpkin-decorating workshop with cider, donuts, and a little fall fun. Invite parish preschool families and neighborhood friends. Teachers lead activities while parent ambassadors build relationships.

Movie Night Under the Stars ALL GRADES

Transform the playground into a family movie night with blankets, popcorn, and a food truck. Encourage every current family to bring a friend. Create a special welcome station for guests who are new to the school.

6. Level Up! Middle School Workshops GRADES 5–8

Host a Saturday workshop featuring robotics, digital design, cooking, theater, or a sports clinic. Give older students a reason to get excited about your school and opportunities to connect with future classmates.

Spring: New Beginnings & Big Possibilities

Grow With Us! Spring Garden Party PRESCHOOL–GRADE 4

Invite families for planting, nature crafts, and garden discoveries. Children take home their own seedlings while parents get to know your school community. A natural connection to stewardship, creation, and Catholic identity.

The Great Spring Challenge GRADES 2–8

Create a Saturday event with obstacle courses, team challenges, scavenger hunts, and friendly competitions. Pair prospective students with current students so they experience the community firsthand.

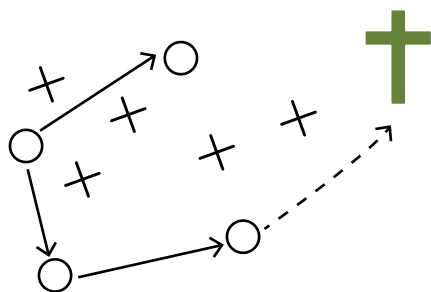
Playground Pop-In: Meet Your Future School PRESCHOOL–GRADE 2

Host a relaxed Saturday playground gathering with coffee, popsicles, and teacher-led activities. Especially effective for families thinking about kindergarten or exploring school options for the following fall.

Make seasonal events work for enrollment. Do not limit these experiences to families already enrolled. Promote them through parish bulletins, local parenting groups, community social media, neighborhood preschools, and current families.

For summer camps, collect prospective family information during registration and invite parents to a casual campus tour or coffee before the camp ends. For fall and spring workshops, offer a natural next step: a student shadow day, school visit, or conversation with an admissions team member.

And remember: You do not need to create everything from scratch. Open an existing school camp, festival, performance, or workshop to the wider community and turn something you are already doing into an enrollment opportunity.



Growth Studio takeaway: The best admissions event may not look like an admissions event at all. Give families a reason to come, an experience that makes them feel welcome, and a reason to come back.

THE STRATEGY BEHIND THE CREATIVITY

Creative events work best when they are part of a deliberate enrollment plan.

The 5-part event conversion system for every admissions event:

Target: Decide who the event is for. Preschool families? Transfer students? Families new to the parish? Don't try to reach everyone with every event.

Invite: Use personal parent invitations, parish networks, preschool partnerships, and targeted digital promotion. Make registration easy.

Experience: Give children something to do, parents someone to meet, and everyone a reason to feel welcome.

Connect: Assign a staff member or parent ambassador to personally welcome every prospective family and learn about their child.

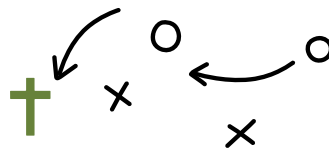
Convert: Offer one clear next step before the family leaves, then send a personalized follow-up within 24 hours.

A Few More Winning Plays to Up Your Game:

- Keep events manageable. Thirty to sixty minutes may be plenty for a small discovery experience.
- Don't require the whole faculty to stay late for every activity.
- Design for participation. Avoid long presentations. Let families engage with students, teachers, and one another.
- Remove barriers. Offer convenient times, clear parking instructions, accessible activities, and bilingual invitations when appropriate.
- Capture interest respectfully.
- A short RSVP form or QR code can collect contact details and permission to follow up. Don't make every guest complete a lengthy admissions form.
- Track results. Record prospective families attending, meaningful conversations, tours scheduled, applications started, and eventual enrollments.
- Compare outcomes with the time and money invested.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT EVENT FOR YOUR ENROLLMENT GOAL

YOUR GOAL	TRY THIS
Fill kindergarten seats	Kindergarten for a Day, Pajamas & Pancakes
Reach parish families	Mass, Muffins & Meet the School
Attract families interested in academics	Pop-Up Learning Lab, STEM Challenge
Build trust with prospective parents	Parent Ambassador Dinner, Principal's Coffee
Reach new families in the neighborhood	New-to-Town Welcome, Neighborhood Table
Convert interested families who haven't applied	Personalized classroom visit or small-group experience
Strengthen community referrals	Referral Appreciation Gifts, Shareable Digital Invitations, Bring-a-Friend Events



The best event is the one that matches the families you are trying to reach, showcases your school's genuine strengths, and leads naturally to a meaningful next step.

YOUR 30-DAY CHALLENGE

Review the school calendar and identify an existing event to open to prospective families.

Choose one specific prospective-family audience.

Ask five current parents to personally invite a family to the event

Create a simple RSVP and follow-up plan.

Assign a welcome ambassador and a next-step invitation.

Track attendance, conversations, tours, and applications.

FOLLOW UP PLAN



ADMISSIONS EVENT PLANNER



Event Date & Location

Event / Experience

Target Audience

Event Lead

What is the big idea?

Grade band, transfers?

Help Needed

Faith Connection

Promotion Plan

Next Step

How will families experience
our Catholic identity?

How will we reach families
beyond our current
community?

How will we invite families to
continue their enrollment
journey?



REGISTRATION
GOAL

BUDGET

RESULTS



Lead with faith. Welcome with love. Trust that
God is at work in every connection you make.

growth
studio 