

The SCHOOL Brand

Best Practices Case Study

Berks Catholic High School
Reading, PA

HEALEY EDUCATION FOUNDATION | Helping Schools Help Themselves

2040 Briggs Road | Suite C | Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054 | t: 856.235.5222 | f: 856.235.2522 | www.healeyeducationfoundation.org



“Everything we do is centered on the four pillars of God, Family, Academics, and Fun. We also look to the Saints as our role models, but remember that they weren’t perfect; they were regular people who lived extraordinary lives at some point. It’s good for teenagers, who go through their own trials and tribulations every day, to know the way of the Saints.”

– Tony Balistrere, M.Ed.
Principal

BRINGING MISSION TO LIFE FOR A *New* SCHOOL

PURPOSE: Formed through the merger of two rival diocesan schools, Berks Catholic High School (Reading, PA) needed to establish a brand that would unify the community and bring its new mission to life.

APPROACH: Working under the motto *Unum in Christo* (“One in Christ”), announced by the Bishop, a 31-person transition team offered guidance on a host of issues, branding included. The principal and director of admissions led many of the early initiatives and continue to promote the consistent use of the school’s brand and professionally designed logo.

Begin with the Students

In the months leading up to the opening, students from the foundation schools voted on their new school’s team name

(the Saints), mascot (the St. Bernard), school colors (black and gold), and uniform.

Live the Brand

The principal’s first key address to freshmen focused on the themes now known as the four pillars: God, Family, Academics, and Fun. Visitors and prospective students are told about them. Students live them every day at Berks Catholic.

Use the Brand

1. Eighth graders from partner schools receive “Future Saint” T-shirts. The Open House promotion is headlined “Be a Saint.”
2. The school offers a reduced registration fee on All Saints Day. (Last year 155 enrolled on that day.)



3. An updated Facebook page reports on spiritual retreats, service projects, academic achievements, sports – and links to new spiritwear.
4. In radio spots, students share their own stories reflecting the four pillars.

BRAND STRATEGY ENCOMPASSES:

- **Mission:** Who are we? What do we do? Who do we aspire to be? What makes us unique?
- **Messages:** clear, concise, compelling, consistent
- **Tagline:** opens and closes; summarizes
- **Logo:** graphic mark; visual representation of the school
- **The Brand Promise:** expectations, made real by experience

SHARE EXPECTATIONS, DELIVER AS PROMISED



“Our decisions about brand start with the students,” said Nicky Smith, director of admissions. “Students can tell you our philosophy and what we’re about. They live it.” The school’s radio spots, written by seniors, describe the

Christ-centered environment, supportive faculty, and sense of family. The co-captain of the football team greets listeners in Spanish and shares that his time at Berks Catholic “has been a fun-filled journey ... even in the classroom.”

OUTCOME: Berks Catholic is known outside the school – even beyond its billboard ads. The school received Alvernia University’s *Pro Urbe* Award for contributions to the community. The local newspaper produced a documentary, “In the Company of Saints,” about the transition. Reversing a decade-long decline in enrollment, Berks Catholic today has 726 students – 20 more than the two schools combined before the merger. Projections are for September’s freshman class to be one of the largest.