

Early Re-Registration

For the Future of Catholic Schools

A Case Study Featuring:

St. Anne School
Bethlehem, PA



“Our school needed a major turnaround. We are blessed with a principal who has been willing to make brave changes. Also on our team are an office manager, supportive pastor and board along with faculty and staff committed to making this a place where all are welcome.”

– Eileen Brida
Advancement Director
St. Anne School, Bethlehem, PA

To Keep Families Coming Back:

- Was that interaction engaged?
- What can we do differently for this family?
- Who is at risk? (Teachers, too)
- How do we amplify our best school attributes?
- Who does it better and how?
- Which teachers influence retention and why?



Retaining Students through the Family Approach

PURPOSE: Facing competition from an aggressive charter school, St. Anne’s had seen years of significant enrollment decline, particularly in middle school. The transformation required a faculty willing to embrace change and an enrollment plan that included early re-registration.

APPROACH: To retain current families, St. Anne School had to create and maintain a culture of belonging. This started in the classroom, with the hiring of faculty in the middle school grades who were on board with the school’s mission. Simultaneously with launching early re-registration, the school attracted additional families through its Latino Recruitment Initiative and Aquinas Learning Support Program for students with diagnosed learning disabilities.

In its first year, the school’s early re-registration featured an all-encompassing “Super Student – Super Hero” themed re-registration. The energizing, customer-friendly process included:

- Tiered fees to incent early re-registration (\$100 by mid-December, \$150 by the close of Catholic Schools Week, \$200 thereafter)

- A seven-foot super hero visual race board in the main hallway for students to view class re-registration totals
- Individual student-created super hero images to display when re-registered
- Class prizes (a circulating trophy, pizza and ice cream parties)
- Teachers’ announcements requesting that students encourage parents to re-register
- Weekly reminders via paper, email and social media
- Periodic personal and automated phone calls
- The awarding of “Super Student” tickets for good behaviors and kindness, with regular winner drawings announced to music
- Catholic Schools Week thematic tie-ins: door decorating contest, the “Super Heroes in our Life” program, drawing lessons from a local Marvel Comics rep
- Personal phone calls from the principal from March-July to all families not re-registered

Track, Report and Build Momentum



OUTCOME: Well above previous years’ percentages, St. Anne School achieved 85% re-registration by Catholic Schools Week and 94% by April. Summer melt was reduced for the first time in several years, and the school opened above the prior year’s closing enrollment.

In the current year, St. Anne’s began earlier (with a “Race to the Finish” cars theme) to achieve 66% re-registration before Thanksgiving. This marked a strong improvement over 43% at the same time last year.

The school surpassed its enrollment goal for Latino recruitment (currently 29 total families) and is making continued progress in becoming a culturally aware Catholic school. The Aquinas Learning Support Program welcomed 19 students, has a wait list and will open a second classroom next year.