



Anticipating Catholic Schools Week, 2017

Now that the holidays have passed, planning for the January 2017 celebration of Catholic Schools Week kicks into high gear. As schools prepare to celebrate this special week and promote themselves to prospective families, it is best to keep the entire annual marketing plan in mind as well. Here are some resources to assist with this effort.



The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) has once again provided schools with the tools and resources to effectively prepare for Catholic Schools Week (CSW), scheduled this year for January 29 through February 4, 2017. A copy of the Catholic Schools Week Marketing Handbook, available in print and digital formats, is available for NCEA members on their website (<http://www.ncea.org/csw>) and can be used as a planning tool not only for Catholic Schools Week but also for year-round marketing. The theme for the 43rd annual NCEA-sponsored Catholic Schools Week, *Communities of Faith, Knowledge, and Service*, was introduced in 2014 and is being used for three years. The NCEA Marketing Handbook offers excellent guidance to schools on how best to promote this theme, as well as how to successfully market the school to potential families.

Each school's Catholic Schools Week initiatives should be part of a larger annual marketing plan, developed by following these steps:

- **Gather research and input about the school:** assess current marketing efforts; analyze the school's marketing position by doing a SWOT analysis; collect internal data via constituent satisfaction surveys, demographic, enrollment and economic trends, as well as the consumer habits of the target audience.
- **Determine the school's marketing goals:** identify each target audience and how best to reach them, while tying the goals into the school's strategic plan and its mission.
- **Develop the school's message:** design the messaging around the key school benefits (the value proposition) and tailor the message to each target audience, remaining consistent with the school's "brand."
- **Establish the school's strategy:** identify the action steps that will best help the school meet its marketing goals and objectives, along with the people responsible for each task, the timeline for completion, and the resources needed to accomplish it.
- **Evaluate the school's progress:** track your results to determine if adjustments are necessary and to identify the next steps. The marketing plan is a "living document" that should change along with the school's needs and resources.

The annual school marketing plan should include a section on Catholic Schools Week, targeting the following communities: students, faculty/staff, school families, parish family, the local municipality, government leaders, and volunteers. Free tools and resources can be found on the NCEA website, including social media and web graphics, logos in a variety of formats, including one in Spanish, downloadable templates (for members only), and Catholic School “Snaps,” which are infographics informing prospective families about the value of Catholic school education.

The daily themes for Catholic Schools Week are as follows:

- **Sunday** – Celebrate Your Parish (devote a Mass to Catholic school education, host a prayer service, invite local pastors to the school)
- **Monday** – Celebrate Your Community (highlight the importance of service, join NCEA members in celebrating the National Day of Service)
- **Tuesday** – Celebrate Your Students (plan enjoyable activities, publicize student achievement to the community)
- **Wednesday** – Celebrate Your Nation (share information with government leaders about the value of Catholic school education)
- **Thursday** – Celebrate Vocations (provide an opportunity for students to learn about vocations)
- **Friday** – Celebrate Faculty, Staff, and Volunteers (honor teachers, staff, administrators, and volunteers; thank the grandparents, alumni, and parishioners who support the school)
- **Saturday** – Celebrate Families (celebrate parents and guardians, host a family event and/or open house).

The next steps in preparing for CSW are similar to those taken when executing the annual marketing plan. A planning committee should be created, a chairperson designated, and sub-committees established. Roles should be assigned to appropriate school employees and volunteers, such as photographer, social media contact, and public relations manager. Establish goals, determine each activity and its timeline, then begin to plan and execute the school events. All CSW events should be promoted on the school’s website and social media, as well as in any school newsletters and to the local media. Items such as banners, posters, and apparel may be ordered to promote Catholic Schools Week (www.catholicschoolpride.com). Remember to post photos taken during the open house or at a CSW event on the school’s social media as well as on the website.

The celebration of Catholic Schools Week is an annual opportunity to engage the entire school family in demonstrating the unique value and benefits of a Catholic school education. Highlighting the school’s participation in Catholic Schools Week as part of a more strategic and comprehensive annual marketing plan will help to promote increased enrollment and strengthen the school’s long term viability.

