

# 5 Tips for Marketing Your School



**Invest in your promotional packet.** Private school is a big investment—so you need to make parents “feel” like you’re worth it. The initial packet you send to parents tells them who you are-- both in fact and in form. Do you send photocopied pages? Is it a bunch of materials stuffed in an envelope? Or is it beautiful, professional, planned, and coordinated? If a parent feels like you have your act together, half the job is done before they read anything. Parents get a major part of their first impression from the packet you send. This is why we recommend a good viewbook (material about your specific school) in addition to the Discover Classical Christian Education booklet that we sell. And, create a great envelope to wrap it all into a combined package.

Once you've sent the packet, be sure you have a follow-up process, and a simple way for them to schedule a visit.



## **Build Word-of-Mouth -- Create Points of**

**Excellence.** If you've been in the school business long, you know that the best form of advertising is parents telling parents. The misnomer is that "word of mouth" is "free." Some of it will be, but to really accelerate enrollment, you can build WOM intentionally. First, be sure you have a good web site, a brief handbill (business card sized, trifold, etc.), and a classy (small) window sticker for cars. This just gives parents something to start a conversation. The handouts may not get used much, but putting them around reminds parent to "tell a friend." The car stickers could be part of your "security" or "parking" plan as well, encouraging their universal use. Secondly, communicate regularly to your parents through e-mail about what you do and why you do it. Use details from classroom observations. The more they know, the more they can tell others about your school. Finally, build Points of Excellence into your program. For example, The Ambrose School in Boise, ID, does an annual Christmas Program for the community. (The program above has been 10 years in development, so don't be intimidated. Pick a point of excellence and start improving it a little bit every year. Before long, you'll have an annual event that brings many families to your door.) This gives parents a reason to tell their friends: "You should come Friday night. This is one of my favorite events of the year." It's easier for parents to talk about your school when they have something specific to talk about without seeming to be a shameless promoter.



**Target your promotional dollar.** Advertising venues (newspapers, TV, Radio, etc.) charge you for every customer exposure. If you’re reaching a lot of people outside your target (single "20-somethings," retirees, etc.), you’re still paying to reach them. For example, advertising on a local radio talk show might seem like a good idea, but the price you

may pay for the “ears” of 2/3 of an audience with no kids will be wasted. So, the goal is to reach as many of your core target with as little waste as possible. This can require you to get creative.

Internet advertising and direct-mail are excellent at targeting if you are creative. Social networking and online advertising are complex, so seek help from your website provider, a local online marketing firm, or [Schola Inbound Marketing](#), a classical Christian firm. Christian radio can also be a good choice, but only during certain times of the day. For example, Christian music stations usually have an excellent “mom” demographic from 3-5 PM.



**Invest in your web page.** If you don't have a great web page, don't waste time advertising in the local paper. Spend at least \$10,000-\$15,000 on a website if your school has at least 250 students; \$5000-\$10,000 if you're smaller and can't afford more. Then, add Facebook or other "social networking" pages. Parents don't “buy” a school without researching it thoroughly. You have their kids, they're investing tens of thousands of dollars over time, and you're dealing with their religion. This makes all the “rules of thumb” about web sites essentially wrong when it comes to schools. Parents stay on site longer, they bore down more deeply, they're willing to watch long videos, and they want lots of content. The prospective parent should have an obvious place to learn about your school. But, this is only the beginning. Your front page should depict an active, joyful, and excellent school in ways that may not seem to target new parents. In other words, everything on your page is indirectly targeting new parents—like events calendars. Up-to-date events calendars, worded well, can be a great tool. Weekly profiles of a class, student, or teacher will provide an inside view. Keep it updated. And keep looking at it, as though you were a new parent looking at it for the first time. If you need help explaining classical Christian education, you can link to the about pages of [classicaldifference.com](http://classicaldifference.com)-- a service of the ACCS.



**Design a parent experience.** Your entryway should tell the story of your school. Invest in photos of your activities, beautification, or even a mural artistically made of your students in action to convey relevancy (it should not look too stuffy) and joy. You enter your school every day. It doesn't register with you. But stop, open the front door, and think “what do people see for the first time... what do they smell... what do they hear?” First impressions make all the difference. Once you get the entry right, focus on the classrooms. Make sure they visually “speak” your message.

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