Director's Message

The demands on school leadership these days is ever increasing due to the rapidly changing educational and social environment. The support provided by school boards to school leaders, in particular the principal, is an invaluable resource to Catholic education.

As you are aware, a major focus of activity of each board is to promote Catholic education at the system and school levels.

With both State and Federal elections getting closer, the assistance of all schools and their communities will be required to ensure the government and opposition understand the funding needs of Catholic schools. Assistance with information and support material for school communities will be provided to help you engage in the election cycle with local members of parliament.

I also encourage you, as a school board to contribute to reviewing your school marketing plan, website and activities, as a means of further promoting your school and Catholic education.

With best wishes

Stephen Elder
Director of Catholic Education

Promoting your school

School boards are a valuable resource for supporting and promoting their school. Two aspects of promoting your school are outlined below.

Marketing strategies and resources

Sustainable and effective school marketing requires an evidence-based approach to reputation management. It is about what you do, rather than what you say about your school. To a large extent reputation is determined by the perception of others.

Effective school marketing is not about sales techniques, advertisements and glossy brochures, it is about building relationships.

So how can your school begin developing a reputation management strategy?

Leading education marketing consultants, The Knowledge Partnership, advocate a strategy that seeks to find the best match between the aspirations and capabilities of the school and the needs and expectations of parents, students and other interest holders.

Underpinning all of this is the requirement that schools must work from a solid understanding of their market. Market research is critical to this, but it need not be an expensive exercise.

Conducting surveys and interviews and gauging satisfaction at various points of the ‘student journey’ – from enrolment enquiry to graduation – will help your school understand its market and help build loyalty and affinity and from this, referral.

Understanding the thoughts and feelings of your school community will also help you influence word of mouth (both good and bad word of mouth) and the all-powerful media of ‘car-park conversations’.

The CEOM is currently working on a range of initiatives to assist schools with developing and implementing reputation management strategies. Results of recently completed CEOM market research into school choice will be released to schools in June 2010.

This research indicates that parents expect our schools

• to have a ‘whole of child focus’
• to develop happy/well adjusted students
Parents are seeking a school that provides a 'fit' with their child’s needs and they choose such a school based on word of mouth and direct experience of that environment.

Once schools have had an opportunity to consider this important research, the CEOM will be providing a suite of marketing support tools to enable schools to easily gather information and develop comprehensive reputation management strategies. These initiatives are being developed out of recognition that education is increasingly seen by parents as a service, and that the local Catholic school is no longer the automatic first choice for Catholic families.

If your school would like more information on these CEOM marketing initiatives, please contact the Marketing Coordinator Adam Pearce on (03) 9267 0228 or email <apearce@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au>

Your School website
It is imperative that each school has an effective website. The school’s website is a very important window through which to display all that is good about the school, as well as being a flexible and timely communication tool. The following are some ideas for what contributes to a ‘good’ website:

**Structure**
- at least five pages of relevant and up-to-date content
- visually appealing in terms of colours, font type and size, amount of text on a page
- sufficient animation, images, video and podcasts to make it interesting but not impossibly slow to download
- clear navigation tools and a home button on each page
- portals for parents, and community

**Content**
- regularly reviewed and uploaded content
- content written specifically for the web – short sentences, short paragraphs, headings, bold and italicised text
- no jargon
- information about the school board, its purpose, role and functions, membership
- information about how parents can involve themselves and contribute to the school
- has available the most recent
  - Annual Report to the School Community
  - school newsletter.

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**2010 Twilight Forums for parents**

The CEOM offers two evening forums later this year, giving parents an opportunity to obtain insights into two key aspects of Catholic education, and to enhance their understandings and contributions to schools and the learning outcomes of all students.

Parents of children from both primary and secondary schools will benefit from these forums. **Put the dates in your diary now.** Registration is opening soon.

Details on [www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au](http://www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au) on School Boards Page under ‘Professional Learning for school board members’

Contact Patricia Palman on 9267 0228 or <ppalman@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au>.

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**EMBRACING OUR CATHOLIC IDENTITY**

*How can your school community explore and celebrate the distinctive Catholic identity of your school?*

**Thursday 9 September**
**6.00pm–9.00pm**
Treacy Conference Centre, 126 The Avenue, Parkville

A key function of all school boards is to promote and support the Catholic ethos of the school. This forum will assist you in identifying the nature of Catholic identity in your school and how you as board members and parents can support, nurture and encourage the Catholic ethos in your school and community.

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**PARENT ENGAGEMENT**

*A vital partnership with schools in the education of children in Catholic schools.*

**Thursday 7 October**
**6.00pm–9.00pm**
Treacy Conference Centre, 126 The Avenue, Parkville

Research shows that where there is effective parent engagement, the quality of schooling improves, students enjoy more satisfying educational experiences, and communities are strengthened. This forum aims to assist schools, families and school communities to explore and develop sustainable, enriching and supportive relationships to enhance the learning outcomes of students.
New CEOM resources online

The following new online resources are now available:

Induction resource for primary school board members developed as a set of PowerPoint slides to assist principals to induct and develop their school board members’ understanding of the purpose, roles, responsibilities and functions of the board.

Available to principals on CEVN at School Improvement/School Boards.

Establishing a multi-school board documentation provided as a four step procedure and sample constitution to assist in the establishment of a multi-school board. Where a priest is responsible for a number of schools it may be appropriate to establish a single board to represent all the schools. This multi-school board may encompass a single parish or a number of parishes if the parish priest is responsible for more than one parish.

Available at <www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au> on the School Boards Page.

Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body (VCSPB)

The VCSPB represents parents of students in Victorian Catholic schools at diocesan, state and national levels, through school boards, or where none exist, through school based parent support groups.

The VCSPB supports the work of the Victorian Catholic education authorities in advancing the interests of Catholic schools and their students, particularly in those areas where parent input can strengthen the quality of Catholic school provision.

2010 Regional Forum for Parents
Sunday 25 July 2010.

The VCSPB in conjunction with the Catholic Education Office Ballarat is to hold a forum in Ballarat.

VCSPB Activities
The VCSPB has submitted submissions on the following:

- Draft Professional Standards for Teachers
- Australian National Curriculum K-10 (English, maths, science and history)
- Terms of Reference on Federal Funding Review

For information about the VCSPB and for details about the Regional Forum see <www.vcspb.catholic.edu.au>.

Vacancies

There are vacancies on the VCSPB Council for the Melbourne Region. Nominees must have children attending a Catholic school and be, or have been, on a Catholic school board in the previous three years.

Please email <secretary@vcspb.catholic.edu.au> for details if you are interested in nominating as a VCSPB Council member.

Reflect and consider

The question posed: is each person on your board working together to a common purpose?

In addressing this question consider:

- is there an common understanding of the direction and strategy of the school?
- does each member know the key goals of the board?
- does each member support, foster and commit to the goals?
- is there alignment (what is to be done) and engagement (how it is to be done)?
- is each member excited by what is possible to be achieved by the board?
- is there a common will to achieve?

Sharing and learning together

What could other boards learn from your board experience?

Please forward your contributions of case studies or strategies that have worked for your board to Patricia Palman <ppalman@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au>.