



## State of the School

Just as politicians use the “state of the nation, city, state...” whatever, as an opportunity to launch new initiatives, explain new programs and generally build support, we can use the “state of the school” as a chance (printed, delivered electronically, in person, or all three) to build your brand, and engage support and enthusiasm and explain new programs or tuition schedules. We can also address the questions of “are we danger of closing?” that unfortunately plague many of our schools each year. (Talk to OCS staff if you are not sure what to say about this specific challenge.)

Set a date for the delivery of this address, or the publication of the report. Be very careful that there is nothing ominous sounding in the announcement. Be sure that the faculty, staff and Board know everything that will be said before hand and that they, too, are supportive and enthusiastic.

This communication opportunity is meant to be completely transparent and passionate. You are assuring your audience that your school is sound and is worthy of investment. Your goal is to make them proud that they are part of it.

If you are doing this at a meeting, plan it as an event: Big welcome. Lots of enthusiasm. Kids singing? Share the spotlight with faculty or staff, kids, too. Have the year’s “greatest hits” slide show; let your audience hear more than one voice; keep everything brief and to the point; make it your practice to be respectful of people’s time.

Set the **larger context** for the state of your school without any fear mongering. “We are fortunate to enjoy the financial support and the resources of both OCS and the Big Shoulders Fund. They continue to show confidence in the work that we are doing at our school. Clearly, though, the more we can do to strengthen our financial situation the stronger the entire system is. We are all, every Catholic school, every Catholic parent, every Catholic donor, in this together!”

Summarize the current state of the school:

- profile demographics,
- major accomplishments,
- operational updates
- recent investments/program enhancements / strategic planning
- financial situation and needs, (briefly, what does tuition do? Why is it so high? Point out that it really isn’t so high, talk about the gap)
- key goals for moving forward (enrollment, fundraising programs, stronger leadership, etc.)

All this information sets up the need to strengthen the financials in order to invest in the future.

Some key points:

Anticipate “blacktop chatter” about any of these items that could be perceived as negative and give them the truth. *Be sure that they understand that you are telling the truth. But nothing negative.*

Be sure to be clear about the positive ways that we are addressing current challenges. Our goal is to reassure and reinvigorate. Not whine and worry.

Make at least one announcement that is brand new, exciting. Something about which there have been no rumors. A special opportunity for kids? A curriculum enhancement? There is so much to be excited about; be sure you share that.

Make sure that there is one big call to action. (Not ten, and not vague.) One specific important way that they can help with this project.

Consider branding this one big call to action and making it a semester long initiative, like a campaign but not a financial one, maybe a recruitment one. Like "Operation Enlist!" or "Start Your Engines;" and challenge each parent to get involved in some way.

Do a door prize drawing or a couple of them: one or two for school apparel – do you have hoodies? Very popular, great for marketing purposes and creating school spirit. Do you have an event coming up? Give away a couple tickets.

Allow a set amount of time for questions; have a partner with you at the front of the room who is skilled at redirecting those questions that are not part of tonight's discussion but who will be sure those questions are addressed.

Thank them for sharing their children with your school. Promise that all tabled questions will be answered; tell them how and when. Promise that your door is open.

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