



K-12 Magnet School Student Recruiting: A School Marketing Case Study



THE CHALLENGE

The Capital Region Education Council (CREC) faced a problem it couldn't quite solve: Several of its 16 magnet schools faced chronic under-enrollment.

Founded to provide school choice opportunities for the students of Greater Hartford, Connecticut, CREC schools offer state-of-the-art facilities and cutting edge programming — all to address the significant disparities in student outcomes across the region.

Despite their efforts, enrollment lagged.

Over the years, school leaders implemented a number of initiatives to address the issues. Several schools were repositioned with new educational themes, including STEAM and International Baccalaureate curricula, and the state increased funding for marketing and community outreach. Yet, student enrollment goals still fell short, and in some cases, even worsened.

THE SOLUTION

CREC turned to iMission to develop a new *digital-first* recruitment marketing approach.

But before they could know where they were going, they needed to know where they'd been. An iMission analysis of prior years' recruitment data generated a number of insights, chief among them were two intertwined problems. First, the schools lacked a sufficient application pool, meaning too few applications came in each year. Second, schools struggled to maintain an effective yield rate. In other words, not enough admitted students would actually enroll.

Additionally, iMission found that prior marketing activities were not effectively targeting the diverse communities of students most likely to enroll. Misdirected resources could not generate the desired results.

Along with other data-driven insights, the iMission team worked with CREC to develop a recruitment strategy.

Specific recommendations included:

- **Improved targeting** designed to meet both geographic and diversity objectives including the use of sophisticated GIS mapping and geo-targeting
- **Consistent messaging** integrating all facets of digital marketing efforts including school websites, search marketing, social media, email and text messaging
- **Layering print, radio, community outreach, and more traditional forms of marketing** into the recruitment campaigns



"With the help of iMission, our applicant number and acceptance rate have soared to the point where we are officially bursting at the seams. Their support has made a world of difference."



Jill Wnuk, Principal
Academy of Computer
Science and Engineering
Middle School, CREC

- **Utilizing a 12-month marketing cycle** designed to build school reputation and brand identity all year
- **Word-of-mouth marketing** to encourage recommendations from family and friends
- **Increasing personalized engagement** to create a welcoming journey from initial inquiry through acceptance

In close collaboration with CREC staff members and teams, iMission created campaign timelines. This way, the schools knew what to focus on and how to gauge success.

RECRUITMENT MANAGEMENT ENHANCED WITH SALESFORCE'S EDUCATION CLOUD

Before the iMission partnership, schools took different, and often fragmented, steps to support the families' decision-making journeys at each school. This led to missed opportunities to connect with parents at the right time with the right message. School staff wanted more streamlined ways to manage communication and engagement with parents of prospective students.

To address these issues, the iMission team turned to the Salesforce K-12 Education Cloud, which worked in concert with Enrollwise and Powerschool to manage databases and segment lists so the schools could keep their audience engaged — from inquiry to enrollment and beyond.

THE RESULTS

The CREC schools have seen success beyond what they even had hoped for. In hard numbers, this meant significant improvements in both applications and acceptances:



Total application targets were achieved



Overall acceptance rates increased by 27%



Acceptance rates by families from key demographic groups increased by 32%

Most importantly, these schools are set up for long-term success. Moving forward, each CREC school has a foundation of data upon which future years of recruitment can be built. They have improved digital reputations and 12-month marketing plans to keep their momentum going. Staff members have been trained to better manage the recruitment marketing and family engagement processes.

In contrast to the disjointed approach of the past, CREC has emerged better prepared to meet the coming enrollment challenges. They've got the strategy, the tools, and the data for long-term success.



"We have a unique marketing challenge at Comp Sci High, because our target audience intersects demographics and niche interests. Mission exceeded our expectations. iMission's approach was data-driven, human-centered, and entirely professional. They helped us find the 'story' in every piece of marketing content."



John Tusch, Theme Coach

Academy of Computer Science & Engineering,
Capital Region Education Council (CREC)