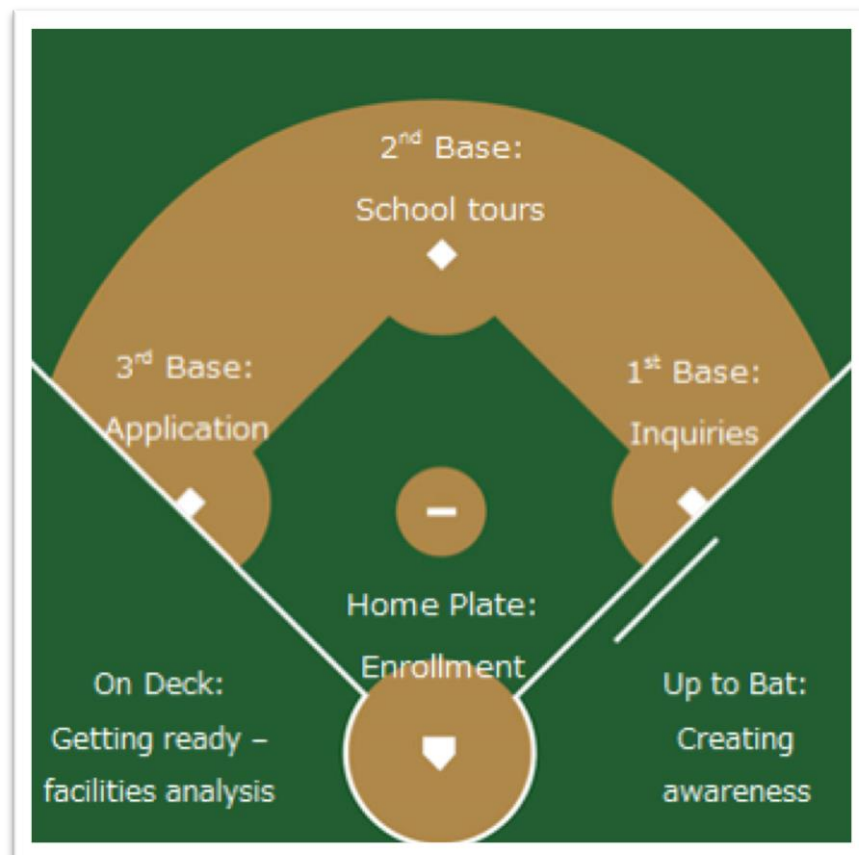


The Enrollment Playbook



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Welcome to the Enrollment Playbook

This guide was designed for you, the Lutheran school principal, early childhood director, pastor, admissions director, board member, etc. – anyone interested in increasing or sustaining enrollment in your school.

It is our hope that this will serve as a resource to help you achieve your goals. Enrollment in our Lutheran schools is paramount now for three reasons:

1. The first, and most important, is that Lutheran education is an outreach mission. The most important mission of all Lutheran education is sharing the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. It is a critical piece in school affordability and sustainability. Schools operating at capacity lower the cost per student and are healthier financially.
3. It creates a great social and emotional environment for student learning. Children will have multiple academic options and caring communities, built on learning, support and friendship.

The information contained in this guide was developed through research of Lutheran schools. LCMS schools were interviewed, either individually or by focus group, and several drivers of enrollment emerged. They were asked what helped them most in developing their brand, what type of leadership worked, how they discovered community needs and how did they reach prospective families with their message.

Analysis of the data revealed the following enrollment drivers:

- Strong and united leadership is key
- Perceived quality offering is most important to parents
- Word of mouth is the best method of advertising

Each of these will be addressed in detail, with ideas from many sources. We have chosen a sports theme to illustrate the steps to enrollment success.

Introduction

This playbook is organized into sections based on the concept of a baseball game:

On Deck

This is the strategy and preparation stage. These steps are vital to the success of the enrollment process and the sustainability of the school.

- Mission & Vision
- Leadership
- Community Analysis and Needs Assessment
- Perceived Unique Offering

Up to Bat

This step looks at creating awareness of the school. The focus is on generating positive word of mouth advertising.

First Base: Inquiries

This is the first contact. How do you generate inquiries? What tools are needed, either on the phone or in person? This section builds on creating awareness and moves the prospective family to interest in your school over the competition.

Second Base: School Tours

School tours are all about presentation. Tools are given to make sure you stand out.

Third Base: Application Process

This step is an evaluation stage. The prospective family is now considering your school and you are evaluating the student.

Home Plate: Enrollment and Follow up

Acceptance! It is time to celebrate, but also a time to follow up, begin retention strategies and continue excellent customer service.

On Deck: Mission, Vision, & Leadership Appraisal



Mission & Values

An appraisal of your school's mission and vision statements is an important starting point.

Mission statement: tells the very purpose of a school.

Vision statement: is an aspirational statement of what the school wants to accomplish in the future.

If a school does not know where they are headed or what they stand for, it can go nowhere. These statements are intended to serve as a clear guide for choosing current and future courses of action. When advertised, they should entice the community. When appraising the statements, there are four questions to ask:

- 1) Is it specific?
- 2) Can people easily find this information?
- 3) Will the community find it appropriate for their needs?
- 4) Does/can the school implement it?

Sample Mission Statements:

Proclaiming Jesus Christ through excellence in education. (Crean Lutheran, Irvine)

Our mission is to provide an environment where children are provided an excellent education, nurtured in their faith, and equipped to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (St. Paul's, Orange)

*Shepherd of the Desert Lutheran School is a family in Christ, working together in training leaders of the future to **Discover, Develop and Declare** the Love of Christ. (Shepherd of the Desert, Scottsdale)*

Leadership

Additionally, an appraisal of leadership has proven to be one of the most important steps. For a school to be successful, it has to have the support of all of its leaders. The process of appraising the school's leadership involves five key questions:

- 1) Do the leaders meet periodically?
- 2) Does every leader share the same vision for the future?
- 3) Are each of the leaders willing to put in a lot of work?
- 4) How many leaders does the school have?
- 5) How many leaders does the school need?

In our research, we determined that the most successful schools had admissions directors that worked closely with the pastor and the principal, all of whom were determined to support both the church and school.

LCEF offers organizational development tools, with VisionPath and Pastor Coaching. VisionPath offers organizations a way to refine and communicate a clear direction, with appropriate strategies and approaches. Pastor Coaching offers professional development with experienced pastors that have faced similar issues.

The pastor, principal, professional staff and teachers must fully embrace their role in fulfilling the mission of the school.

Admissions Directors

As discovered in a panel interview with the LCMS Pacific Southwest District school admissions directors, the representatives from the schools with the greatest enrollment numbers stressed how vital the hiring of a motivated admissions director was to their school's continued growth and retention. Therefore, we strongly advise developing LCMS schools to consider hiring an admissions director to aid in developing and implementing strategies to retain and grow enrollment in their schools.

In order to ensure that the admissions director is a worthwhile investment, they must understand and meet the expectations of their role in supporting the school. A job description is necessary to clarify those expectations, and an example of such a description can be found the Appendix (A).

On Deck: Community Analysis

Community Analysis-Demographics

One of the great challenges for Lutheran schools today is the changing community demographics. In order to be successful, schools need to know as much as they can about their current population and where the future student population will come from.

Demographics are the study of populations. It covers information such as:

- Geographic Region
- Age & Gender
- Income
- Ethnic Background
- Education

MissionInsite is a great tool provided by LCEF to obtain your community's demographics. An example and steps for MissionInsite is provided in the Appendix (B). Additionally, schools can research their competition; this includes public and other private schools. Are the public schools cutting back on the arts, music, and physical education? This may provide you with a competitive advantage. It is essential to find out what the community and families need from a school, and that leads to a needs assessment.

Community Needs Assessment

Identifying the community's need is vital for any institution that aims to serve the area. Many well-developed schools understand that it's not just about marketing their school; it's about serving the community. In order to understand the surrounding community, a wise place to start is to look at demographics.

Examples include:

| Need |
|---|
| Community involvement |
| Lack of community sports facilities |
| Education not focused on standardized test subjects |
| Integration of technology in the classroom |
| Small & safe school environment |

On Deck: Perceived Unique Offering

Once the community’s needs have been identified, the next step is to identify or create a perceived unique offering that will meet those needs. Your unique offering is what sets you apart from the competition.

A good place to start is asking your current families why they chose you--how you are fulfilling their needs. This will tell you what areas you are strong in. Also ask what they would like to see more of--this will help with future direction. Surveys can be conducted online for free or little cost (Google & Survey Monkey are examples). An example survey is in the Appendix (C).

Examples include:

| Need | Perceived Unique Offering |
|---|---|
| Community involvement | School parents volunteer at local thrift shop or food shelves |
| Lack of community sports facilities | Loaning of school facilities/fields |
| Education not focused on standardized test subjects | Religion and liberal art studies paired with standardized test subjects |
| Integration of technology in the classroom | All curriculum offered online to enhance in-class experience |
| Small & safe school environment | Small teacher to student ratio with attention given to each student |

From our research parents want the following from their Lutheran school:

- Supports the Christ-centered development that the parents desire
- Academically prepares the child for high school or college
- Provides for the broad, well-rounded education of the whole child, and
- Community support and a safe environment for their child

The focus is on the family's needs and problems--the conversation is about THEM and how you will solve their problem, meet their needs or give them peace of mind. Your school is the solution for them.

Up to Bat: Creating Awareness

After the school has determined its mission, vision, target audience and unique offering, it is time for the school to create awareness. According to our research, the most effective method of attracting families was word of mouth. The challenge is how to cultivate positive word of mouth.

Your best ambassadors are current, happy families. Here are some ideas for generating great referrals.

Word of Mouth

Many of these ideas came from schools that are successful in developing "loyal ambassadors."

- Incentives (no registration fee, or one-month tuition discount)
- Family referral cards (parents give to their friends--drive to your website)
- Social media (Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter)
- YouTube videos
- Parent testimonials (see Appendix (D))
- Publicity (news articles, blogs)
- Yard signs
- Seminars, speaking engagements

Digital

Many parents get their information from a digital platform, so you should have a working:

- Website
- YouTube video
- Newsletters (school or community)
- Directories (greatschools.org)
- Targeted email

First Base: Inquiries

Community Involvement

The next step is to create inquiries regarding the school through an increased community presence. Ideas on how to increase community presence include:

- Develop relationships with staff from feeder school and local congregations and ask them for opportunities to promote your school
- Lead community workshops (parenting or tutoring workshops)
- Make sure your school is listed in any community school listings (and if new communities are being built in surrounding area, that you are included in their introductory packets)
- Have a well-designed website including your school's location and upcoming events
 - Consider having your students answer FAQ for student perspective on your school
- Have school brochures available in places where parents patronize
- Have a kid-friendly booth at local community events
- Have your school families volunteer around the community
- Sponsorships of community events or teams

Open Houses

Holding open houses is one of the best opportunities to get interested families through your doors. However, the goal of the open house should be to receive names and numbers to invite families for a personalized school tour, not just to hastily receive their application.

- Make sure fun is involved for all; it should be a social event
- Have prospects meet teachers and school advocates in a relaxed setting
- Special giveaways (pens, mugs, magnets, t-shirts)
- Make every school event an "open house" for the community
- Use warm, friendly terms like "Preview Night" or "Campus Tour"

The most important action is to FOLLOW UP with all inquiries, names, etc. Many times this step is not done and the money is wasted. Invest in developing a database so that every admissions activity with an applicant is tracked.

Second Base: School Tours

Before a school invites families to their facilities, it is important to establish curb appeal with all building, grounds and staff looking clean and professional. Outdoor banners and signage should be clean and concise. Many times this is the most cost effective advertising (other than word of mouth). Have a welcome card for visiting families to gather information; this may also be used at events. A sample may be found in the Appendix (E). Families who wish to schedule tours should receive prompt and welcoming responses by the staff member who will schedule their appointment. Keep in mind, the first impression may be the most important, so it should properly represent the greatness that is your school.

The faculty member who leads the tour should have an admissions folder already prepared for the touring family. Make sure the folder includes organized information that is easy to understand. It should reflect the mission of the school and highlight the school's unique perceived offerings. In the folder, consider including:

- A personal letter from the principal
- Brochure
- School application
- Fee schedule and school calendar
- Information on curriculum and grade-level entry
- FAQ sheet (by faculty and students)



Third Base: Application

Hopefully by the end of the tour, the family will understand the value your school has to offer and will be interested in applying. It is essential to recognize that your school is a service and not a product. Make sure you ask and listen to the family's responses and feelings about the school so you can address any concerns on the spot. If they do not immediately apply, keep in touch.

Home Plate: Enrollment

If you decide to accept a student, notify the family immediately. Send them:

- A letter of congratulations from the principal or admissions director
- An invitation to enroll
- All necessary enrollment forms
- Clear guidelines regarding how to complete the enrollment process

If the family decides to accept your invitation to enroll, send them:

- A personal thank you letter from the principal or admissions director
- A calendar of upcoming school events, inviting them to attend
- A school t-shirt
- A welcoming letter from the student's teacher or a future classmate

If you decide not to accept a student or they decide not to enroll, notify the family immediately. Send them:

- A "thank you" letter for considering the school
- Keep them in your database in case another opportunity for them to enroll occurs

If a student leaves the school, follow-up with them to learn where change is needed. Have the principal or admissions director personally call them to learn of their reasons for leaving, and use that knowledge to prevent reoccurrence of leaving for those reasons.

Appendix

- A. Admissions Director Job Description
- B. MissionInsite
- C. Parent Survey
- D. Parent Testimonial
- E. Welcome Card

Appendix A. Sample Admissions Director Job Description

Primary Objective

The Admissions Director is to be a welcoming representative of *School* who strives to recruit and retain students to further the mission of *School*. This individual must develop and maintain relationships with current and prospective parents and students, faculty, staff, the community, and partnering congregations.

Primary Responsibilities

- Promote *School* by attending community, regional, and statewide events to market the benefits of an education at *School*
- Become the key public relations representative for *School*, updating the school website regularly and coordinating with local papers, websites/media, and events to create community awareness
- Remain knowledgeable about Lutheran schools and continuously research the ways in which *School* can continue to grow stronger
- Motivate all congregation members, faculty, and staff to promote *School*
- Collaborate with faculty and staff to gain insight on ways to recruit new students
- Develop and maintain relationships with feeder preschools and schools
- Lead all campus tours with a welcoming and positive attitude
- Perform phone and/or face-to-face interviews with future students and their families
- Follow-up with prospective families about consideration of enrollment
- Advise prospective and new students on the curriculum and issues of academic preparation
- Establish, organize, monitor, and update the enrollment and student database
- Provide all necessary forms and information to prospective, new, and current families
- Always look for ways to improve the enrollment process
- Seek scholarship donations

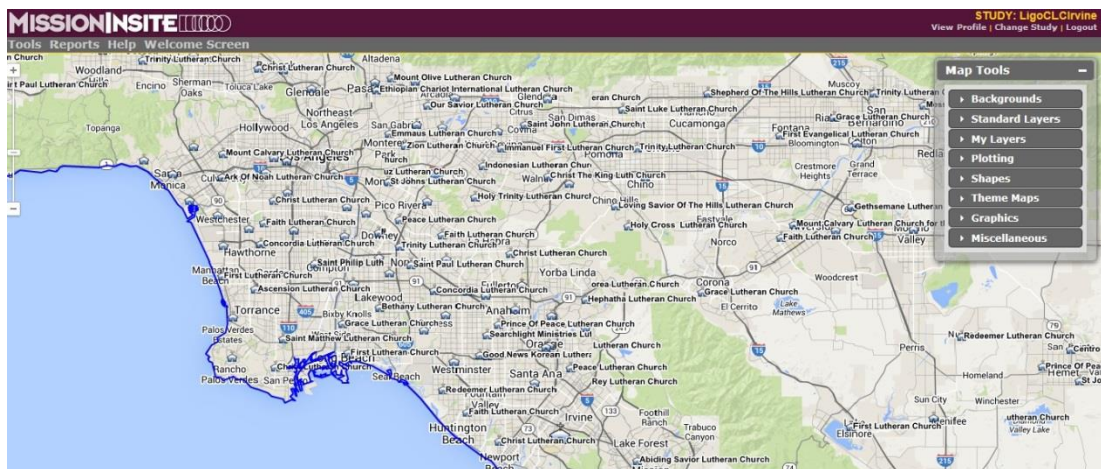
- Attend all school events and faculty meetings
- Create and distribute calendar of important dates
- Prepare all materials for marketing *School* and various special events

Appendix B. Using MissionInsite (missioninsite.com)

Step 1: Create a username and password

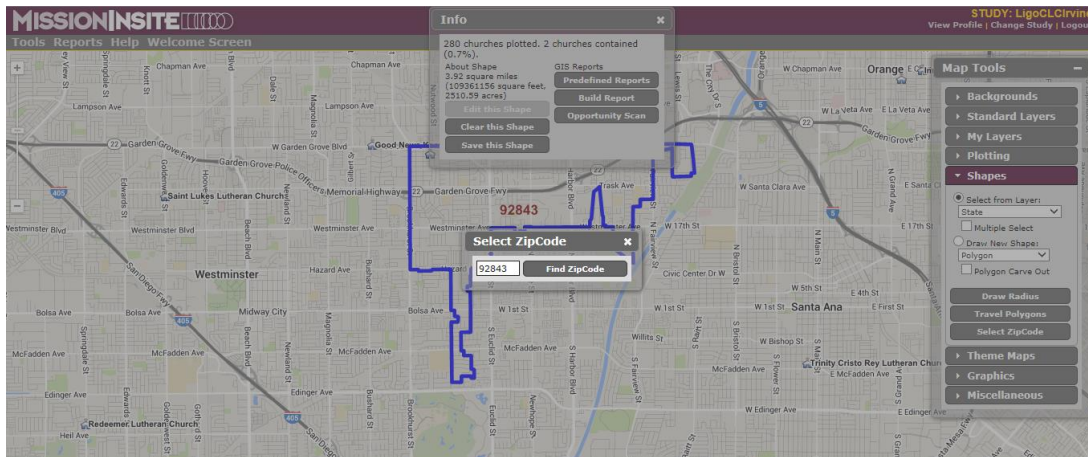
Step 2: Log in

Step 3: After logging in you will see a map with numerous churches in the area. To the right there is a dropdown list labeled “Map Tools.” Among the list there is “Shapes.” Click on “Shapes.”

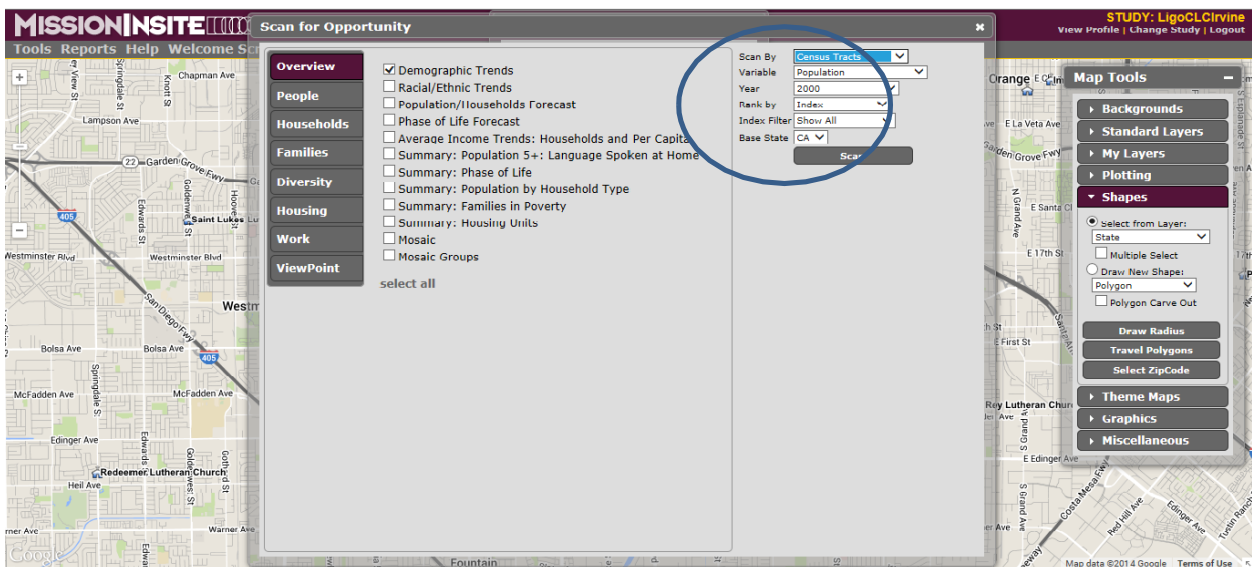


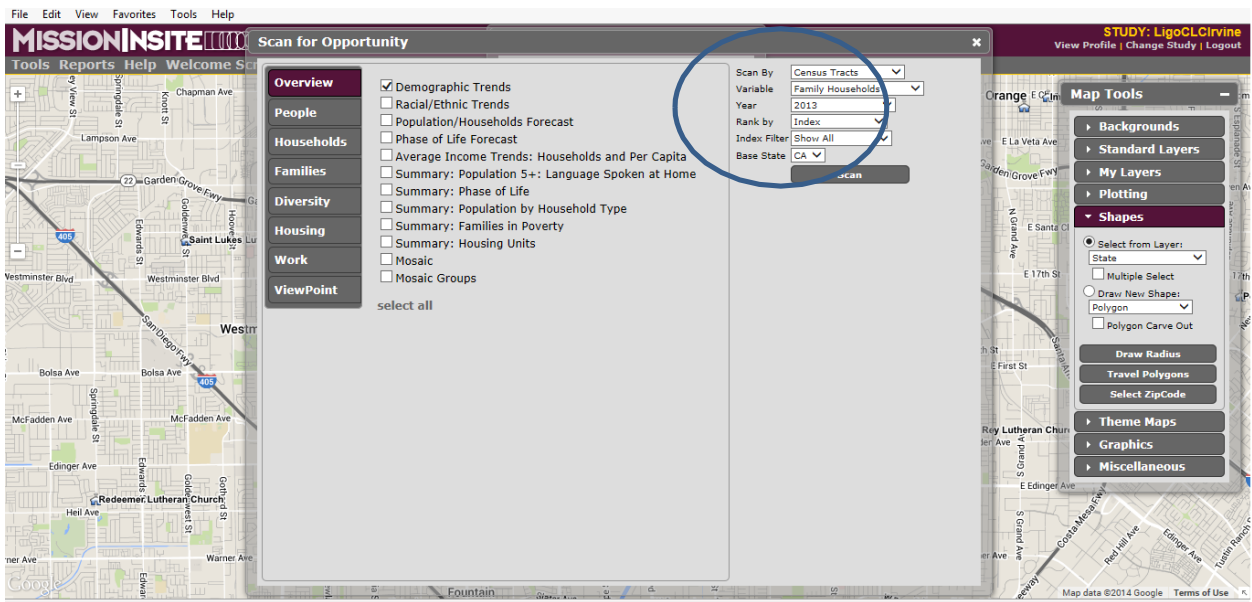
Step 4: Click on “Select ZipCode.” Then enter in the zip code of the church or school you want the demographics of. You will see the area that pertains to the zip code outlined in blue.

Step 5: A box will pop up labeled “Info.” Click on “Opportunity Scan.”



Step 6: A new box will appear called “Scan for opportunity.” You will see that “Demographic Trends” is already checked. To the right there is an item called “Variable” with a drop-down list next to it. Click on the drop-down list and click on “Family Households.” Below “Variable” it will say “Year.” Next to “Year” will be a drop-down list where you should select the most recent year to the year it is being used in.



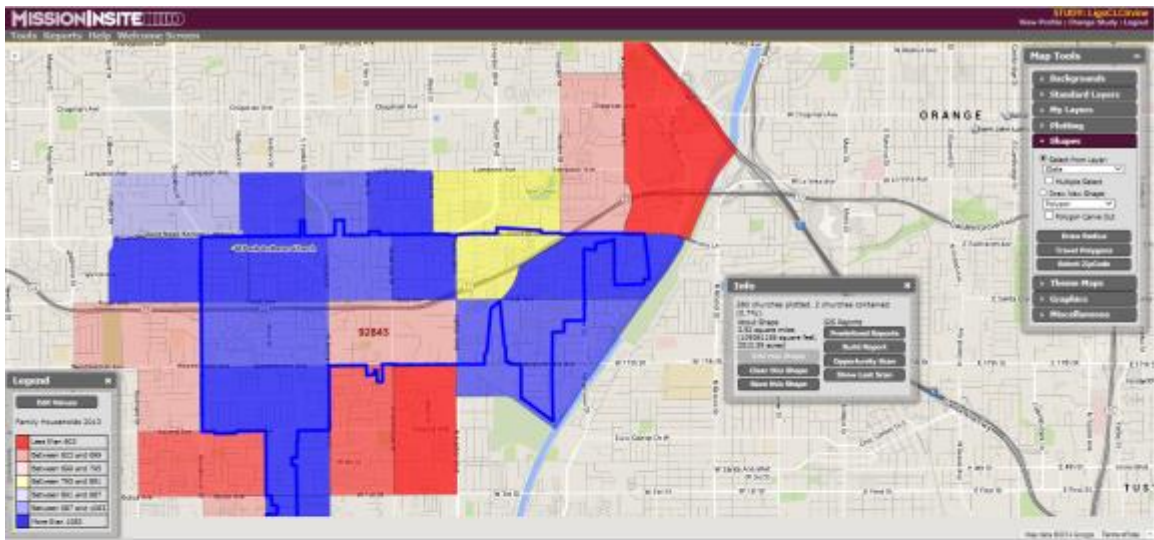


Step 7: Click on “Scan.” Wait a moment as the website gathers data. You will be given two tools. One is a list of various zip codes and the information you asked it to search. Scroll through the zip codes and find the one that you are specifically looking for. The other is the map color designation. In the bottom left corner of the screen is “Legend.” It will tell you what each color means.

| Church Presence Analysis | |
|---|-------------|
| Number of churches inside a scan geography | 2 |
| Number of scan geographies with no churches | 18 |
| Agency Average Population per Church | 0 |
| Scan Area Average Population per Church | 22,944 |
| Comparative Index | 0 |
| Analysis: | |
| No Church Presence: There are no churches in the scan area. | |
| Scan Geography Factors | |
| Scan Geography | CensusTract |
| Average pop per church per scan geography | 2,266 |

Scan Variable: Demographic Trends Family Households Base Area: CA Percent of State Demographic Trends: 68.67%

| ID # | CensusTract | Near Zip | Scan Variable (P) | Variable % | Index | Scan variable 2018 | Var Change % | 2013 Pop | 2018 Pop | Pop Change | % Pop Change | 2013 HH | 2018 HH | HH Change | % HH Change | Number Of Chs | Pop Per Church | Pop Per Church Index | Church Presence |
|------|-------------|----------|-------------------|------------|--------|--------------------|--------------|----------|----------|------------|--------------|---------|---------|-----------|-------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 089904 | 92683 | 648 | 91.1 | 132.70 | 724 | 11.70 | 3,136 | 3,506 | 370 | 11.8 | 711 | 793 | 82 | 11.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 2 | 089901 | 92843 | 642 | 90.0 | 131.10 | 640 | -0.30 | 3,312 | 3,321 | 9 | 0.3 | 713 | 713 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 3 | 089903 | 92843 | 752 | 88.8 | 129.30 | 773 | 2.80 | 4,128 | 4,223 | 95 | 2.3 | 847 | 867 | 20 | 2.4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 4 | 088902 | 92844 | 1,030 | 87.9 | 128 | 1,030 | 0 | 5,146 | 5,156 | 10 | 0.2 | 1,172 | 1,173 | 1 | 0.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 5 | 088903 | 92844 | 1,645 | 87.6 | 127.60 | 1,634 | -0.70 | 8,520 | 8,477 | -43 | -0.5 | 1,878 | 1,866 | -12 | -0.6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 6 | 099204 | 92683 | 742 | 87.0 | 126.70 | 746 | 0.50 | 3,445 | 3,464 | 19 | 0.6 | 853 | 857 | 4 | 0.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 7 | 089107 | 92843 | 1,085 | 85.4 | 124.40 | 1,100 | 1.40 | 6,037 | 6,112 | 75 | 1.2 | 1,270 | 1,287 | 17 | 1.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 8 | 088901 | 92844 | 725 | 85.3 | 124.20 | 718 | -1 | 3,448 | 3,416 | -32 | -0.9 | 850 | 843 | -7 | -0.8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 9 | 089004 | 92703 | 574 | 85.2 | 124 | 589 | 2.60 | 3,163 | 3,261 | 98 | 3.1 | 674 | 695 | 21 | 3.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 10 | 099203 | 92843 | 1,261 | 85.1 | 124 | 1,244 | -1.30 | 5,938 | 5,862 | -76 | -1.3 | 1,481 | 1,462 | -19 | -1.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 11 | 089106 | 92843 | 887 | 84.7 | 123.40 | 953 | 7.40 | 4,310 | 4,599 | 289 | 6.7 | 1,047 | 1,123 | 76 | 7.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 12 | 088501 | 92843 | 1,467 | 84.6 | 123.20 | 1,476 | 0.60 | 6,740 | 6,775 | 35 | 0.5 | 1,734 | 1,743 | 9 | 0.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 13 | 088702 | 92843 | 1,242 | 84.1 | 122.50 | 1,237 | -0.40 | 5,852 | 5,836 | -16 | -0.3 | 1,477 | 1,473 | -4 | -0.3 | 2 | 2,926 | 77 | Low |
| 14 | 089102 | 92843 | 1,034 | 84.1 | 122.40 | 1,036 | 0.20 | 5,564 | 5,575 | 11 | 0.2 | 1,230 | 1,228 | -2 | -0.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 15 | 089104 | 92843 | 994 | 83.2 | 121.10 | 975 | -1.90 | 5,040 | 4,939 | -101 | -2.0 | 1,195 | 1,171 | -24 | -2.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 16 | 076103 | 92868 | 724 | 80.2 | 116.80 | 723 | -0.10 | 3,505 | 3,504 | -1 | 0.0 | 903 | 903 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |
| 17 | 088701 | 92841 | 951 | 77.0 | 112.10 | 925 | -2.70 | 3,872 | 3,770 | -102 | -2.6 | 1,235 | 1,201 | -34 | -2.8 | 1 | 3,872 | 59 | Low |
| 18 | 088602 | 92843 | 998 | 74.2 | 108.10 | 1,039 | 4.10 | 4,685 | 4,879 | 194 | 4.1 | 1,345 | 1,391 | 46 | 3.4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | No Church |



Step 8: You can continue to click on “Opportunity Scan” in the “Info” box to search for other information such as “Racial/Ethnic Trends” and “Average Income Trends: Households and Per Capita”. Make sure to change the variable and the year to get the desired information.

Appendix C. Sample Survey

The Playbook Follow Up Survey

Thank you for taking this short survey. Your participation is voluntary and all answers will remain anonymous. The survey will only take a few minutes. Your feedback is very helpful.

PLEASE SELECT THE MOST APPROPRIATE ANSWER IN RESPONDING TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Please check the appropriate box that best aligns with your views.

2.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | No Opinion | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| The mission of the school is communicated well | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The mission of the school is adhered to | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There is a strong relationship between the Pastor, Principal, & Admissions Director | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I am happy with the education my child is receiving | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I am happy with my child's personal growth | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The school communicates well with parents | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. How did you hear about our school?

4. What changes would you like to see in the school?

5. Would you recommend this school to a friend? Why or why not?

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey!

Appendix D. School Mom Testimonial

Skeptical Mom finds her way at a little school on Pine Street

By Caroline Casey

I was evaluating preschools for my 3 year-old, when I stumbled onto a place that showed me how far gone I really am. I moved to Old Towne for the lifestyle – the quaint surroundings, casual pace and community spirit reminiscent of days gone by. Or at least that’s what I told myself. I still commuted to a stressful job, crammed workouts into an overloaded schedule and walked a little too fast to see the beauty around me.

I lived here but I didn’t have a life here. Then I enrolled my daughter in Immanuel Lutheran School and found a community of folks who have been quietly epitomizing the spirit of Old Towne for 85 years. They are the real deal. As authentically “small town” as their numbers suggest. They are minimal by design, not by default. And it works.

I remember getting a “welcome phone call” from a church member shortly after we signed our daughter up. “Here it comes”, I thought. “The big pitch.” I figured I was about to be recruited for something, so I braced myself and prepared to decline graciously. But she never asked. She really was just calling to welcome me. It was a woman in her 80’s who said she’d been baptized in their historic church, dedicated in 1922. I kept her on the phone nearly an hour, lost in her stories of life in Orange back in the day. I liked what I heard.

Our first event was an ice cream social. I was dressed in my power colors, ready to assess the



Principal Mark Grewe greets Charlotte Casey as she arrives at school. Charlotte’s mom Caroline, holding sister Ruby, has found Immanuel Lutheran to epitomize the spirit that brought her to Old Towne Orange.

proper social connections to get my child started on the right foot.

“Must be a low turnout”, I thought, as I gazed at a handful of parents visiting while children of all ages gathered on a small playground. There was plenty of seating and no line for the sundaes. It was comfortable. Casual. It felt like the last party I had in my home. The preschool teacher came up and introduced herself. I began rambling about my child and her specialness, figuring she must be sizing us up. But she didn’t have an agenda. She just pulled up a chair at our table and sat for a spell.

We wondered why people kept coming up and introducing themselves. Then it dawned on us: The turnout wasn’t low. It’s just a really small school. They figured if they didn’t know us, we must be new. We met a lot of nice

people that day.

I like walking my daughter to school and being greeted by the principal on the way in. Or opening the door in the middle of summer to find my daughter’s teacher there to return a sweater we left in June. I like going to the “big Christmas pageant” and finding a seat in the historic church building, decorated with live greenery like it probably has been for generations. After the show, they gather in the church hall and hand out oranges. A touching nod to a time when that was something pretty special to find in your stocking.

I still struggle to embrace the simple life. I take on too much and meander too little. But the folks at Immanuel have shown me that the good old days haven’t all gone by. And that’ll do. ●

Appendix E. Welcome Card

WELCOME CARD

Thank you for visiting our school. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____

Phone: _____

Name of Student(s): _____

Current Grade: _____

Current Grade: _____

Current Grade: _____

1. Why are you interested in our school? _____

2. List something special about your children _____

3. List one quality you're seeking in a school _____

4. How did you hear about us? _____

5. What are your feelings about attending a Christian school? _____

Thank you for visiting our school. I hope you felt treated as a special guest and all of your questions and concerns were satisfied. If not, please call me.

God's blessings to you and your family,

(signed by Admissions Counselor or Principal)