

Accept only excited families

Ensuring everyone at your school loves it—and wants to be there

“I interview all students and parents before they are accepted. We want only people who are excited to be here.”

Tim Kubrock, Principal
Lodi Academy

Interview all parents and students

You, as principal, should interview all parents and students, even if your school is lucky enough to have a full- or part-time marketing/recruiting person. You are the education expert who can help parents assess whether your school will meet the needs of their child(ren). It also allows you to assess their level of interest.

Example from Lodi Academy—While Karen Kanas has many conversations with potential families, Tim still interviews all parents and students before they are accepted. He has 10 consistent questions he asks to get a sense of their interest in being there.

If parents or students seems tentative about enrolling--encourage them to keep looking.

I know this seems counterintuitive, but here is why.

- Parents and students need to start their experience with a sense of "we're so lucky we found this treasure" rather than "we're giving this a try and hopefully it will work out." People who begin something with a try-it-out mindset tend to start with a balance sheet in their heads. Future interactions will all be tallied in the credit or debit columns. Even if most of their interactions and impressions are positive, they are more likely to notice and remember negative ones if they've approached their experience with the mindset of trying it out, rather than diving in.
- There will be bumps in the road. There always are. If a family was uncertain when they started, those bumps will loom large. If they started out in love with your school, they will be more willing to view the bumps as just bumps.
- Depending on the size of your school even one or two new students can sway your school's tone and culture. Accepting students who aren't committed to being there, can dramatically affect the satisfaction of current families.

It is for these and a couple other reasons I don't recommend offering discounts for first-year families. But that is the topic for next week.

So how do you do this effectively?

If they seem uncertain, tell them: "We'd love to have you and your family here. But only if you will also love being here. If you aren't certain yet, please take the time to research and consider your options. We'll still be here when you've decided."

This sample approach comes from Karen Kanas, Director of Community Outreach at Lodi Academy.

Delegating:

You as principal need to interview parents and students. You can have a designee handle initial contacts and tours if you have chosen that person extremely carefully.

Credits:

Karen Kanas, Director of Community Outreach, Lodi Academy

Tim Kubrock, Principal, Lodi Academy

Binder tab:

Put this in front of the January tab and behind "Handle lead effectively, part 10: Call parents after their visit."

School size: All

Marketing process step:

- 1) Who are we?
- 2) What do families want?
- 3) What needs to change?
- 4) How do we tell our community?
- 5) How do we track results?