

## Rethink your student handbook

Using your student handbook as a promotional piece

*“Your student handbook should demonstrate and reinforce the quality of your program, the warmth of your teachers and the enthusiasm of your parents.”*

Carol Tilstra Nash

### **Rewrite your student handbook to demonstrate both the quality and the appeal of your school.**

Many student handbooks sound like they were written by the secret police of an eastern bloc country and focus on all the ways a child (or a parent) can get in trouble at school (bad behavior, not following the dress code, not showing up on time and on and on). Your handbook should be written to reinforce why your school will be a great place for a child to succeed.

### **Write in first person.**

Use "us" and "we" and "you" and "your child" to set a friendly tone. Think of writing in the same way you would talk to a guest you are inviting into your home. The one exception: Keep information about discipline in the third person.

### **Avoid directives and give reasons.**

If you are just getting to know someone will you find it more welcoming to read,

"All students must be in their desks by 8 am. Any child who is late will be required to stay after school."

OR

"Because worship is the most important part of our day, we need our students to be at their desks and ready to start by 8 am. If your child is having trouble with this expectation, we will talk with you to find a way to resolve the problem."

Yes, this requires more words. But the cost of two or three extra sheets of paper per handbook is minimal and will set the tone for your interactions with parents.

## **Include quotes from happy parents and students.**

Adding quotes about the advantages of your school, will break up the text and remind parents about how wonderful your school is. (I'm sure that after the May 4 Marketing Corner you ran right out and gathered testimonials from happy parents and students--right? :-)

Another way to include quotes is to create a very wide margin on at least one side of your pages. Then put your testimonial quotes in that large margin.

Testimonials are most effective when you put them in a sidebar. (This is a sidebar.)

— Carol Nash  
Parent

## **Proofread, proofread, proofread--and have someone else proofread.**

This is not new. Parents are trusting you to teach their child about grammar and spelling and syntax. You better make sure that yours is flawless. After you proofread, find a friend to proofread also. And promise them a smoothie, candy bar, cup of coffee or other poison of their choice for every mistake they find.

**Binder tab:** June

**School size:** All