

## Plan an open house (or enrollment event)

Reinforcing school choice for current parents and promoting to new parents

*“We realized we had parents on our campus frequently for sports, fairly often for music programs, but never to highlight and celebrate academics. So our open house is designed to showcase all the great learning our students are doing.”*

Peter Fackenthall  
PUC Preparatory School

Some schools in our conference are showing the great things you can accomplish with a well-planned, well-executed open house that highlights and celebrates what your students are learning.

This week I'll talk about the core of what you should be doing for a great open house. Then in the next few weeks, I'll also talk about a) specific ideas for activities, b) getting everyone possible to come, c) getting enrollments for next year, and d) timing (this year as compared to future years).

### **Pick a date and start publishing it.**

I'm sure your spring calendar is already absurdly full, so you may need to combine this with another event to avert a parent revolt. If so, look at how you can accomplish the goals below whether this is a new event or a new focus for an existing event.

(A+ work: Set a date in next year's calendar for a January open house. I'll explain later why this is a much better plan.)

### **Demonstrate and celebrate great learning--especially hands on activities.**

**Every** classroom needs to have some demonstration or presentation in addition to displays of interesting things that have already been done during the school year. Next time we'll focus on great ideas from other schools.

### **Keep the focus on WOWing your current families (parents, grandparents, etc.), but...**

Remember that current parents are your best sales force to your community. Because they don't sit in your classroom(s) every day, you need to show them all the great

learning that happens at your school--and remind them why they are so happy they choose your school.

### **...Invite every prospective family you can think of.**

Prospective families are much more likely to be impressed with your school if they join an event filled with the energy of your current students and happy parents. More on this later...

### **Schedule your (newly recruited) cheerleader.**

Even an open house can start with a welcome and orientation in a central location. **You** should welcome everyone. But also ask your new cheerleader to talk for **five** minutes on your school's three best selling points.

- Make sure **academics** is one of these since that is the focus of this event. Give them quantifiable data, i.e. your students' Iowa Assessment percentile rankings, or growth from one year to the next. (A+ work: Create a chart(s) in PowerPoint that can be projected or if that isn't possible, a poster board chart.)
- Pick the other two topics from areas that are important to your parents. If you don't know, start talking to your parents.

#### **Credits:**

Peter Fackenthal

Thank you for sharing your reasons for and approach to an academic-focused open house.

Justine Leonie

Thank you for your ideas for using an open house to reinforce the school choice of your current parents and bring in new families as well.

#### **Binder tab:** September

(This year I'm having you plan this now, because it is "better late than never." In my prior experience a spring enrollment night was a great idea. However, I've learned from Justine and Peter, and I believe a January open house is an even greater idea.)

**School size:** All