

## Open house timing

Set a date and details for next year's open house

*"I do open houses in January for two reasons. First, that is when parents are thinking about school choice for the next year. And secondly, because we ask for their applications and a non-refundable fee we are very confident in those numbers. And I can use those to build my budget for next year."*

Justine Leonie  
Napa Christian Campus of Education

### **Plan your open house for January or early February of next year**

This year I've suggested an open house this spring. That has been based on the principal of "better late than never." Justine's reasons for holding an open house earlier are solid.

### **Set a date on next year's calendar for January or early February.**

Find out when your local public school district is holding their kindergarten open houses or opening registration. That date tells you when your community is thinking about school choice. Make sure your date is before that, whether you offer kindergarten or not.

### **Prepare a one-page application form.**

If you did not get this step done when we talked about enrollment materials, please do it now. (Tips for this form are on the Education Department website, in the Marketing Corner as "Tip-Enrollment materials." Or in your binder's October tab as "Enchant your parents with your enrollment materials.")

Late-breaking news: Don't ask for social security numbers, per the conference's legal advice.

### **Set an application fee.**

This is **not a new fee**. And you will need to be very careful to communicate this in a way that all parents understand this is not a new fee. You are asking for part or all (with a discount) of your registration fee earlier than usual. Here are your goals:

1. This fee should be **non-refundable**. You are planning to hire teachers based on how many students you expect. You will make financial commitments based on their commitment.
2. This fee needs to be **big** enough that parents in your community will be motivated not to change their minds.
3. Offer them the **incentive of a discount** to pay the fee at your open house. For example: If your registration fee (typically due in the summer) is \$200, then expect \$100 at the open house and tell them this will give them a \$50 discount on their fee overall.
4. Set the fee and discount with your **school board**. Clearly, you will need to design this with your board in a way that fits the demographics of your community.

### **Communicate, communicate, communicate.**

Find the clearest words communicating your new expectation. Have a parent read them. See if they understand this accurately. Revise if needed.

Put those words in your weekly newsletter **every other** week next year—until your open house happens. If you are asking parents to make a substantial payment at a time they have not expected, they will not be happy.

They may not be happy anyway. When they come to you to complain (and I'm sure some will), you need to listen, listen, listen. Then politely explain that:

1. The conference expects a budget from the school in March, so that...
2. Teacher are provided contracts for the following year based on that budget,
3. In order for the school to be a responsible steward you need to know how many students to expect for next year, and
4. This will save them \$xx overall.

#### **Credits:**

Justine Leonie

Thank you for sharing your fabulous idea.

**Binder tab:** April

**School size:** All