

Schedule in-home visits

Connecting with parents individually

“Katie and I visited almost every home... Even though we are a small school, it was exhausting to visit all the families, but so worth it. We will definitely make this a yearly event in the spring.”

Cynthia Ackerman, Principal
Galt Adventist Christian School

As I have said before, the secret to great retention and great recruitment is creating gloriously happy parents. One way to contribute to their satisfaction with your school is to meet with them and listen to their hopes and dreams for their children—your students. By meeting in their space, you are telling them you care enough to inconvenience yourself and you are giving them the upper hand in the conversation.

The subheads below come from Cynthia Ackerman's and Katie Zimmermann's experiences doing in-home visits last spring.

Be flexible.

"All the students were talking about when the teachers were going to come to their homes to visit and super excited about it! Some of the parents didn't want us to come visit, but they received pressure from their child/children and agreed to a visit. A few parents wanted to meet us at the school."

Remember the point is to create and reinforce positive relationships with your students' parents. So do what works for them.

Expect this to be uncomfortable for your teachers and yourself--at first.

"Katie was scared to death to do this and only did it because I asked her. After the first two visits, in one night, she was thrilled! Communication really opened between teachers and parents."

Expect this to be exhausting.

"I have to say that it is exhausting and overwhelming. You get conflicting ideas from parents: we really want uniforms / we do NOT want uniforms. I know you can't please everyone, so that part is hard. At least the parents know we really care and want to listen."

Expect this to be rewarding as well.

"Communication really opened between teachers and parents. After that, parents seemed more open to talking to us when we passed paths in town or even when they came to pick up their children at school. I know that we had one student return to our school this year because of our home visit and our interest in listening to the parents' concerns."

A note on timing:

In Galt, these meetings were done in the spring. At that point, you are looking at what went well over the course of the school year and what you can learn for the next year.

The goal is a little different for visits in the fall. Your aims would be to start the year with a clear understanding of each parents' goal for their child(ren) and to build a good relationship for the current school year.

Delegating:

A secretary or volunteer can handle the scheduling. Each teacher will just need to provide blocks of time they are available.

Credits:

Cynthia Ackerman and Katie Zimmermann—thank you for sharing your experiences in an authentic way.

Binder tab: September

School size: Elementary schools of all sizes. (This would be more challenging for academies since each student has several teachers—but you should make monthly phone calls instead. See “Call parents monthly” under August in [ncceducation.org>resources>marketing corner](http://ncceducation.org/resources/marketing-corner))

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?