

Make your website effective *for recruiting*

Focusing your website on getting people to visit your school

“We found that getting parents to visit our school was critical to enrolling them. Every family who came and met us, enrolled. And no one enrolled sight unseen.”

Katie Richmond, Principal
Foothills Adventist Elementary School
(Foothills increased 12 student last fall, to 49)

This is the first in a series on key features your website should and should not have to be effective for recruiting. Today is a big picture overview, not a "to do list."

This series will not include making it effective for your parents or making it attractive. Those things are important--they're just not part of this series. I will address them at another time.

The #1 job for your website: Get parents to visit you

From a recruiting standpoint, your website needs to give prospective parents enough information to get them in your doors.

We know from experience that parents do not enroll in a school they have not visited/seen personally. (There are rare exceptions to this rule. For example, dyed-in-the-wool Adventists who are moving to your area may send their children to an Adventist school regardless--but this is a very rare breed.)

So the "call to action" for all good school websites needs to be: Come see us. For details on the best way to do this see, "Add this call to action to your website" in the January section.

Why not answer all their questions?

Parents in the millennial generation will argue vigorously that schools need to be transparent, i.e. put every possible piece of information on the website. But schools are not finding this increases enrollment. Why?

Reason #1—Millennial or not, parents do not choose to entrust their child 6-7 hours a day, 180 days a year without meeting the people they are choosing to trust. Would you?

Reason #2—Put yourself in the position of a prospective parent researching schools in your area. There are probably several choices between public, charter and private schools. All parents are busy and don't want to spend time visiting every option. So they are looking for ways to pare down the list to a manageable two or three (preferably two) schools. If your website answers all their questions they will believe they can make an informed choice without meeting you--and they will not end up enrolling. Why? Which brings me to the next point...

Pixels don't make connections--people do

Parents need to connect with a person in order to sense whether they can trust that person with the most precious part of their lives: their child. As humans we don't truly make emotional connections with pixels, we make connections with people. (For a reminder on an effective way to make those connections rather than being a salesman, see "Handle leads effectively, part 7" in front of the tabs.)

So, once again, your website needs to provide enough information to interest them, to impress them, to keep your school on the list of those to visit. And then you need a "call to action" on every page telling them how to visit: Call to schedule an appointment.

Delegating:

Since today's message is not a "to do" item, you don't even need to delegate it. But you may share it with whoever helps you with website development and/or maintenance.

Binder tab: June

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?