

## **Retain preschoolers into kindergarten**

Connecting with preschool teachers, students and parents

***“Depending on which study you believe, and what industry you're in, acquiring a new customer is anywhere from five to 25 times more expensive than retaining an existing one.”***

Amy Gallo  
*Harvard Business Review*

This is the first of two messages on the two toughest retention challenges: preschool to kindergarten and 8th grade to high school.

With a few low-income exceptions, all parents must pay for preschool. Starting at kindergarten, your school is competing with the free public school down the street. This makes persuading preschool parents to continue into kindergarten at your school the hardest retention challenge.

But it is not impossible. Last year, Mekey Lepulu and his staff at Hilltop, retained all but three graduating preschoolers. One moved out of the area (so for retention calculations we would not even count that child) and two needed a full-time kindergarten program based on parents' work schedules. As a result, the Hilltop kindergarten class grew from six the year before to 17 last year.

### **Personally connect with preschool parents**

Mekey got to know preschool parents and their concerns--he made it a priority to be out front during drop off and pick up times at the preschool, he talked with those parents at school events, he listened to their concerns. This year Hilltop has shifted to a full day kindergarten program based on last year's experience.

### **Expect your kindergarten teacher to connect with preschool teachers, preschoolers and their parents.**

Another NCC school has encouraged the kindergarten teacher to have a consistent reading time with the graduating preschool class. Ideally, this should happen weekly. This not only connects the kindergarten teacher with preschool students but also provides a little break for preschool teachers.

But at the kindergarten level, parents still play a primary role in school choice, so connecting with parents also is key—getting involved in preschool activities that the

parents attend, planning joint preschool/kindergarten field trips to meet and get acquainted with preschool parents, being out front during drop off and pick up (and I know this would require help with watching the kindergarteners during this time).

**Delegating:**

You need to connect with preschool parents. But you also need to delegate connecting with them to your kindergarten teacher.

**Credits:**

Mekey Lepulu, thank you for sharing your school's experiences.

**Binder tab:** August

**School size:**

Schools with preschools (whether they are operated by your school or church)

**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?