



A 10-Step Plan to Maximize Student Retention

The strongest indicator of overall school health is its retention rate. While many factors influence retention, the most significant is high parent satisfaction. Just because a family enrolls this year, doesn't guarantee they will re-enroll the next.

Implement these 10 proven strategies as part of your school's re-recruitment plan to keep current families enrolled!

1) Enlist a Retention Champion

While all staff share responsibility for recruiting families back each year, designate an administrator or an enthusiastic staff member as your school's retention champion. Empower your champion to lead the retention effort, as well as challenge and encourage everyone's involvement in the plan.

2) Roll out the Red Carpet

Every faculty member is responsible for serving school families with excellence. Encourage staff to make a connection with new or struggling families. Whether by simply greeting them with a smile or by making a positive comment about their child, each teacher, coach, and administrator has the opportunity to reinforce for parents why they should continue their investment in your school.

3) Serve Coffee and Convo

Provide informal coffee and conversation meetings for parents. Even brief, early morning gatherings can create a feeling of inclusion, maintain an internal open-dialogue, and promote positive word-of-mouth as parents communicate with each other within the school.

4) Focus on Transition Grade Levels

Transition grades are the ones most likely to lose students. Make every effort to reach out to families with students in transition grades and "sell" them on staying for the next level. For example, invite parents to a "Next Year and Beyond" meeting to inform and generate excitement about the transition from lower to middle school.

5) Reach Out "One Family at a Time"

Know which parents to target for support. By assessing a family's likelihood to return, you can focus re-recruitment efforts on those in question. Identify families who are likely "on the fence" and reach out individually to discuss their situation and potential concerns impacting their future enrollment.

6) Send Personal Notes

Everyone appreciates a personal note, especially one that acknowledges something positive about their child. Consider what would happen if your faculty wrote five personal notes each week to parents and/or students to celebrate their school successes. This personal approach goes a long way in helping to retain families.

7) Market Internally during Re-Enrollment

It costs less to retain a current family than to recruit a new one. Use the re-enrollment process as an opportunity to market your school internally. From the re-enrollment letter, to banners, to online messages, to testimonials – focus on engaging and invigorating your current families.

8) Launch a Parent Ambassador Program

Invite committed parents to become school ambassadors. Whether by welcoming newly enrolled families or by facilitating a steady stream of positive parent reviews on school directory and social media sites, ambassadors act as a grassroots marketing effort that expands your school's goodwill both internally and into your broader community.

9) Say Thank You

While saying thank you after a parent re-enrolls their child seems obvious, the power of your "thank you" can go a long way. If possible, give a school t-shirt to each newly enrolled and re-enrolled student and allow the special privilege of wearing these school shirts instead of the usual dress code during the re-enrollment period.

10) Conduct Annual Satisfaction Surveys

Measure your school's parent satisfaction level annually as an important component of your re-recruitment plan. This will identify areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and create an opportunity to improve the quality of overall school experience and ultimately impact retention.

For more information and examples of effective parent satisfaction surveys:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/harvard-education-surveys/>

<http://www.nais.org/Articles/Pages/The-NAIS-Parent-Satisfaction-Survey.aspx>

<http://broadeducation.org/asset/1344-schoolsatisfactionsurveys.pdf>

[http://www.academystbenedict.org/pdfs/Satisfactionsurvey\[1\].pdf](http://www.academystbenedict.org/pdfs/Satisfactionsurvey[1].pdf)