

## 1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO PREPARE FOR ADMISSIONS EVENTS

**Everything is an Admissions Event:** 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, and 365 days a year the school can make positive or negative impressions. Prospective families are judging the building, the website, the person answering the phone, the answering machine, current families, and what other people are saying. Ensure the school is shown in the best light possible at all times.

**The End Goal is Enrollment:** Admissions Events always have the end result of enrollment in mind. Collect contact information of all visiting families. Be prepared with appropriate paperwork if a family is ready to enroll on the spot.

**One Open House is NOT A PLAN:** Plan to host multiple opportunities to get prospective families on campus each year. Double check dates and times for any possible logistical issues – i.e. parish events, parking lot issues and other events that influence traffic.

**Activate the Community:** Students should know to be respectful and welcoming towards those touring the school. Use Parent Ambassadors to give tours and recruit. An active and engaged community is a very attractive feature of a Catholic school.

**Be Prepared to Answer Questions:** A list of Frequently Asked Questions by potential families is found in the Appendix. Anticipate answers to these questions and provide follow up. Distribute the list of questions and answers to visiting families and those acting as tour guides and ambassadors.

**Marketing Materials:** Especially for an Open House, have marketing materials ready to distribute families touring the school. Always keep extra copies on hand for unexpected visits by prospective families. Include only information that is going to address the family's needs and move them forward in the enrollment process. Here are some examples of information that parents might find helpful in a packet:

- Statistics on Faculty, Staff and Specialists
- Curriculum and Academic Programs
- Technology Offerings
- Co-Curricular Activities
- Volunteer and Service engagements
- Unique Community Traits & Parish Connections
- Multi-Lingual Materials
- Current Parents in Every Grade Willing to Talk to Prospective Parents
- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

**Staff & Faculty:** Ensure a roster of current staff in attendance at Admissions Events. When a family comes in for a visit, front desk staff should make an effort to introduce that family to the appropriate teaching staff (depending on the age of family's children).

## 2. INVITING PROSPECTIVE FAMILIES TO ADMISSIONS EVENTS

Invitations to the campus for any type of admissions event are crucial to the success of recruitment efforts. This includes personal invitations to potential families, general advertisement of events, and working with Parent Ambassadors (and other volunteers, staff, and parish leaders) to promote the school on an ongoing basis.

**Current Community:** Send an invitation home to current families to inform them of ongoing admissions efforts. Offer incentives or engage this community in friendly competition to find new families. Identify parents that may be particularly helpful in promoting the school and bring them into the Parent Ambassador Program at the school. Include information in the Parish bulletin (as well as surrounding parishes without schools) about open houses, enrollment processes and opportunities for financial assistance.

**Identified Prospects:** If a family is new to the parish community, or has shown interest at one time or another, personally invite them to tour the school or attend an admissions event. A phone call from the Principal or an engaged parent volunteer can make an important impression.

**General Advertisement:** When advertising for a specific admissions event (as opposed to general tours), advertise early and as inexpensively as possible (for instance, online, newsletters, and email). Engage parent and parish communities in the process.

### 3. HOSTING PROSPECTIVE FAMILIES AT ADMISSIONS EVENTS

Visiting families bring a mixture of feelings and anxieties to their visit. The school should be prepared to make them feel comfortable in a positive and welcoming atmosphere. It may be helpful to consider a prospective family's experience from the moment they leave their home until they return home.

- Ensure that appropriate signage informs first time visitors where to park and how to find the main office. If a school doesn't have appropriate signage, have parking lot Parent Ambassadors help assist prospective families. This is not only good hospitality, but also a safety precaution.
- Staff and volunteers in the main office should understand basic protocol to smile and welcome people to the school. First impressions are important, so properly training and reminding staff to be welcoming to prospective families is critical.
- Always collect data and give visitors a name badge so that tour guides can remember the names of the family members. This will also be helpful during follow up.
- Ask questions of the family on their visit, remain attentive to their experience:
  - Do they have any questions?
  - How did they hear about the school?
  - Are they new to the area?
  - What are they looking for as they consider education options?
  - During their visit, try to visually demonstrate that the school satisfies any concerns.
- Some families may need language translation. If the office has a bi-lingual staff member, try to utilize their skills. Otherwise, try to find a current parent that can act as a translator during the recruitment process.
- Give a guided tour of the school and show off the most attractive features of the school. Visit classrooms, share testimonials of current parents, and address any questions.
- Conclude the tour in a private office to debrief, share the schools packet of marketing materials and inform of next steps to enroll.
- If the school has capacity, ask them if they'd like to enroll now.
- Never let the conversation end with tuition. Be prepared to share information about tuition and financial aid in a confidential environment.

#### **Answering Phone Calls:**

Ensure that each phone call is answered promptly by a friendly voice capable of answering questions (or finding someone else who can) and record contact information for follow up. When available, the Principal should speak to the prospective family to help move them to enrollment.

#### 4. FOLLOW-UP WITH PROSPECTIVE FAMILIES

Always working to enroll means ensuring proper follow up after an event. Without follow up, a perfectly run event or interaction can become a total waste of time. Parents have many demands and multiple options to educate their children, here are some ways to ensure proper follow up.

**Principal:** Use information provided from sign-in sheets to write handwritten notes to each of the families. Email is also an option, but only if an email includes a personal recollection of a family's visit or follow up to a family's question. An email that reads like a "blast email" is impersonal and leaves a bad impression. Demonstrate individual attention to the family and perhaps include an invitation to another upcoming school event.

**Staff:** After collecting the data from the sign-in sheets at an admissions event. Store the data in a centralized location and track future interactions with individual families to ensure follow up that is purposeful and not redundant. If someone indicated that they were likely to attend and didn't, follow up to see if they would like to schedule a private tour.

**Parent Volunteers:** Follow up calls to prospective parents who have children at their grade level or near their grade level. Parent volunteers can ask for honest feedback about the event and also move a family forward to enrollment.

**Students:** Students can also play a part in follow up to prospective families. Some schools have found it very effective for current students to write letters to families explaining why they are happy at the school.

Every kind of admissions event includes an opportunity for reflection:

- What was positive and what can improve?
- How many families enrolled?
- Solicit feedback from volunteers and staff.
- Ask touring families for feedback, including a decision to not enroll.
- Keep track of the efforts to drive attendance to Open Houses:
  - Determine if expected attendance matched actual attendance
  - What factors might have contributed to strong or weak attendance?