
The Millennial Mindset:

Recruiting & Retaining Families

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**“It wasn’t like this
when I was young.”**

**“They spook
easily.”**

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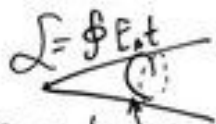
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**“I just don’t
get it.”**

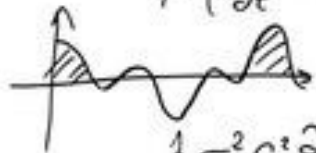
“Nothing I do works.”

$$f(\omega) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x) e^{-2\pi i x \omega} dx \frac{dt}{d\omega}$$



$$\begin{aligned} \nabla \cdot E &= 0 & \nabla \cdot H &= 0 \\ \nabla \times E &= -\frac{1}{\epsilon} \frac{\partial H}{\partial t} & \nabla \times H &= \frac{1}{\epsilon} \frac{\partial E}{\partial t} \end{aligned}$$

$$\rho \left(\frac{\partial v}{\partial t} + v \cdot \nabla v \right) = -\nabla p + \nabla \cdot T + f$$

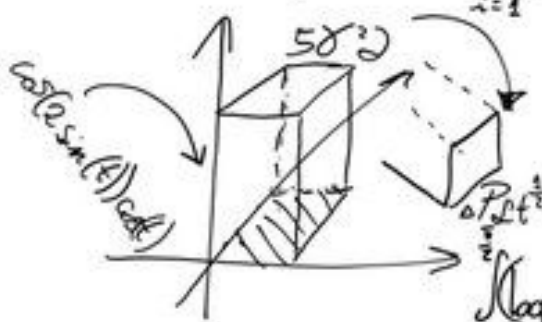


$$H = -\sum p(x) \log p(x)$$

$$\frac{1}{2} \sigma^2 S^2 \frac{\partial^2 V}{\partial S^2} + r S \frac{\partial V}{\partial S} + \frac{\partial V}{\partial t} - r \cdot V = 0$$

$$\begin{aligned} &+ \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{q_i}{2} H_i^M + c_s \frac{\partial}{\partial t} + c_0 D + \\ &+ \frac{Q(p-D)}{2p} H^M + F_0 N + \\ &+ F_0 N + \sum_{i=1}^n D_i \cdot w_i \cdot d_i \cdot \frac{(1+w_i)}{F_i} \end{aligned}$$

$$TC(Q, q_i, m_i) = \sum_{i=1}^n \left[\frac{D_i}{m_i q_i} S_i + c_i D_i + \frac{q_i H_i^v}{2} \left(m_i \left(1 - \frac{D_i}{P_i} \right) - 1 + 2 \frac{D_i}{P_i} \right) \right]$$



$$\begin{bmatrix} \frac{d \Delta p(s, \phi)}{d \phi} \\ \frac{d \Delta M(s, \phi)}{d \phi} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \beta & -\beta \\ -\beta & 0 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \Delta p(s, \phi) \\ \Delta M(s, \phi) \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\int_0^{\pi/2} (\log \sin x)^2 dx + \int_0^{\pi/2} (\log \cos x)^2 dx = \frac{\pi}{2} \left\{ \frac{\pi^2}{12} + (\log 2)^2 \right\}$$

**“They
don’t want
to work.”**

**“I blame
the
parents.”**

**“They want
to play.”**

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Preschoolers?
Kindergarteners?

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- Spooks easily
- Doesn't show up
- Is hard to reach
- Confusing
- Has questionable work ethic

What are they talking about?

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Millennials

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Raise your hand
if you have **said** or **heard**
any of these generalizations.

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Who are Millennials?

- Generation born between 1981 and 1996
- Currently 29 to 44 years old
- Largest generation in the U.S.
- 22 million Millennial parents in the U.S.

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Teacher
Enrollment Manager
Marketing Professional
Administrator
Pastor
Business Manager
Secretary
Parent of Millennial



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Objective #1

Explore how Millennials' **experiences shape their expectations** for education and community.

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Objective #2

Identify the **key characteristics, values, and behaviors** of Millennial parents.

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Objective #3

Identify **considerations** schools should make to effectively recruit and retain Millennial families.

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“Knowledge is a consequence of
experience.”

- *Jean Piaget,*
Child Psychologist

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“The **home environment** is where the child’s first education takes place.”

- *Maria Montessori,
Physician & Educator*

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“The brain’s response to trauma **rewires pathways** responsible for attention, impulse control, and executive functioning — skills essential for learning.”

- *Dr. Bruce D. Perry,
Child Psychiatrist*

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**Experiences shape
children.**

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Guess what?

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The **parents** of
your students
were once children.

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Events that Shaped a Generation

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Columbine

Ages 4-19

- Safety
- Security and trust
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Violence



September 11, 2001

Ages 5-20

- Democracy
- Foreign policy
- Military
- Political divide
- American leadership
- Safety
- Terrorism



Hurricane Katrina

Ages 9-24

- Racial disparity
- Social injustice
- Response to disasters
- Media coverage



Great Recession

Ages 11-26

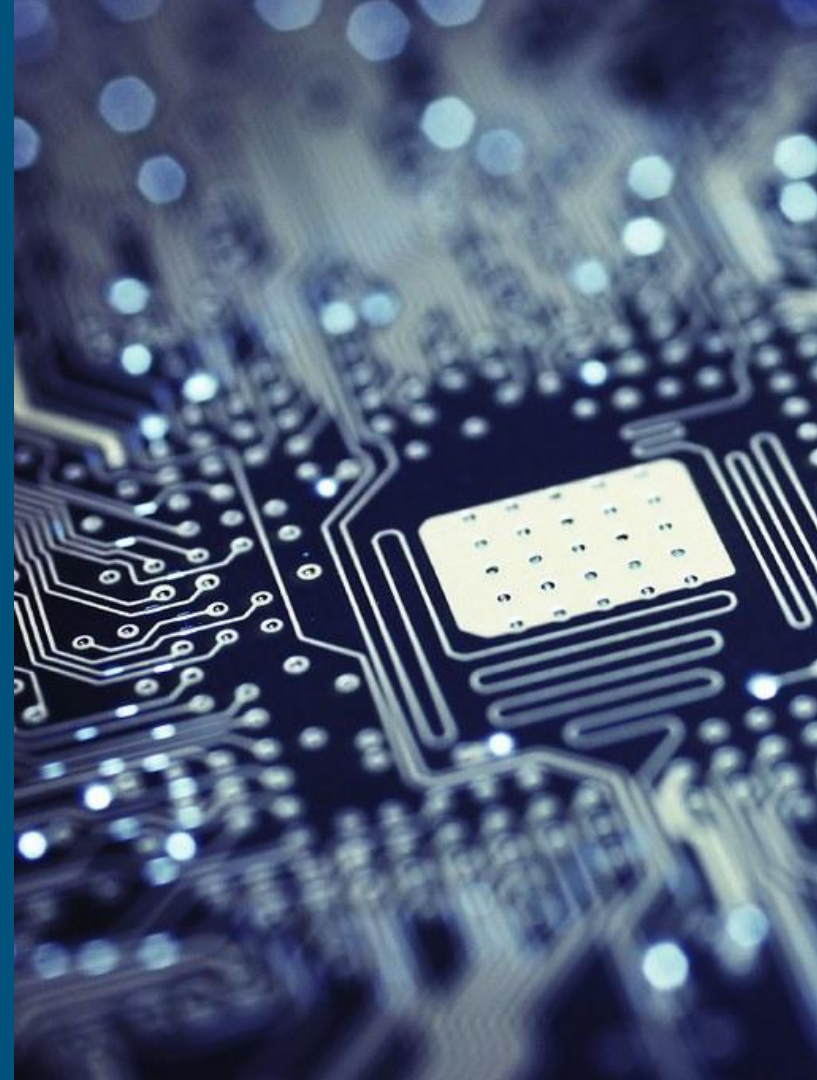
- Job security
- Company loyalty
- Financial struggles
- Postponing life events
- Experiences vs. items



Digital Boom

Digital Natives

- Technology use
- Access to information / misinformation
- Connectedness
- Pastimes and hobbies shift
- Social media



Recurring Themes

- Concerns over safety
- Financial uncertainty
- Skepticism and distrust
- “Living in the moment” mentality

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Common Characteristics of a Generation

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#1: Product of “Helicopter Parents”

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1. Seek a similar experience for their child OR
2. Seek the opposite experience for their child

Intensive
parenting



Permissive
parenting or
“free range”

What Schools Need to Know

1. There are 2 distinctly different parent groups in this generation
2. Consider homework limitations, competition
3. Expect interest in extracurricular activities without commitment
4. Parents let children have more say in decision-making

Intensive
parenting



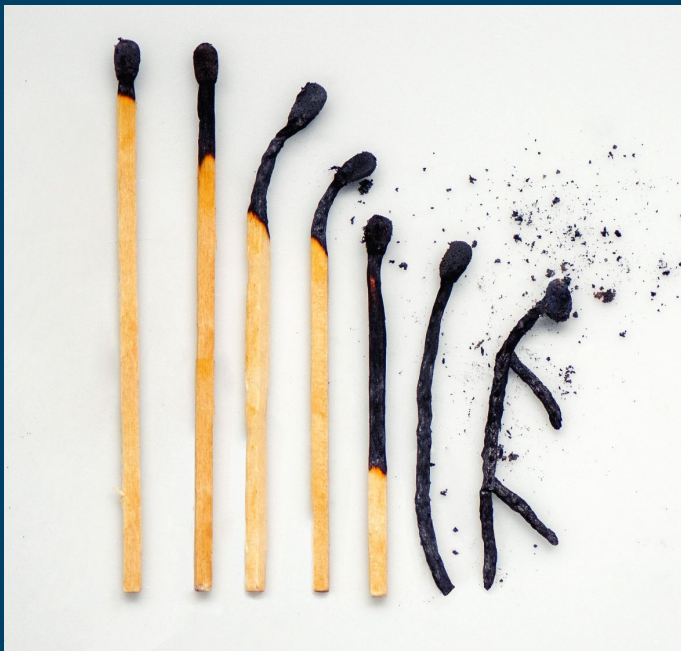
Permissive
parenting or
"free range"

**#2: Put emphasis on
work-life balance**

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Impact



1. Are presently the generation reporting the greatest level of burnout (66%).
2. Experienced high levels of competition as a child.
3. Look for entertaining and social opportunities as a part of their personal life.
4. Value unstructured playtime for children.

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What Schools Need to Know

- A stressed parent = less receptive
- Events and socials play an important role in sense of community
- Characteristic impacts parenting approach:
 - Amount of homework seen as acceptable
 - Does not want their child to experience burnout
 - Interest in extracurricular activities, but may be committing

**#3: Highly educated group
with a global perspective**

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Impact

1. Look for opportunities to learn and grow
2. Engage in greater reflection and questioning of policies and practices
3. Value curiosity



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What Schools Need to Know



- Want assurances that children will be successful in the world
- Looking for guidance / learning opportunities related to parenting
- Interest in continued learning for kids - summer and after school enrichment
- Value inclusion and want to know how you are supporting it

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**#4: Are less financially
stable than previous
generations**

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1. High amount of student loan debt
2. Live at home with parents
3. Higher percentage of renters vs. homeowners
4. Getting married later in life
5. Having fewer children

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What Schools Need to Know

- Impact ability or perceived ability to afford Catholic education
- Financial situation + shifting priorities will be reflected in stewardship
- Millennials become parents at an older age (as compared to Baby Boomers)
- Two income households = less availability to meet or volunteer during the day
- Choose times that make sense for your working parents

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#5: Prioritize change in the world

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1. Put emphasis on accountability and change
2. Look for opportunities to do good
3. Feel more connected to brands and organizations that are actively addressing these issues
4. Value open-mindedness

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What Schools Need to Know

- Parents are looking for high impact outreach opportunities with lower input
- When mistakes have been made, failure to demonstrate accountability and change will upset Millennials more than others
- Parents are seeking moral and character development for children



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**#6: Less likely than
previous generations to
feel pride in their
communities**

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Impact

1. Do not feel close ties to jobs or brands
2. Less likely to stay with a job, organization or a community out of loyalty



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What Schools Need to Know



1. Polarizing issues and conflicts within parishes / schools may be enough for Millennials to leave
2. Do not assume that a family is happy
3. Do not assume a family will re-enroll
4. It takes intentional effort to build a sense of belonging and community

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**#7: Less trusting and more
skeptical of institutions**

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Impact



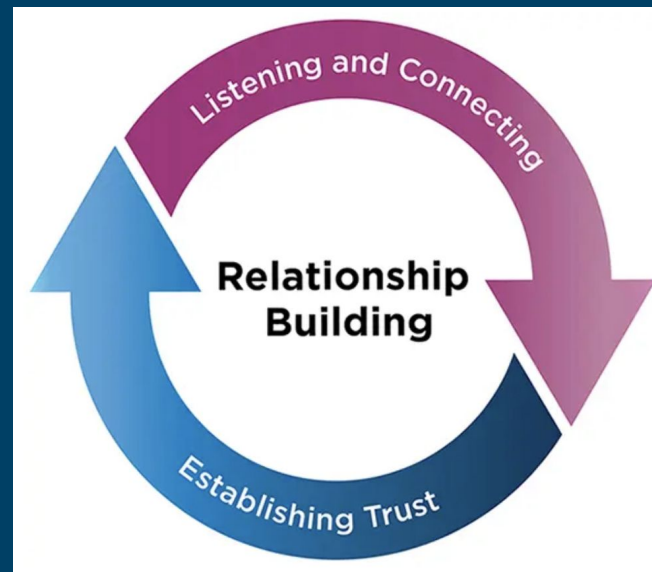
- Skeptical about church initiatives and leadership
- 53% Catholic Millennials attend Mass once or twice per month (Pew Research, 2024)
- Less trusting of organized religion, big businesses, and the criminal justice system

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What Schools Need to Know

- Trust needs to be established from administration and teachers
- Communication needs to be consistent and authentic
- Transparency is expected
- Catholic schools are increasingly becoming the Church experience for families



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**#8: Less likely than
previous generations to say
religion is important to
them**

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Impact

1. Seldom (25%) or never (27%) go to church (Gallup, 2016). They are the only generation to show this pattern.
2. 44% say religion is not important to them (Gallup, 2016).
3. In 2015, 30% of Millennials said they had no religious preference.

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What Schools Need to Know

1. Current families may not attend Mass, which could create strained parish relationships.
2. Prospective families that identify as Catholic may not be parishioners.
3. Recruitment strategies have to expand beyond the parish.
4. Recruitment efforts also need to happen at at the parish level.



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#9: Most racially and ethnically diverse generation in the U.S.

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Impact

1. Searching for communities with commonalities
2. Increase in multilingualism
3. 44% of Catholic Millennials are Latino (Pew Research, 2024)



What Schools Need to Know

- Representation on boards, committees, and staffing matters
- Need for bilingual parish and school communities are important
- Desire multicultural experiences for their children
- Interest in dual language and culture studies
- Increased need for Spanish-speaking staff

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#12: Characterized as Digital Natives

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Impact



- Accustomed to doing everything online
- 95% own smartphones and expect mobile-friendly everything
- 89% of Millennials use social media
- Notoriously ad-resistant group
- Average Millennial watches 6 hours of online video per week

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What Schools Need to Know

- Make all communication mobile-friendly
- Write conversationally, not formally (chat GPT)
- Utilize groups and communicate internally to prevent “communication overload”
- Harness the power of cell phones
- Use trends to make content creative and fun
- Present information using short video

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Millennial Family Retention - 3 Takeaways

Goal	What It Looks Like
Host purely social, community-centered events throughout the calendar year to build on relationships	Trivia Night, Parents' Night Out, Father and Daughter Dance, Family BBQ, playground playdates in the summer
Create opportunities for parents to get involved in school-specific events and community-outreach events that work with parents' schedules	Volunteer opportunities in the classrooms, lunchroom, or before/after school; hosting food drives, clothing drives
Communicate in ways that make sense for your parent community - harness the power of cell phones	Utilize the platforms where your parents are already; communicate in native languages

Millennial Family Recruitment - 3 Takeaways

Goal	What It Looks Like
Recruit at the parish and beyond	Encourage current parents to reach out to friends and family; create a recruitment committee; utilize social media; attend Mass and reach out to parish families; speak with Religious Education families and homeschool families; host virtual events
Create messaging that highlights what families are looking for	Highlight the areas of strength of your school; highlight Millennials' areas of interest (safety, academics, connection to the real world)
Make the inquiry and application process easy	Make process simple; everything should be mobile-friendly; do not let families feel alone in the process

Objectives:

1. Explore how Millennials' **experiences shape their expectations** for education and community.
2. Identify the **key characteristics, values,** and **behaviors** of Millennial parents.
3. Identify **considerations** schools should make to effectively recruit and retain Millennial families.

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Questions?

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