

## Open House Planning Map

### **DATES AND TIMES**

Plan dates throughout the school year to allow a new family options that will fit into their busy schedule. Open Houses that occur during the school day are big hits because parents get to see teaching in action. It is one thing to say that you have dynamic teachers who utilize technology on the regular, but it is another thing to experience it! You may also want to offer an evening date to catch those parents who can't run out for lunch or leave work. You should have a comprehensive list of your Open House dates and times established during summer months so that they are printed on your school calendar. They should also be highly visible on your school's website. Some schools opt to implement RSVP's so they can adjust their event format based on the number of guests attending.

### **LOCATION**

Most Open Houses are at the schools themselves. Sometimes, in trying to break through to a new demographic target area, schools host an event at a current faculty or parent's home and invite prospective families to join them there. Other ideas might be central locations where families often congregate such as shopping malls, parishes, daycares, libraries, or other places of business. Members of the admissions/ administrative team should be present. This is a great idea, just remember that the goal of this is to drive them to a school campus event. The more times you can get a family to come to campus, the higher chance you have of having that family register at your school.

### **TRAINING FACULTY, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

Not everyone is admissions-minded, so just because Mrs. Jones has been employed at your school for fifteen years doesn't mean that she understands the competitive admissions landscape. The enrollment director at your school should clearly communicate the recruitment goals for the year, as well as what he/she needs from each faculty and staff member to make that happen. For example, orderliness of classrooms and interactive presentation of courses are integral to recruitment. Curriculum materials should be available for review as well. Every person representing the school at your event should wear a name tag. Name tags should include their name, title, and if they are an alumnus of the school. If someone speaks another language, it is helpful to include that on their nametag such as, "¡Se Habla Español!" An administrator (preferably the principal) should always give a welcome message at Open House and be available for questions from individual families. It is wonderful to have clergy, school board members, parents, parishioners and alumni present as well.

### **FACILITY CLEAN UP**

Image is everything. Regular communication between the enrollment management team and school maintenance crew is essential. The facility should always be functional, clean and decorated appropriately. Develop a system that works between enrollment and maintenance personnel, and be sure that you have the support of the principal on this. It is recommended to go above and beyond. If it's fall season, plug in some pumpkin or apple scents around the main entry way, plant some mums, and scatter a couple pumpkins in the main office. These are small things, but they make a big difference.

## **PROMOTING YOUR OPEN HOUSE**

Word of mouth is the all-time most effective means to drive people to your school. Encourage current families and faculty to invite their friends and family to your Open Houses. Ask them to share your Facebook posts about any recruitment event your school is hosting. They can also be asked to hang flyers at local libraries, grocery stores, restaurants and other local hot spots, and to stake a yard sign on their property to advertise your event. Post the Open House date(s) on the Archdiocesan calendar of events, as well as your local town newspaper's community section (which is usually free to do). Beyond that, keeping Open House dates prominent on your website is helpful so prospective families can find them easily. Online presence is important. If you have room in your marketing budget, you can check into Google AdWords or an online advertising campaign, such as ReachLocal, that will increase your search engine optimization.

## **REFRESHMENTS**

Always serve at least light refreshments any time you host visitors at your campus. Whether it's just water bottles, coffee and snacks that parents can pick up to take on their tour, or a place at the end where families can mingle, listen to the principal speak and enjoy some treats and iced tea at the end of the tour in the library, a refreshment plan needs to be in place.

## **GIVE AWAY**

This is a great time to market your school! Give a family a pen, Frisbee, water bottle, mug, or anything that they are likely to use that also has your school logo and name on it! That way, the family (and hopefully other people, too) will see it and be reminded of your school while in their decision process. Always have a school 'look-book' available for families to take home with them. This packet of information should not include school policies, or a calendar. Keep it simple, inviting, and include instructions on how to apply to your school and why your school is worth it!

## **EXIT SURVEY**

This is a great time to capture feedback, both from prospective families and your faculty and staff who were present at the event, so that you can improve upon it for next time. Place a one page exit survey in each packet of literature for families that they return to you at the conclusion of their time spent in your school, or gather their email address during registration and e-mail it with a 'thank you for coming' note. Always be ready to schedule a private tour for families who want to return at another date and bring along more family members or merely schedule a separate time to discuss the school.

## **FOLLOW UP**

As stated above, follow-up is critical. Develop a series of touch points after a family comes to campus, and identify who in the building will make those touches. Follow up until that family's registration is in hand! Enjoy all of the new relationships you build in the meantime! Personal touches such as a hand written note are always effective. Make sure to invite families to future events in all of your correspondence.