

The fine art of
parent
relationships

**Balancing
customer service
and educational
leadership.**

Building our School Community

*Positive Relationships
With Parents Are
Miracles Of Design, Not
Happenstance.*

Ezra Adams
Episcopal Day School Augusta Georgia

Our Parents...

- Client
- Critic
- Funding Source
- Human Resource

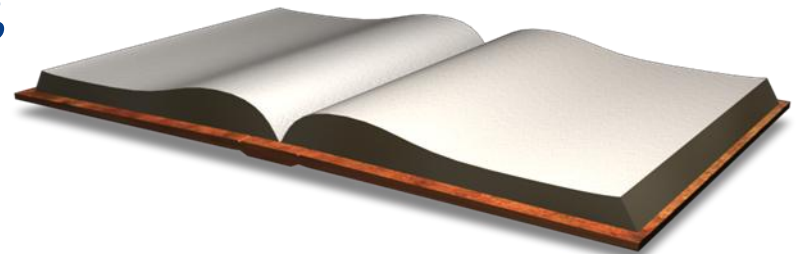
Why do parents come to us?

In May 2007, The Fraser Institute
conducted a study

*Ontario's Private Schools:
Who Chooses Them and Why?*

which is based on a survey of 919 Ontario
households with children attending
private schools.

www.fraserinstitute.org



This study found that the top 5 reasons parents chose private or independent schools were:

- * Disappointment with the public or separate school systems
- * Smaller class sizes
- * Dedicated teachers
- * Emphasis on academic quality
- * Safety



- Highly educated
- Highly involved
- High anxiety
- High achievers

How Do We Get On The Same Page?

**Communicate the
value of your school**

Why is this independent and
expensive school worth it?

Sharing School Vision and Core Values

"Identifying the core values that define your organization is one of the most important functions of leadership. The success or failure of this process can literally make or break an organization."

--Ken Blanchard:

The Heart of a Leader

The Customer...

Parents need to know
what they are “buying”...

- ✓ Vision statement
- ✓ Mission statement

Engaging, Involving and Empowering Families

How do we ensure that there are
no "guests" at the school's table;
that all parents have opportunity to be
involved in the life of the school.

Parent as Critic

That consumer mentality...

“The customer is always right!”

- * Assumptions
- * Entitlement
- * Power

Invite the Critique

How does that help?

Customer Satisfaction

- ✓ Are we doing what we should be doing?

Better ways of doing things

- ✓ Help identify solutions

Parent Surveys

Open Door
Policy



ENCOURAGE
DIALOGUE



Communication is a vital component of the success
of *Everybody's School*.

Your input is extremely valued and will be used to
inform the decisions of the
Principal , the Board of Directors , Administration
(use whichever one you want)
to the best interests of the School.

The Parent Survey

marketing exercise

- * parent led committee with staff input?

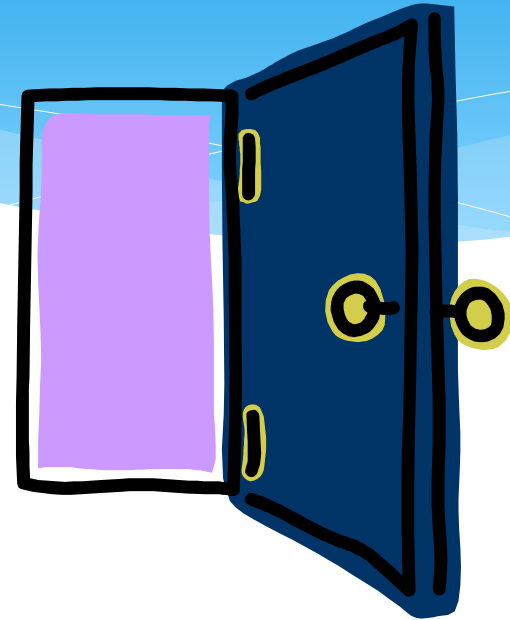
invitation to partnership

ask the right questions

- * staff, administration, parent, Board review
- * a terrific internal audit

Come on in...

- ✓ actually leave your door open!
- ✓ repeat your welcome in your newsletters
- ✓ do not avoid confrontation – you need to be open to dialogue
- ✓ you don't have to agree, but you do need to listen to what is being said
- ✓ maintain your sense of humour and your discretion



"A true leader has to have a genuine open-door policy so that his people are not afraid to approach him for any reason."

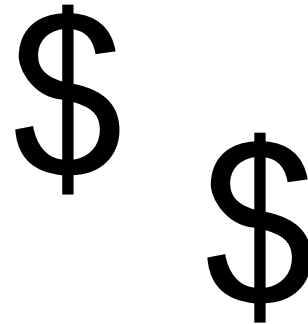
~Harold Geneen~

- academic reports
- newsletters
- personal notes
- survey results
- committee updating (where appropriate)
- face-to-face personal interviews
- parent workshops
- website

**Communication:
report back !**

PARENT AS FUNDING SOURCE

- Tuition
- Fundraising
- Donations



Provide parents with multiple ways to give financially to the school, showing how each contribution will affect the educational process.

Don't overlook...

- ✓ Appropriate Transparency in Financial Matters
- ✓ Policies and Procedures in place and practiced

- relatively small revenues gained
- can take significant manpower
- all fundraising is a reflection on your school
- the right person can make all the difference

Fundraising...

Empower your fundraisers...

- facilitate, don't manage
- give them money to work with
- allow them to set the goal
- give them a voice in how it's spent
- let go !

Donations...

- How was my donation used?
- What effect did my donation make?

- Newsletters
- Plaques
- Public thank you's

- COMMUNICATION



Parent as Human Resource

Parent volunteers and an effective school volunteer program can

- enhance the performance of students
- enrich the curriculum
- enhance a school's image
- improve parent-teacher relationships
- provide an array of job skills

Parents in your school

strong community

- * create a supportive relationship - develop a rapport
- * bring experience, expertise, knowledge and different points of view
- * simply to get work done - manpower

strong students

- * research is overwhelming that parent involvement is positively related to achievement
- * parent involvement is also positively related to student attitude and behaviour

FORMAL PARENT COMMITTEES

- Board of Directors
 - Parent Council
 - Fundraising Committee
 - Marketing Committee
 - Admissions Committee
 - Property Committee
- Uniform Committee
 - Parent Committee
 - Fundraising Committee
 - Marketing Committee
 - Social Committee
 - Volunteer Committee

Avoid pitfalls - set the stage...

Get your teachers
and administrative staff on board

“people most affected by any initiatives should have the greatest say in any decisions about those initiatives”



Parent volunteers
in the classroom
of their own
child...

observation or participation
discipline
distraction
independence

Make the experience credible, significant and clear...

Make sure there is integrity to the positions you are seeking to fill or the tasks you are assigning

- Volunteer Workshop
- Volunteer Manual
- Terms of Reference
- Name badges
- Confidentiality forms
- Evaluate and provide feedback

IDEAS

- Assembly Participation
- Breakfast Club (St. Andrew's College)
- Coffee Club
- Family Camping Weekend (Montessori House of Children - London)

- Continuing Education
 - Literacy night
 - Numeracy Night
 - Parent Seminar series
- Broadway revue - parents and staff
- Parent Ambassador program (Bishop Strachan).

Governance

- in Charitable or Not-for-profit schools
- in For-Profit schools

A good school has clearly defined duties and responsibilities.

Principal/Administrator

- Operates the school - hiring/firing, job descriptions, facility management, government regulations, marketing, admissions, dealing with parents, public relations, professional development, working with committees etc etc
- Initiates and implements Board Policy
- Supports the Board
- Reports to the Board, ensuring that Board has appropriate and accurate information
- Ex-Officio non voting member of the Board and all Committees

Board/Owner

- Protecting the Mission or Vision of the school
- Approval of the budget, setting tuition and salaries
- Fundraising
- Financial Long Term Planning
- Strategic Planning
- Setting Policies
- Hiring Principal /Administrator

What can you
do to keep
everyone in
line?



We need to educate parents

** ...about who and what we are.*

**Communicate the
boundaries !**

**Policies and
Procedures Manual**

**Parent-Student
Handbook**

Minimum expectations for your parents...

- Understand and support the vision of the school
- Support the school and the administration
- Know and understand school policies and procedures
- Always support the school and staff to the child.
Discuss concerns directly with the school staff
and/or administration

And there will be times...

- you might have to say “NO”
- you might have to agree to disagree
- you might have to allow or ask a family to leave

Policy...

“The school believes that a positive and constructive working relationship between the school and a student's parents (or guardian) is essential to the fulfillment of the school's mission.

Thus the school reserves the right not to continue enrollment or not to re-enroll the student if the school reasonably concludes that the actions of a parent (or guardian) make such a positive and constructive relationship impossible or otherwise seriously interferes with the school's accomplishment of its educational purposes.”

- our confidantes
- our friends



DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULT ONES

“Getting”
our parents...

Is it possible?

Seven steps...

- * 1. Modeling a positive attitude
- * 2. Don't take it personally.
- * 3. Consider your role.
- * 4. Fight fire with water.
- * 5. Kill them with kindness.
- * 6. Talk it out in-person.
- * 7. Involve other people carefully.

Try to put yourself in their shoes

Stay calm, offer reassurance and empathy

Take their concerns seriously

- ❑ Document and follow up
- ❑ Avoid meeting in groups

The "helpful complainer"

The "therapeutic complainer"

The "malcontent complainer"

The Complainers



Difficult Parents

- The "My Child is Perfect" Parent
- The "Inconsiderate" Parent



Two heads are
better than
one...