



DORIS TOPSY-ELVOR ACADEMY

STUDEN RECRUITMEN STRATEGIES

Student Recruitment

The school choice movement has taken hold nationally, and families have a number of K-12 options. While offering options is clearly positive for students and families, the competition created by these options makes it especially important that DTEA have a strong student recruitment program.

Through research, DTEA is well aware that children as low as elementary school today have greater influence in parent decision-making. DTEA is recruiting students at all times and continues throughout the year, always marketing the uniqueness of the school. Recruiting students for the first year of operation is often the most difficult, as there is little for families to see, no track record. Although a handful of schools open with a waiting list of students, far too many schools find themselves recruiting students in late August. A variety of recruitment strategies are listed and DTEA uses some combination of strategies that best fill the needs.

Below are some of the strategies and tips that might be useful with whichever recruitment strategies are being used in recruiting students. Depending on the type of program at the school, the audience of prospective students, there is probably a combination of tactics used in the recruitment plan.

- Make sure we have a clear vision and mission and can communicate it to the intended audience.
- Focus on our program's strengths, but don't "over promise." Be honest and realistic. Nothing hurts a school more than being unable to deliver on significant elements of the program. Focus on what is good about our school, not what is bad about the district schools.
- Where appropriate, use hands-on activities to help families understand your program.
- Develop a clear, succinct brochure that describes our program. It doesn't have to be fancy or expensive, but make sure it is well written and appealing. You don't want the public to have a negative impression of the school because the brochure is full of spelling errors or is badly copied. You might want to develop a web page where families could request materials, or even register, online.
- Whatever kinds of marketing materials is developed, make sure prospective parents know how to follow-up and get in touch with a live person at the school. Make sure the contact information is accurate.
- Make sure we understand the target population. Make sure materials and presentations are in the language and at a level the population can understand.
- Often a more targeted recruitment effort is more successful than a wider effort. For example, running ads in a neighborhood newspaper may generate more interest than those in a major paper.
- Use parents and students. They will be your best recruiters.

Recruiting Strategies

- **Encourage current parents and current or former students to spread the word about DTEA.** A good word from a neighbor or friend will mean more to a parent than any message coming directly from the school.

- **Go Door-to-Door Passing Out Material.** This can be particularly effective if you're targeting specific neighborhoods. The door-to-door strategy is clearly very labor-intensive. We may want to recruit volunteers - parents, older students, other community members to help.
- **Find out where the targeted audience is likely to spend time.** Drop off school materials in those places, e.g., daycare centers, community recreation centers, barber and beauty shops, libraries, stores and other local businesses.
- **Utilize Website and Social Media.** As an effective tool to reaching the mass and a targeted following.
- **Post flyers/posters advertising school.** Around the neighborhoods you are targeting.
- **Seek Attention In The Local Media.** This can include calling and sending information on our program to newspapers, radio and TV stations serving your target area. A new school starting up is likely to be considered noteworthy enough to merit some attention. When interviewed by the local press, it's best to avoid negative comments, i.e., don't talk negative of the existing school system. Clearly state your purposes in starting the new school and how your program will help children learn, and what is unique about our school.
- **Take Out Paid Advertising In The Local Media.** We have a limited budget for marketing, but the local newspapers and journals can be relatively inexpensive, and this is another way to put our name and message before the public.
- **Participate in local street fairs or festivals.** Community groups or local chambers of commerce will be able to share about these events, which may allow us to have a table or booth to hand out information about the school.
- **Announce School Events Through Public Service Listings.** Local newspapers may have events calendars where a school grand opening or open house for prospective students and parents can be listed.
- **Attend meetings of community groups to talk about your program.** This could include block clubs, community councils, tenants' organizations, and cultural organizations, or places of worship.
- **Contact Social Workers, Probation Officers, Welfare Officials and People in Similar Occupations.** Give them information that they in turn can give to families with whom they work.
- **Join the local Chamber of Commerce, and/or attend meetings of a local business association.** In order to build ties to the business community.
- **Contact real estate agents so they will have information on our school.** Give to potential homebuyers who are often interested in area schools.
- **Do mass mailings to targeted areas.** Mailing lists are available from a variety of list brokers (look under Mailing Services in the Yellow Pages) and can easily be targeted to specific groups by geographic area and family characteristics, e.g., parents with children in a specific age range. We'll be able to reduce mailing costs a great deal if we have a non-profit bulk-mailing permit.