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RECRUITING TRANSFER STUDENTS

For the audio portion, please dial:

US/Canada: 866-627-5180

Conference ID: 61736701018



OUR FACILITATOR



Linda Mann Simansky most recently served as the Senior Program Manager, Affordability and Growing Tuition Revenue at PEJE. For over 14 years, Linda developed and executed many of the organization's grant programs for Jewish day schools and managed the work of PEJE's governance and its board.

In a volunteer capacity, Linda Chairs the Nominating Committee for the Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Boston and serves on the board of the Kehillath Israel Nursery School.

MEET OUR GUEST



Amy Pearson serves as the Director of Admissions and Marketing at Brandeis Hillel Day School in San Rafael, California. For over 10 years, Amy has run admission offices in various independent schools including a school for gifted children, a progressive school and now a Jewish Day School. She started her educational career as a second/third grade teacher at a Montessori-inspired school and spent a few years in advertising as a project manager and copywriter.

In a volunteer capacity, Amy co-chairs the diversity committee at her son's preschool and recently joined their board of directors.

AGENDA

- Why Recruit Transfer Students
- Making Your School Stand Out
- Recruitment
- Ideal Candidates
- Assessing Transfer Applicants & Managing Expectations
- Integration

GOALS FOR THE CALL

- To clarify the benefits of recruiting transfers
- To learn from the presenter and each other about a diversity of strategies for recruiting transfer students to your school
- To discuss ways of setting expectations with families and colleagues
- To problem-solve tricky situations together

Why Recruit Transfer Students

- National annual attrition is often close to 10% at many schools.
- Need a plan in place to replace students that leave the school.
- New families that come in at non-entry points can add a unique perspective and enrich the classroom and school community.
- New peers can help with classroom balance and current family retention.
- Can boost teacher and administrator confidence in the program when the school is sought out by new families.
- Other ideas...

Making Your School Stand Out For Potential Transfer Students

- Start an annual “Bring a Friend to School Day” in the fall, get your core parent volunteers spreading the word and have them help you plan fun activities for the day.
- Invest in excellent teachers and a dynamic program at a specific grade level that can potentially become a new entry point...look toward technology and innovation.
- Dedicate marketing resources to filling openings once you have something innovative to promote.
- Look for ways to partner with other schools/classes/educators to build awareness about your excellent students and program.
- Reach out to public school teachers through your own teachers or your experience with specific transfer students. A personal connection with one of your dynamo teachers can solidify a fruitful relationship.
- Spend limited advertising dollars wisely (local newsletters, online journals, direct mail, sponsor local events).

Making Your School Stand Out: Collaborate with Teachers & Invest in Program

- Parents continue to pay tuition because of the amazing teachers that work with their kids.
- Collaborate with school leaders to define and support what makes your school unique.
- Find a teacher or administrator with a passion that resonates with parent demand and help them share it in a public format with the larger community.
- Retain excellent teachers by showing them how much they are appreciated, help administrators design ways to do this.
- Visit other private schools and determine what makes their schools stand out.
- Ensure your teachers see other private schools in the area. Offer to arrange tours and classroom visits for them and attend with them if possible.
- Strategize with your team about how to add more students at specific grade levels. Can you double or triple out your middle school classes? Can you add a Pre-K class?
- Share what you are hearing from applicant families with administrators.
- Push and encourage your school to strive for more academic excellence and serving kids on the high academic end (students will transfer for high academics).

Making Your School Stand Out: Innovation

- Assess your openings and tailor your message to the age group you can accommodate.
- Highlight the benefits of Jewish Day School at specific times in a child's life (i.e. middle school). Your messaging techniques should be innovative as well.
- Use your school's size and areas of focus to your advantage. Make sure you can distinguish your school's innovative approach from the local public school's approach.
- Independent schools are largely focusing on innovation and educating children for the 21st Century. In what ways does your school do this?
- Ideally define your school's "special sauce" through a lens of innovation.
- Study what the families with school age children in your area are doing, reading, buying, frequenting, caring about, etc. Once you know which families you want to capture, bring your school into their focus.

Recruitment: Collaborating with Teachers and Administrators

- Marketing is a team effort... you cannot sell a program that isn't dynamic and engaging.
- Who are the most innovative educators on your staff?
- Do they visit other programs and collaborate in the wider community with other teachers?
- Drop into your teachers' classrooms and engage them about their programs.
- What makes them excited? Ask them to tell you about their most exciting project with their students this month.
- Report back to your head of school and educational leaders about what you are seeing in the classrooms. Keep up an open dialogue.
- Comment on what will sell to prospective families and do not be afraid to speak your mind.
- Suggest ideas that could make the program even more enticing. Take a risk, tell them you are playing devil's advocate.

Recruitment: Get Prospective Transfer Families in the Door - Programs

- Arrange a speaker series or parent education series at your school on a topic of interest to parents at a specific grade level. This is easiest to do with prospective middle school families as they become sensitive to the effects of social media, etc.
- Offer an academic/special interest class that isn't happening at other private or Jewish Day Schools in your area after school, during breaks, or during the summer.
- Assess the demand in your area for academic and extra-curricular classes. (Classes focusing on technology often fill quickly).
- Get your most dynamic teacher to offer a unique after school class and encourage current students to invite friends from other schools.

Recruitment: Get Prospective Transfer Families in the Door – Current Parents

- Share what grades you are trying to fill.
 - Do they know families on sports teams, through book clubs, etc. that might attend a parent “coffee” hosted in one of their homes to learn more about your school?
- Use the newest families in your school that came in at non-entry points to help spread the word about your school. They are closest to prospective families given that they are new and have a unique inside/outside perspective.

Ideal Transfer Students and Families...

- Are academically and socially/emotionally prepared for your program.
 - Families may not reveal that they are looking to transfer because their child is not doing well in his/her current program. Make sure your school can meet their academic needs and handle their social/emotional needs. Trust your intuition if something seems or feels off. Call their current teacher if you have more questions.
- Understand that you may want to have their child visit for multiple days to see how they do in your program. Set this up as a potential from the beginning of the conversation. Students show more of themselves over time.
- Want to be a part of a thriving school community and ask questions about how to be involved.
- Inquire about volunteer opportunities.
- Have some experience with speaking and reading Hebrew (see next slide).

Addressing the Hebrew Language Challenges

- Often transfer students do not have much exposure to Hebrew except possibly through a synagogue program.
- Problem-solve ways with your teachers and administrators to include students with little to no Hebrew experience. Can all new transfer students receive tutoring for the first three months of school after school in a small group?
- Are other languages an option at the middle school level, for example?
- Encourage the staff to see the benefit of adding new students and families by sharing stories with the teachers and working directly with your educational heads to highlight strong new students and how they are enriching the school and classrooms. Faculty/staff meetings are a good place to add updates and successes. Your head of school can also include “plugs” in the weekly staff email.
- Offer spring and summer tutoring before transfers join the school, work in small study groups to minimize the cost to the family.

Assessment & Managing Expectations

- Skillfully craft the student visit/shadow day(s) for your visitor and minimize demands on your teachers.
- Work with your team to create a standardized assessment tool for all grade levels. This includes reading, writing and math assessments that adapt to grade levels.
- Work with your teachers and school counselor to train shadow buddies and all students about how to welcome visitors into the classrooms.
- Provide an easy way for teachers to give you feedback on visitors.
- Applicant families may ask for lots of information about how the shadow visit went... be clear about what you can share while remaining positive.

Integration: Setting-up Transfer Families for Success

- Engage transfer families in the spring (invite to school events, especially graduation if it is a stand-out event at your school).
- Host a new family event at your school or in a current family's home (may want to separate the events by entry points).
- Match new families with buddy/mentor families. Consider having a parent volunteer help with this.
- Share contact information with classmates in late May/early June and email updates as new students join classes over the summer.
- Ensure all teachers know about new students. Some admission directors create a “Facebook” of all new kids and families for their staff. Photos help!
- Satisfied transfer families become some of your best cheerleaders to recruit new families. Give them a few months to get acclimated and thrilled with your program and then engage them in a focus group and other venues to solicit their input and help recruiting.