



Talking to Parents: Effectively Delivering Tough Decisions

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The Westminster Schools
A co-educational Christian day school for grades Pre - 1st - 12



Why are these Decisions so tough to deliver?

These people Love us, Hate us, Care about us the most.

- Special People
 - Alumni
 - Major Donors
 - Current Parents
 - Faculty and Staff
 - Community Leaders
 - Board Members and other Parent Volunteers
 - Current Siblings
 - Your family members
- Make Your Own List
 - First time you were blindsided by an angry (rejected) parent
 - Most difficult conversation you've ever had
 - Longest lasting case of hard feelings
 - One that you know you really handled poorly...

Thinking back on those tough conversations : Was the decision?

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- Unpredictable ?
 - ✓ Applicants were thinking Yes, but you were thinking NO WAY.
 - ✓ Do you strive to be predictable, so you don't surprise those who care most about you?

- Understandable ?
 - ✓ Did your explanation help the family to fully understand your reasoning?

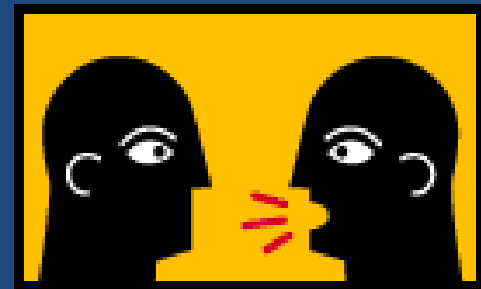
- or was it Inexplicable ?
 - ✓ Not only did the applicant get blind sided, but can you even defend the decision?

Tough Decisions To Deliver & Receive: Session Agenda/Role Play

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- Gather into teams of 4 people
- There are 4 scenarios, each with roughly 10-12 minutes for set-up and role play.
- You will each take a turn in the HOT SEAT as Admissions Director.
- Julie and I will get you started, then when I signal, you will have 5 minutes to “meet the parent” to review the decision.
- Wrap and Review – 15 minutes.





Success Plan for Effective Admissions Decisions Delivery

- Politics
- Policies
- Practices
- Personalization
- Patience
- Passage of Time

Success Plan for Effective Admissions Decisions Delivery - Politics

- Political Considerations
 - Who delivers the message?
 - In person? In the mail with a courtesy call? In your office?
 - When? Time of day? Day of the week?
 - Any additional persons warned in advance? Presidents/ Head? Development Office? Board Members?

Success Plan for Effective Admissions Decisions Delivery – Office Policy

- Policy Review Considerations
 - Published admissions criteria
 - Academic and maybe social & behavioral
 - Age/ Grade application requirements
 - Slots/Spaces held for certain groups – legacy, faculty...etc.
 - Board Member and faculty children – special considerations?
 - Head/ President involvement in process?
 - Level of Institutional Advancement/ Development involvement in admissions process?
 - Letters of Recommendation – do you accept/ encourage/ require?

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The banner features a background of a ship's rigging and sails in shades of red, white, and blue. The text '2010' is on the left, and 'SSATB ANNUAL MEETING BOSTON' is on the right with a star.

Success Plan for Effective Admissions Decisions Delivery – Office Practices

- Office Practice Considerations - Alumni/ Current Parents:
 - Special Alumni/ Current parent admissions information sessions
 - Alumni tours
 - Meetings w/ all Parents
 - Specialists on staff – counselors, psychologists, principal – to review files
 - Special attention given to the reading of affiliated files
 - Devoting time to early review – allows time to make calls to gather more details, ask questions, or talk with former teachers....etc.
 - Bringing children in for 2nd visits, or visiting them at their schools/homes



Success Plan for Effective Admissions Decisions Delivery – Office Practices

- Office Practice Considerations – Faculty
 - Review admissions practices with all new employees
 - Special attention given to the reading of affiliated files
 - Devoting time to early review
 - Protect the privacy for faculty children - scores, interview ratings...to refrain from embarrassing them in some cases.
 - Bring in faculty to your office to let them know ...on a Friday
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Success Plan for Effective Admissions Decisions Delivery – Personalization

- Do you KNOW this child?
- Do you know these affiliated/ business leaders? Have you invited them into your office to chat? To get to know you?
- Do you KNOW this child?
- Study every piece of data in that file... two times...
- Did you go out of your way to be sure decision was right one? Class visits? Teacher calls? Parent calls?
- Do you KNOW this child?
- Articulate why your school won't serve them well?
- Personalize the decision letter

Effective Admissions Decisions Delivery – Patience and Passage of Time

- Be patient with parents, especially parents of young children.
- Put yourself in their shoes.
- If they need to vent, let it be with you... that means
 - 1) Sometimes people have to hear themselves talk to hear what YOU are saying,
 - 2) Less negative stuff they will share with others,
 - 3) Let them know you really care how they feel.
- You've had weeks to get comfortable with a NO for this child, give that parent as much time, if not more.
- Many times parents will come in years later to tell you that the gift of time proved you right, the child is doing beautifully at another school.

Success Plan for Effective Admissions Decisions Delivery

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- Politics
- Policies
- Practices
- Personalization
- Patience
- Passage of Time
- And remember



It's Better to have a Parent Mad, than a child SAD.