

# Planning/Budget

Promoting a school is not a hit or miss deal. Education is in an unprecedented era of competition, with greatly expanded learning options for families. Students and their parents are no longer captive audiences and must be treated as customers, with their educational choices clear. To maintain or increase student enrollment, you must plan. Sit down, take some time, and write your promotional plan for the year. Set your time line by focusing within your enrollment windows, and include year-round sustainability strategies and gear-up strategies for the next school year. **Your promotional budget and recruitment goal will determine the strategies you implement.** The sample time line highlighted in this guide presents many no-cost, creative ideas, including personal and digital networking.

## Know Your Product

What are you promoting? Identify and memorize your school's unique benefits. For instance, does it have the only such curriculum in the county? Does it have a proven track record of improving academic success? What career paths are offered to motivate students in their studies? Be prepared to describe or sell your school to anyone at any time in a 15-30 second pitch, the same time you might have to talk to someone while on an elevator ride. This is called the "elevator speech," and you should have it set in your mind and ready to go for any conversation.

**Remember, public relations is doing a good job then telling people about it.**

## Know Your Audience(s)

In most instances you will need to reach more than one audience, including staff, parents, and students in your school, out-of-boundary schools, feeder schools, charter schools, private schools, other public schools with magnet programs and possibly all district schools (be mindful of limited transportation capabilities). Other audiences may include M-DCPS employees, school principals and certain segments of the community, including homeowner associations, day-care centers and Pre-K programs.

**Budget and time constraints may limit your ability to reach all audiences, so it is best to focus on your most lucrative source of potential students and target your communication efforts to that group(s).** When you assess your recruitment efforts at the end of the year, you may realize the need to expand your reach to more audiences.

## Promotional Materials/Technologies

Now that you have a plan, a projected budget and a target audience(s) identified, what promotional materials and/or technologies do you need to get your message out? Ideally, one printed item (usually a simple, cost-effective brochure with concise information and designed as a self-mailer or to fit in a standard #10 envelope) will suffice. Remember to include multilingual information, if necessary. To promote on-site and off-site recruitment events, an 8.5" x 11" flier is a flexible alternative. Convert to a PDF file, and e-mail it to your target audience and/or post it in schools and businesses throughout the community. This flier should be similar in design to the brochure, prominently feature the unique selling points of your school, and include contact information. Utilize electronic strategies, as well, such as your website, ConnectEd, Facebook, e-mail/text blasts, and YouTube.



## Utilize Existing Resources

Remember, you are not alone! Use your students, parents and staff to help get the word out. Work closely with your PTA and the district PTA; ask to have your school mentioned in their literature and available at their events. Other district departments can assist, as well. Their phone numbers are listed on the back panel. Give them a call; introduce yourself. Share your news with the Office of Public Relations, which can help generate awareness through press releases and radio exposure. Make your program and its benefits known to civic organizations, libraries, government entities and businesses in your recruitment areas. Ask them to distribute your materials and add your school link to their websites. See sample time line for other no-cost, promotional ideas.

## Are You Covered At Home? Customer Relations

Your home base should always be well informed and be your biggest advocate. Ask yourself these questions before you begin promoting your program: Is my website up-to-date? Do I have a contact phone number that is answered and answered politely? Is my school clean and secure? Does staff promote the school at meetings with parents, other school-site staff, district staff and school Dade Partners?

## Assessment and Updating Strategies

Always ask inquiring parents and students how they heard about your school. This is especially important, as you may need to shift or update strategies to ensure recruitment goals are met. This constant monitoring will shape your revised communications plan for next year, as well. A formal evaluation of all program elements and strategies is sometimes necessary.

## Sustainability

Keep the promotion momentum going after the enrollment period ends. This is the time to make sure your current and newly-recruited enrollees are kept informed of school updates. Have an awards ceremony. Send your parents a note, and ask them to share a program success with friends who have children. Your parents can be your best program advocates. Visit a day-care center to distribute information. Think of new ideas to promote your program to the community.

*Note: This communications guide was designed to present information in a basic brochure format that can be used as a guide to produce your own program brochure. This design can be easily adapted to be a self-mailer.*

## Sample Time Line

### August

Strategic communication plan finalized for year  
Update website, phone message, e-mail address  
General information, one-page flier/school profile ready for opening-of-school student take-home kits, front desk, library, parent resource center (Consider Spanish and Creole versions if necessary)  
Prepare banner for school entrance  
Design postcard for October e-mail blast

### September

Develop relationships with colleagues, district departments and organizations that can help get the word out e.g. (PTA/PTSA - school chapters and districtwide, Parental Involvement Office, The Parent Academy, Title I (CIS), Dade Partners)  
Schedule recruitment visits to feeder schools, out-of-boundary schools, homeowner and condo associations

### October

Direct mail postcard to charter school students  
Connect-Ed message for school event  
Have display materials at open houses and parent/teacher conferences at your school and other targeted schools with potential recruits  
Develop open-house press release  
Post flier in area libraries, businesses  
Have principal promote school at staff, district and community meetings

### November/December

Respond to direct mail/e-mail inquiries  
Send information for inclusion in district PTA newsletter  
Schedule recruitment visits to private and charter schools  
Assess/analyze enrollment goals  
Consider another Connect-Ed call, perhaps a holiday message

### January

Connect-Ed message to potential recruits in feeder schools/out-of-boundary schools  
Site visits to three area day-care centers  
Fliers to Parent Academy for distribution at events  
Presentation to school PTA  
Prepare note to parents of new and existing enrollees with school update/successes  
Invite parents to visit and to share information with friends and business associates

*(Sample time line continued on back cover)*

## Sample Time Line *(continued)*

### February-June

Assess enrollment data  
Consider survey to all enrollees  
Revise flier, develop Spanish version  
Reprint brochure  
Revise promotional plan to include increased PTA chapter visits  
Possible funding shift to 2nd direct-mail campaign  
Plan graduation/awards ceremony

*(Note: This is a sample time line that may or may not fit the promotional needs of your school or target audiences. It is simply presented as a guide with some suggested strategies that may or may not be appropriate for your communication plan)*

### Helpful Telephone Numbers

Miami-Dade County Council of PTAs/PTSAs

305-995-1102

Title I Parent Outreach

305-995-1713

Parental Involvement Office

305-995-1233

The Parent Academy

305-995-2680

Office of Public Relations

305-995-1126

Dade Partners in Education

305-995-1215

Department of Materials and Graphics Production

305-995-1131



Miami-Dade County Public Schools

[www.dadeschools.net](http://www.dadeschools.net)

# Promoting Your School!

A Basic Guide  
to Getting the Word Out  
and Your Numbers Up!



Miami-Dade County Public Schools