

# best practices & advice for outreach



If you're struggling with outreach efforts and enrollment, the key to success can be as simple as having a friendly, knowledgeable staff who can communicate with parents and build relationships.

Best practices for developing strong prekindergarten outreach programs include:

## 1. Develop a Strategic Plan

- Start early and plan ahead. Make a plan and implement it early to see the best enrollment results.
- Conduct a community needs assessment. Understand what families need to know about prekindergarten programs and how they prefer to get their information before building your plan.
- Develop unified objectives. Ensure your objectives meet everyone's needs and share them with partners. Be sure to integrate the outreach activities of the prekindergarten programs with outreach activities of your community partner organizations.
- Use broad-based outreach strategies. To reach the most families, incorporate multiple methods into your outreach efforts. For instance, consider using printed pieces in combination with radio or television public service announcements.

## 2. Create an Engaging Environment

- Hire good people. The staff will make or break your outreach efforts. Look for positive, energetic staff who are trusted by and willing to get out in the community. They will be your first contact with families and the community.
- Collaborate. Create true collaboration with families, the school district and community organizations. Develop personal relationships and get families involved in outreach activities. Do not underestimate the power that words have.

### 3. Work Closely with Parents in the Community

- Generate broad reach. Use several different outreach approaches to reach the most families.
- Explain the benefits. Provide information to families about the advantages for children who attend high-quality prekindergarten programs.
- Be direct and clear. Be thorough but concise about the qualifications for enrollment.
- Be mindful of cultural and practical differences. Take into account the various languages, beliefs, schedules, and media/Internet usage patterns of your community members.
- Host face-to-face events. Schedule events and meetings families can attend to receive relevant information and ask all questions that may arise.

### 4. Use Current K-12 and Prekindergarten Families

- Get help from students and families. Make use of siblings/children already enrolled in the school district and/or the prekindergarten program. They are likely to be your best advocates.
- Encourage parents to be “Prekindergarten Ambassadors.” Families can be your spokespeople, promoting the program to other eligible families.
- Provide information to students. Current students can take home information for families about the benefits and availability of free prekindergarten programs.

### 5. Develop Community Partnerships

- Develop strong partnerships. Recruit partners to help maximize your efforts. Ask for specifics, and tell partners exactly what you want/need from them. Get agreements upfront.
- Find businesses providing services to parents of young children, such as grocery and convenience stores, churches and religious organizations, health clinics and health care providers, laundromats, food banks, large apartment complexes, fast food restaurants and providers of check cashing services.
- Find non-profit partners with shared interests. Engage partners that have shared interests, objectives and audiences. Examples of potential partner organizations might include YMCAs/YWCAs; Head Start; subsidized child care; Boys and Girls Clubs; and Big Brothers, Big Sisters.