

*Toughest retention challenges, part 3*  
**Retain eighth graders into high school**

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Connecting with eighth graders and parents

***“Companies that play an active part in communicating with customers to keep them engaged and better meet their needs and expectations, are well on their way to achieving the prime objective of any customer retention program; greater customer loyalty.”***

Alex Lawrence  
*“Five Customer Retention Tips for Entrepreneurs”*  
forbes.com

The second most difficult retention challenge is from eighth grade into high school for two reasons. 1) Since this is a natural transition in schooling, many parents will re-evaluate their goals for education and the best location to achieve them. 2) Parents will listen even more to their child's personal preferences in making a high school choice.

The following ideas are not a comprehensive program, but three helpful tips that have been successful at Lodi Academy.

### **Create personal connections--especially with social leaders**

As you know well, social dynamics become very important in junior high. Ask the eighth grade teacher who the social leaders are in the class. Start **now** to build a rapport with those leaders and focus your recruiting efforts on them first. Once they commit to your high school, it will make recruiting the rest of the class easier.

### **Present "Class of 20xx" t-shirts**

Start building school spirit and a sense of group membership. Use your school colors, name and logo. Either hire a hip, young graphic designer to design this shirt or get one of your high school students to look through stock designs with you and pick the best one. Present these early in the school year as part of an event where you tell them you're looking forward to having them join the high school next year.

### **Talk as though you expect they will come. Work as though you think they won't.**

In talking with eighth graders and their families, be positive and convey you are looking forward to having them in high school. Even if they do not contact you, reach

out to them. You can acknowledge that they are probably considering various options, "I know high school is a common time for families to research school options. I'd love to answer any questions you may have about our high school program."

But don't assume they are enrolling. Create reasons to contact them at least monthly-- and track their progress through the same enrollment process you would for a new student.

**Delegating:**

You can delegate choosing and ordering t-shirts. But unless you have recruiting/marketing staff, you should handle the personal contacts and giving out t-shirts yourself.

**Credits:**

Thank you Lodi Academy for sharing your ideas.

**Binder tab:** August

**School size:** All

**Marketing process step:**

- 1) Who are we?
- 2) What do families want?
- 3) What needs to change?
- 4) How do we tell our community?
- 5) How do we track results?