

Websites that Work:

*Creating effective sites
for recruiting*

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A Hammer

Good tool design starts with a clear understanding of what you need the tool to accomplish.

What do you want your website to do?

1. Delight parents by providing current, easy-to-find school information
2. Recruit new families *by getting them on your campus*

Begin with the End in Mind

How do families research schools?

1. Research list of possible schools via internet and people
2. Refine list to *manageable number* through internet, contacting the school, talking to people
3. Visit schools on the final list
4. Make their choice

Which of these steps is most critical for you to understand when creating or refocusing your website?

The Perfect Seven

These seven features are critical for a website that will aid in recruiting new families. They are fully compatible with, but not always the same as, delighting current parents.

1. Responsive design
2. Call to action
 - Design criteria
 - ~ On every page
 - ~ In the same location
 - ~ Visually eye-catching
 - The most effective call to action: Schedule a tour/visit/consult
 - ~ Email VS
 - ~ Phone call

3. Testimonials
 - On every page
 - A+ for testimonials that address the content of the page
4. Staff information page — second most visited page
 - Portraits of teachers
 - Highlight your teachers' qualifications
 - ~ Degrees earned — where, when, field of study
 - ~ Certifications and credentials — Adventist and state, all special endorsements
 - ~ Continuing education — either specific to staff or noted for team
 - ~ Experience — “teaching since 20xx”
5. Home page — focus on mission and differentiation
 - What is your mission?
 - What do your graduates look like? (i.e. What outcomes can a parent expect that will motivate them to spend \$1,000s at your school?)
6. Clear and simple navigation
 - Cluster information to minimize primary navigation list
 - Trend toward few, longer pages requiring less clicking — but aid navigation with jumps to specific topics (i.e. headings) within the page
7. Content
 - Photos
 - ~ Feature/banner photos — pay for good quality
 - ~ In-page photos — show students doing something active, and preferably education related, and include captions that talk about a benefit of your school that connects with the photo
 - Text
 - ~ Focus on benefits, not features
 - ~ Write in first-person friendly
 - ~ Break up text into bite-sized chunks with subheads, short paragraphs, bulleted lists

The Fatal Four

1. Tuition — counter-intuitive but very critical
 - Remember the task of the website is to persuade people to come visit. When parents are researching schools they are working to narrow the list, to find a reason to skip visiting your school.
 - Three reasons to leave tuition off
 - ~ No matter what your tuition is some parents will view it as too high (“I can’t afford that”), and some as too low (“the school can’t possibly provide a good education for only that”). In either case, you get crossed off the visit list.
 - ~ By not listing tuition, or giving it out over the phone, you are increasing the number who come meet you.
 - ~ Would you prefer parents who choose a school based on price? Or based on quality? Or the fit of your school and their family values?
 - Instead, focus on philosophy of tuition and tuition aid available.
2. Enroll now/full registration packets/online application links
3. Handbook (possibly)
4. Fund-raising announcements on the home page, or in primary navigation

General announcements are generally ignored

1. Proofread, proofread, proofread
2. Use consistency in formatting
3. Choose a simple, straightforward template
4. If your school has any affiliation with a preschool, combine websites
5. Boilerplate information about Adventist education is available
 - adventisteducation.org/cg1.html
 - adventisteducation.org/abt.html
 - nccsda.com/education/marketing-corner
6. Delight current parents
 - Keep it current
 - Cluster their information — calendar, school day schedule, current week’s newsletter, home and school, photos, links
 - Links — online gradebook, homework, payment system