

AUDIENCE & MARKET RESEARCH

The Family Interview Guide

Ask the families who said no.

A screener, 14 interview questions, a notes sheet, and a worksheet for turning parents' own words into advertising copy. Use it when one location lags the others, before a rebrand, or ahead of an enrollment season.

1. Recruit with a screener

Recruit two groups: families registered in neighborhoods similar to the school, and families who applied and chose another school. Aim for 8 to 12 interviews.

Screener questions

- 1. Do you live in one of our target neighborhoods? (Yes required)
- 2. Do you have a child at or near the entry grade? (Yes required)
- 3. Were you the primary decision maker in choosing a school? (Yes required)
- 4. Did you apply to or seriously consider our school in the last 18 months?
- 5. Did you choose another school, or have you not enrolled? (Marks the second group)

Before you invite anyone: Offer evening and weekend slots, plan 30 to 45 minutes per interview, and ask for permission to record in the invitation and again at the start of the call.

Recruiting tracker

2. Ask these 14 questions

1. Walk me through how you started looking for a school for your child.
2. What did you want your child's school day to look like, start to finish?
3. What did you need from the hours after the school day ends?
4. When you picture your child feeling safe at school, what do you see?
5. Which schools did you seriously consider, and what put them on the list?
6. What words or phrases made you want to take a closer look at our school?
7. Where did you go to learn more about us, and about the other schools you considered?
8. What was the one thing that tipped your decision?
9. What almost changed your mind?
10. If a friend asked you to describe the right school in one sentence, what would you say?
11. What would you want a school to tell you that no school has told you yet?
12. What matters most to you in your child's teacher, and what did you learn about the teachers at our school?
13. What did you think of the school's facilities, and what would you have wanted to see?
14. How happy were you with the communication you received from the school, and what would you change?

Add for families who chose another school: What would our school have needed to offer for it to be your first choice?

Interviewer tips

- Record every interview with permission. The recording is your record of the actual conversation.
- Follow up on any answer that names a feeling: "Tell me more about what safe means for you."
- Stay quiet after an answer. The second answer is often the real one.
- Send a thank-you note within a day.

3. Interview notes sheet

One sheet per family. Note the timestamp of strong quotes so you can find them in the recording.

Family / neighborhood:	Group: ☐ Applied, enrolled ☐ Applied, chose another ☐ Neighborhood family
Date / recording file:	Other schools considered:

Needs they named (with timestamps)

Teacher, facilities, communication (happy or not)

Words that drew them in / where they researched

What tipped the decision

Exact phrases worth keeping

4 and 5. Report back, then write the copy

Report to the enrollment team

- Sort every comment into themes and count how many families raised each.
- Report separately on teachers, facilities, and communication, since each points to a different fix.
- Tally where families did their research (search, social, word of mouth, website, tours). That list tells you where the ads run.
- Present the top three themes with direct quotes and the matching recording clips.
- List what the school already offers for each theme. The gap between what families ask for and what the marketing says is your messaging brief.

Copy worksheet (one per theme)

Theme	
Their words three verbatim quotes	
Repeated phrases used by 3+ families	
Proof from our school	
Headline draft in a parent's voice	
Where it runs research channels	
Test	Read it to a neighborhood parent. Does it sound like them?

Want HEEDGROUP to run it? We handle the screener, recruiting, scheduling, interviews, every recording, the report, and the ad copy. Visit heedgrp.com and choose Audience & Market Research.