

# Who Are Your Families?

Deeply understanding the families who support and enroll in your school is essential to the success of your advancement goals. Getting to know your families and thinking about the unique market your organization serves allows you to be more strategic in how you approach families to ask them to enroll or support your school. One powerful way to get to know your families is to build your ideal family's persona.

## Why and How Do People Give to You?

When any family considers enrolling their child in your school, they need to not only have the ability to pay, but the willingness to pay. The ability to pay is relatively easy to determine with a little research and financial aid offers. The willingness to pay is developed through your advancement team's outreach efforts. This relationship-building work takes time and a savvy team that deeply understands why families choose to enroll in and support your school and what separates your school from the competition.

**Escale Tip:** When creating personas, ask yourself, *Who do we serve now?* and *Who do we want to serve moving forward?*

## Key Persona: Parents

The parents of prospective or past students are the primary decisionmakers of a family. They determine how willing a family is to enroll their child, give to your school, or participate in a fundraiser. Often, spouses fall into one of two general roles.



### School Mom Sue

In many families, School Mom Sue is making the decision to enroll her children at your school. She is the one who will make the case to her spouse that your school is the right fit for their children academically and socially. Often, she is also deciding how a family's charitable dollars are spent.



### "Decision" Dad Dan

While he may agree with his spouse that your school is a good fit for the kids, "Decision" Dad Dan often needs a little encouragement to make the leap and write the check. This may also be true for charitable gifts to your school.



## Key Persona: Students

Increasingly, potential students are also involved in the decision to enroll at your school.



### Excited Student Sam

Excited Student Sam has taken a tour of your school, has a few friends who attend already, and is counting down the days until he's a part of your school family. A child's enthusiasm for your school can be a major factor in a parent's decision to enroll them at your organization. Conversely, a child's negative experience on a tour can sway parents to look elsewhere.



### Diligent Student Daisy

Diligent Student Daisy is the family's high achiever. She's at the top of her class academically, and she and her parents are worried your school may not fit her needs. For Daisy, your school's academic rigor and ability to shape leaders is a major factor in the decision to enroll.

## Key Persona: Grandparents

Grandparents are often involved in a family's decision to enroll their children at your school. Grandparents are deeply invested in the education of their grandchildren. And, if they are a part of your supporting congregation, they are invested in the success of your school as well.

**EScale Tip:** Grandparents of enrolled and past students are often excellent candidates for major, leadership, and transformational gift givers.



### Guiding Grama Gertrude

Guiding Grama Gertrude is very involved in the family and may provide childcare while the parents are off at work. She may nudge parents into considering switching to your school or be actively involved in the decision-making process.



### Legacy Grampa Gary

Like Gertrude, Legacy Grampa Gary is very involved in the family. As a retiree, he is regularly reviewing his legacy and estate plan and deciding which causes and efforts are worth his investment. He is the key decisionmaker in how much he and Gertrude will contribute to their grandchildren's education, including any major charitable gifts to your school.

## Applying Personas to Your Advancement Strategy

Once you have a general idea of who your ideal family is, it is time to get specific. Ask your advancement team to get creative as they flesh out the characters of your family. What are the occupations of the parents? Where do they live? What are their hobbies? What are the ages, grade levels, and interests of the incoming students?

Get as specific as you can in describing your ideal family. Then, use these details as you craft your messaging for enrollment and development campaigns. Being more specific about your audience makes writing letters and making calls much easier and effective. Advancement teams that embrace personas often end up bringing them into strategy sessions. If they're considering adding or cutting a program, for example, they may ask themselves, "What would School Mom Sue think about this decision?"

### Closing Thoughts

Once you narrow down your ideal family, set a date a few months or a year in the future to review and update it. Personas can change over time as your advancement strategy and school population evolves. Regular review of your school's ideal family persona helps your advancement team stay focused on the right audience.