

How to Use Attrition Charts to track your enrollment

It's February, and we're full with a long waiting list!
Last year was a disaster! Six children left in just one month!
We can't hold on to our five-year-olds.
Don't worry. Applications are always slow coming in at this time of the year.

Independent schools normally depend on tuition to cover their operating expenses, which means that accurate up-to-date information is essential. Despite this fact, too often, administrators rely on their memory or sense of what feels right when considering whether the current enrollment trend is normal or something to celebrate or fret over.

One thing is certain: A Montessori child can never be replaced! Every time a family decides not to continue with your school, another child has to be recruited just to replace the lost tuition. But the impact on the stability of our classes (normalization) is tremendous.

We call the information on students who either do not reenroll or who withdraw during the school year attrition.

Compiling and analyzing enrollment information and attrition is an important activity that deserves greater attention in many Montessori schools.

In any given year, our overall enrollment is made up of the students who continued with us from last year, plus the new students that entered in the fall along with other new students who applied during the school year, less the students who left us for one reason or another during the school year.

How to prepare an attrition chart

Prepare a grid in which the rows running across reflect the age levels within your school, beginning at the top with the oldest and moving down to the oldest students.

Attrition Last Year								
	Age level	students moved up	new students	left during yr	asked to leave	entered in yr	did not return	% attrition
Toddlers								
24	2	0	24	-3		3	-5	21%
2 classes								
	3	19	10	-2	-1	6	-4	13%
Primary								
79	4	23	3	-1			-2	8%
3 classes								
	5	18	5	-1			-5	23%
Lower elem								
42	6	17	3	-2			-3	17%
2 classes								
	7	13	2	-2			-1	8%
	8	10	2	-1			-1	9%
Upper elem								
9 to 12 yr	9	9	1				-1	10%
29	10	10	1	-2	-1		-1	13%
	11	11	1	-1			-2	18%
Middle School								
7th-8th	12	8					-1	13%
20	13	9					-9	100%
Totals		147	52	-15	-2	9	-35	18%

Enrollment at
end of year

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Running across, create 7 columns.

Column 1 [Students moved up] = The number of students moving up from one age level to the next after attrition.

Column 2 [New students] = The number of new students admitted into the school before the first day of school

Column 3 [Left during year] = The number of students who withdrew during the school year. The criteria is simply that it was the family's decision, whether because of they move, experience financial difficulty, or are disappointed with your program.

Column 4 [Asked to leave] = The number of students that the school counseled out, where you asked the family to transfer the child to another school for one reason or another. Normally this number will be very low or zero if you've done a fair job of screening children. Obviously, the number will also be determined by your school's philosophy of how far you will go to work with a child who is having a difficult time. However no matter how rarely it occurs, it is important to keep a record of how many students did not adjust well to your school whether due to distractibility, aggressive behavior, learning disabilities or other factors.

Column 5 [Entered during the year] = The number of students accepted at this age level during the school year

Column 6 [Project attrition] = The number of students that you expect will not return next year (or the actual numbers after the fact)

Column 7 [Projected percentage of attrition] = The percentage of students who you project will not be returning next year

When you carry over from one year to the next, to calculate the students moving up in the following year add up all of the students in each age level at years end after subtracting those students who do not reenroll. [The formula is "students moved up + new students - students who left during the year - students you asked to leave + students who entered during the year - the students who did not reenroll = students moved up in the following year"]

Separately, keep a record of the name of each child who is not reenrolled for the following year, along with information as to his/her age level that final year, the reason why he/she was not reenrolled, the school to which he/she transferred, and whether or not he/she had siblings in the school.

Many schools will conduct exit interviews or mail surveys to families whose children did not reenroll to try to determine the reasons that led to their decision.

Let's look at the sample attrition charts. This represents a school with a capacity of 276 students:

2 classes of 12 toddlers	= 24 full-day spaces
3 classes of up to 28 3 to 6 year olds	= 84 full-day spaces
3 classes of up to 28 6 to 9 year olds	= 84 spaces
2 classes of up to 28 9 to 12 year olds	= 56 spaces
1 class of up to 28 12 to 14 year olds	= 28 spaces

During this four year period, the school's enrollment never reaches its full capacity, however note that in 2 more school years the school can anticipate needing to add a third 6 to 9 year old class and a second 9 to 12 year old class.

By tracking information on reenrollment age level by age level, along with data on mid-year admissions and withdrawal, the school can establish reasonable future projections based on past history or monitor the affect of program or policy changes on each factor as it goes along.

For example, notice that on the chart for last year's enrollment, 17 students left during the school year, which is just under a 10% turnover. This is a substantial number and could imply a potential problem that needs to be understood, or it could be a fluke.

By looking ahead, the school can project future trends more than one year in advance.

Projected Attition This Year								
	Age level	students moved up	new students	left during yr	asked to leave	entered in yr	projected attrition	projected % attrition
Toddlers								
24	2	0	24	-1		1	-4	17%
2 classes								
	3	19	14			2	-4	11%
Primary								
80	4	28	8				-4	11%
3 classes								
	5	23		-2			-4	19%
Lower elem								
48	6	17	2				-2	11%
2 classes								
	7	15	1			3	-3	16%
	8	12	1	-1			-1	8%
Upper elem								
9 to 12 yr	9	10	2	-1		1	-1	8%
27	10	9				2	-1	9%
	11	7	1				-2	25%
Middle School								
7th-8th	12	9	1				-1	10%
18	13	7					-7	100%
Totals		156	54	-5	0	9	-34	16%

Enrollment
at end of
year 214

Projected Attition						
Next Year						
students moved up	new students	left during yr	asked to leave	entered in yr	projected attrition	projected % attrition
0	24				-4	17%
20	10				-4	13%
31	3				-4	12%
32					-4	13%
17	1				-2	11%
17	1				-2	11%
16	1				-2	12%
11					-1	9%
11					-1	9%
10					-2	20%
6	2				-1	13%
9					-7	78%
180	42	0	0	0	-34	15%

Enrollment
at end of
year

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Projected Attrition Two Years From Now								
	Age level	students moved up	new students	left during yr	asked to leave	entered in yr	projected attrition	projected % attrition
Toddlers								
24	2		24				-4	9%
2 classes								
	3	20	15				-4	11%
Primary								
84	4	26	5				-4	13%
3 classes								
	5	30					-4	13%
Lower elem								
68	6	28	6				-2	6%
3 classes								
	7	16	1				-2	12%
	8	16	1				-2	12%
Upper elem								
9 to 12 yr	9	15	1				-1	6%
34	10	10	1				-1	9%
2 classes								
	11	10	1				-2	18%
Middle School								
7th-8th	12	8	2				-1	10%
21	13	7					-7	100%
Totals		186	57	0	0	0	-34	14%

Enrollment
at end of
year

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The New Gate School

Analysis of students not returning from the 1995-96 student body

Report prepared on June 20, 1996

Thirty-three students will not be returning next year. Their age/grade breakdown is as follows:

	# not returning
Two-year-olds	1
Three-year-olds	5
Four-year-olds	7
Five-year-olds	7
1st graders	2
2nd graders	3
3rd graders	1
4th graders	1
5th graders	1
6th graders	4
7th graders	1
Total not returning	33

To the best of our knowledge, these families made their decisions for the following reasons:

- We only know of one parent who is openly unhappy with New Gate. Her child is presently four-years-old. She will be transferring him to public school.
- Four students graduated from our 9-12 class.
- One family moved away from Sarasota.
- We recommended that two children transfer to special education programs.
- Nine families wanted to return, but simply could not continue to afford the tuition. If substantially more financial aid had been available.
- Nine other families decided to place their children in public schools to eliminate tuition. These families were not unhappy with their children's experience at New Gate, but simply could not justify the investment in tuition.

Analysis of students not returning from the 1995-96 student body
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- One child will be leaving us because her mom has been offered a position at the Center for Education. The family has been very happy at New Gate.
- Four children will be entering the Out-of-Door Academy.
- One family will be enrolling their child in West Florida Christian School to give him a religious education. A younger sibling will still be enrolled at New Gate.
- One older student may be leaving us to return to public school. He says that he wants a larger social group and prefers the "cool kid" culture that he has always known. He entered mid-year.

Where will the students who left New Gate be going next year?

Southside Elementary	8
Public (local school/but we aren't sure yet which one	5
Out-of-Door Academy	4
St. Stephens	2
Ashton elementary	3
Booker High School	1
Center for Education	1
West Florida Christian	1
Teddy Bear	1
Day care center	1
McClellan Park	1
Moved	1
Pineview	1
Prew	1
Sarasota Middle	1
Special Ed	1