



Ravenna + TADS

How The Children's School Built a More Connected Enrollment Experience

The small, passionate K–8 school in Oak Park, Illinois, now uses an admissions approach built for reach, connection, and simplicity.



At A Glance

School: The Children's School, Oak Park, Illinois

Grade Levels: K–8

Enrollment: 86 students

Current Platform: Ravenna Admissions with TADS integration

Key Outcomes:

- Achieved a fast, smooth mid-cycle launch of Ravenna
- Centralized admissions tracking into a single platform, replacing spreadsheets and fragmented views
- Improved the family experience through a more intuitive application process
- Expanded digital visibility to support enrollment growth and community outreach
- Streamlined operations through integrated admissions, enrollment, and tuition workflows between Ravenna and TADS
- Simplified event management to save time and reduce manual coordination



Learning That Grows Organically

At The Children's School, education rarely follows a straight line. One year, a group of fifth graders chose "bananas" as their project topic. What began as a lighthearted question grew into a deep exploration of plant biology, Chicago for field visits, and ultimately a student-led conversation about global supply chains and labor conditions. By the end, those students weren't just learning — they were advocating.

That spirit of curiosity-driven, student-centered learning defines The Children's School, a progressive, inquiry-based K-8 community in Oak Park, Illinois, where collaboration, real-world thinking, and authentic discovery shape every day.

Behind the scenes, Executive Director **Michelle Candelaria-Dunstan** wanted the school's operations to reflect the same sense of connection and intentionality that defined the student experience. As she took a closer look at the needs across the school, she recognized an opportunity to better align admissions and key systems.



A Small Team Carrying a Big Load

With **86 students and a lean staff**, The Children's School operates without a dedicated admissions team. Executive Director Michelle Candelaria-Dunstan manages all the enrollment work herself, alongside everything else that comes with leading a small independent school.

TADS had long been a dependable backbone for the school — reliably managing contracts, deposits, and admissions. As The Children's School looked ahead, Candelaria-Dunstan saw a chance to build on that foundation. Growing enrollment and reaching families beyond the immediate Oak Park area were priorities, and she wanted stronger tools to support recruitment efforts and greater visibility into each family's enrollment journey. With growth in mind, she set out to find the right fit for the school's next chapter.

"We're a small school without a full admissions team," Candelaria-Dunstan shared. "We needed something that could help us stay organized, simplify our process, and help more families find us."

Adding Ravenna

In mid-2025, Candelaria-Dunstan added Ravenna, drawn in part by its marketing and recruitment tools and the opportunity to expand the school's visibility beyond the local community. The impact was immediate. For the first time, she had a clear, centralized view of every prospective family, making it easier to track progress, stay organized, and guide applicants through the process.

At the same time, Ravenna fit seamlessly into the school's existing enrollment and re-workflows with TADS. Applicant information flowed directly into TADS, allowing Candelaria-Dunstan to continue managing enrollment deposits and tuition payment plans without additional administrative work. Together, the two systems created a more connected experience for both families and staff.



The platform is very intuitive. We've had fewer questions from families and it's easier for them to move through the process while giving me a clear view of everything in one place.

—Michelle Candelaria-Dunstan,
Executive Director; The Children's School

Even the rollout went smoothly. Despite launching in late summer, The Children's School was up and running in time to accept new applications within the same school year. For a one-person admissions operation, that kind of quick, low-friction implementation matters.

Ravenna also strengthened the school's digital presence, with the Ravenna Hub creating a more visible, accessible entry point for families who might not yet know what makes The Children's School so distinctive.

Candelaria-Dunstan also shared that she had been tracking RSVPs for monthly tours and coffee talks in separate spreadsheets, something that will now come together in one place with Ravenna Starter's built-in event management, saving time and simplifying the process.



Room to Focus on What Matters Most

The school's goals remain clear: grow thoughtfully, expand access, increase diversity, and bring this approach to learning to more families across the region.

"Our goal is to make this kind of learning more accessible," Candelaria-Dunstan said.

With the operational side of admissions running smoothly, Candelaria-Dunstan has more time to do what she does best: connecting with families, sharing the school's story, and building the kind of community where a question about bananas can spark something genuinely meaningful.

