

**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP AND STUDENTS
RETENTION: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SOCIO-SPORTIVE AND CULTURAL
PROJECT “FELIPÍADAS 2025” IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL**

**GESTÃO ESTRATÉGICA, ESCOLA-FAMÍLIA E RETENÇÃO DE ALUNOS: A
EXPERIÊNCIA DO PROJETO SÓCIO-ESPORTIVO E CULTURAL “FELIPÍADAS 2025”
EM UM COLÉGIO PRIVADO**

**GESTIÓN ESTRATÉGICA, RELACIÓN ESCUELA-FAMILIA Y RETENCIÓN
ESTUDIANTIL: LA EXPERIENCIA DEL PROYECTO SOCIODEPORTIVO Y CULTURAL
“FELIPÍADAS 2025” EN UN COLEGIO PRIVADO**



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ABSTRACT

This article presents a practice-based case study on the strategic role of the CEO in the design and implementation of a socio-sportive and cultural project, the “Felipiadas 2025”, in a Brazilian K–12 private school. Conceived by the author in 2014 and continuously developed since then, the project was strategically reconfigured in 2025 to operate as a core device for strengthening school–family partnerships, promoting student engagement and supporting student retention. Drawing on qualitative data (institutional documents, observations and internal feedback) and descriptive quantitative indicators, the study analyzes key management decisions regarding thematic design, student leadership structures, multi-stage events and family participation strategies. Results show that 86% of families attended at least one major event related to the project and that the overall reenrolment rate reached 82% for the subsequent school year, suggesting a strong level of community fidelity. These findings are discussed in light of literature on strategic educational leadership, school–family partnerships and permanence policies, indicating that long-term flagship projects, when intentionally aligned with institutional goals and led from the top, can become powerful levers for engagement and retention in basic education. The study highlights implications for school leaders who seek to position themselves as strategic CEOs in the educational field.

Keywords: Strategic Educational Management. School–Family Partnership. Student Engagement. Student Retention. Leadership.

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta um estudo de caso de natureza prática sobre o papel estratégico do CEO na concepção e implementação do projeto pedagógico socioesportivo-cultural Felipiadas 2025 em um colégio privado de educação básica. Concebido pelo autor em 2014 e desenvolvido de forma contínua desde então, o projeto foi estrategicamente reconfigurado em 2025 para operar como dispositivo central de fortalecimento da parceria escola–família, promoção do engajamento estudantil e suporte à retenção de alunos. A partir de dados

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qualitativos (documentos institucionais, observações e registros de devolutivas internas) e de indicadores quantitativos descritivos, analisam-se decisões de gestão relativas à definição do tema anual, à estruturação de lideranças estudantis, à organização de etapas sucessivas do evento e às estratégias de participação das famílias. Os resultados apontam que 86% dos responsáveis participaram de pelo menos um dos eventos principais vinculados ao projeto e que a taxa geral de renovação de matrículas alcançou 82% para o ano letivo subsequente, sugerindo elevado nível de fidelização da comunidade. Tais achados são discutidos à luz da literatura sobre liderança educacional estratégica, relação escola–família e políticas de permanência, indicando que projetos institucionais de longa duração, quando intencionalmente alinhados a objetivos organizacionais e conduzidos a partir da alta gestão, podem se constituir em potentes alavancas de engajamento e retenção na educação básica.

Palavras-chave: Gestão Escolar Estratégica. Liderança Educacional. Engajamento e Retenção. Integração Escola–Família. Relato de Experiência.

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta un estudio de caso práctico sobre el rol estratégico del CEO en la concepción e implementación del proyecto pedagógico sociodeportivo-cultural Felipíadas 2025 en una escuela privada de educación básica. Concebido por el autor en 2014 y desarrollado continuamente desde entonces, el proyecto se reconfiguró estratégicamente en 2025 para operar como un dispositivo central para fortalecer la alianza escuela-familia, promover la participación estudiantil y apoyar la retención estudiantil. Con base en datos cualitativos (documentos institucionales, observaciones y registros de retroalimentación interna) e indicadores cuantitativos descriptivos, se analizan las decisiones de gestión relacionadas con la definición del tema anual, la estructuración del liderazgo estudiantil, la organización de las sucesivas etapas del evento y las estrategias para la participación familiar. Los resultados indican que el 86% de los padres/tutores participaron en al menos uno de los principales eventos vinculados al proyecto y que la tasa general de renovación de la matrícula alcanzó el 82% para el año escolar posterior, lo que sugiere un alto nivel de lealtad comunitaria. Estos hallazgos se analizan a la luz de la literatura sobre liderazgo educativo estratégico, relaciones escuela-familia y políticas de retención, lo que indica que los proyectos institucionales a largo plazo, cuando se alinean intencionalmente con los objetivos organizacionales e impulsados por la alta dirección, pueden ser potentes palancas para la participación y la retención en la educación básica.

Palabras clave: Gestión Escolar Estratégica. Liderazgo Educativo. Participación y Retención. Integración Escuela-Familia. Informe de Experiencia.

1 INTRODUCTION

Contemporary basic education faces the permanent challenge of engaging students in a scenario marked by multiple educational offers, competition between private institutions, changes in family dynamics, and new forms of relationship with the school mediated by technologies and social networks. In this context, the permanence of the enrolled student is no longer just an automatic result of satisfaction with teaching and starts to depend on intentional strategies of belonging, engagement and qualification of the school experience, articulated by a school management guided by strategic vision, data and long-term goals.

Several studies have pointed out that school management, when organized in a strategic and participatory way, plays a central role in the articulation of pedagogical, administrative and community bond objectives, influencing both learning outcomes and retention rates. In private institutions, this strategic dimension is added to the need to differentiate themselves in a competitive market, retain families and consolidate a recognized institutional identity.

At the same time, there is a growing recognition that the relationship between school and family is one of the pillars for the construction of successful school trajectories, directly influencing engagement, performance and decision to stay. The literature shows that cooperation between these two contexts expands opportunities for academic and affective support, reducing the risk of dropping out and school failure. In the case of private schools, this partnership also takes on a brand dimension, as it impacts the institution's reputation, word-of-mouth referrals and the decision to renew enrollments.

In this scenario, the role of the school CEO as the top leader responsible for articulating pedagogical project, institutional sustainability, and student and family engagement strategies gains relevance. More than managing routines, the figure of the CEO is called upon to conceive and conduct structuring projects that express the school's identity and function as concrete devices for building bonds and loyalty.

Felipíadas is a socio-sporting-cultural pedagogical project authored by the CEO himself, implemented in 2014 at Colégio Dom Felipe and maintained uninterruptedly since then. Over the years, the project has consolidated itself as an identity mark of the institution, articulating sport, art and culture in a collective experience of great repercussion among students and families. As of 2023, and more intensively in 2025, the project began to be strategically repositioned as a structuring axis of school-family integration and student retention, with greater prominence of the CEO's management and with the definition of explicit indicators of engagement and permanence.

This article aims to present and analyze the role of the CEO of Colégio Dom Felipe in the conception and implementation of the Felipíadas 2025 project, discussing how strategic management materializes in concrete decisions that favor school-family integration, student protagonism and the permanence of students in the institution. In doing so, it seeks to show that long-term institutional projects, when re-signified from a strategic perspective, can become powerful levers of engagement and retention in basic education.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 STRATEGIC SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Contemporary school management has been understood as the ability to organize people, processes and resources around a pedagogical project that produces significant learning and sustainable institutional results. From a strategic perspective, management is no longer just administrative and starts to involve a vision of the future, reading context, data-driven decision-making, and aligning the community with a clear institutional identity.

The literature highlights that school leadership, when distributed and guided by learning and retention goals, directly influences the engagement of teachers and students, in addition to creating conditions for institutional projects to gain coherence and continuity. In private schools, the role of the maximum leader – here represented by the CEO – includes, in addition to pedagogical responsibilities, brand management, economic sustainability, and the construction of competitive differentials, requiring that decisions about projects and events are also thought of in terms of family loyalty and consolidation of institutional identity.

2.2 SCHOOL-FAMILY INTEGRATION, ENGAGEMENT AND PERMANENCE

The relationship between school and family is pointed out by the literature as a central dimension for school success, both in terms of performance and permanence. Studies indicate that parental engagement is associated with improved learning indicators, reduced absenteeism, and strengthened positive attitudes toward school. Cooperation between school and family expands the student support network, favors the monitoring of the school path and increases the probability that difficulties will be identified and faced jointly.

Brazilian authors have also highlighted that the participation of families is part of a conception of democratic and participatory management, in which the school recognizes the community as a partner in the construction of the educational project. In contexts of strong vulnerability and risk of dropout, structured partnership programs with families tend to function as a protective factor, contributing to the permanence of students and to the construction of more stable school trajectories. In private institutions, this cooperation adds value to the

school experience offered and strengthens the perception that the school takes care of the students integrally.

2.3 DROPOUT, PERMANENCE, AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

In recent decades, educational research has shifted the focus from "dropout" to "permanence", understood as the result of articulated policies of pedagogical, social and institutional support. Studies on permanence in high school and in integrated modalities show that initiatives that strengthen ties with the school, qualify the formative experience and expand opportunities for participation tend to reduce the intention to drop out.

In basic education, permanence strategies include attendance monitoring actions, pedagogical support, psychosocial follow-up, and the development of projects that value the identity and talents of students. The literature also points out that participatory management, with the involvement of different segments in decision-making, increases the effectiveness of actions aimed at confronting dropout. In this scenario, integrative projects, such as sporting, artistic, and cultural events, can be configured as retention devices by promoting belonging, recognition, and affective bonds with the school.

3 METHODOLOGY

It is a report of school management experience, with a qualitative approach based on descriptive quantitative indicators. The study is set at Colégio Dom Felipe, a private institution of basic education that serves students from Kindergarten to High School, organized in two units. The experience analyzed refers to the cycle of conception, planning and realization of Felipíadas 2025, the institution's annual socio-sporting-cultural pedagogical project.

The Felipíadas project was conceived by the CEO in 2014 and since then has been held annually. However, the analysis presented here focuses on the 2025 edition, understood as a milestone of strategic reconfiguration under his leadership as CEO. Structuring elements accumulated along the trajectory (opening ceremonies, week of games, closing) were maintained, but deliberate changes were introduced related to the strengthening of student leadership, the expansion of family participation and the systematic use of institutional indicators of engagement and renewal of enrollments.

Data sources included: institutional documents (project dossier, regulations, schedules, job descriptions, terms of commitment), records of meetings with coordinators and teaching teams, direct observations of the implementation process, and records of internal evaluation with families and students. From a quantitative point of view, two main

institutional indicators were considered: (a) engagement and participation of families in events linked to Felipíadas 2025; and (b) enrollment renewal fee for the subsequent year.

Family engagement was calculated based on the percentage of parents or guardians present at at least one of the main events (opening ceremonies, War Cry and closing ceremony), in relation to the total number of students enrolled, resulting in an overall rate of 86% of family participation. The renewal of enrollments was obtained from the number of students who enrolled for the following year, in relation to the total number of students eligible for renewal, reaching 82%.

The analysis was conducted based on three axes: (a) strategic decisions for the design of the project; (b) leadership strategies and mobilization of people (students, families, internal team); and (c) perceived institutional impacts in terms of engagement and permanence, articulating quantitative data with the literature on school management, school-family and permanence. The emphasis is on understanding how the CEO's performance materialized in concrete choices of project design, resource allocation, and process conduction.

3.1 THE STRATEGIC CONCEPTION OF FELIPÍADAS 2025

3.1.1 Long-term vision and definition of the theme

By directly assuming the conception of Felipíadas 2025, it was based on the understanding that the project should dialogue not only with the school calendar of that year, but with the medium and long-term trajectory of the institution. The intention was to reinforce the identity of Colégio Dom Felipe as a school that values bonds, memory and life project, positioning the event as an expression of this culture and as an axis of community loyalty.

In this context, the theme "Charms of Time: Memory, Presence and Future – Because to live is to celebrate each time of the heart" was defined, in dialogue with the pedagogical team. The purpose of this choice was to articulate three central dimensions: memory (history of the school, family trajectories, students' memories), presence (concrete experience lived in the here and now, especially in events) and the future (personal, academic and professional projects of the students). By connecting these dimensions, we sought to build a symbolic axis that would reinforce the idea of continuity and permanence in the institution, both for students and their families.

Based on the theme, the division into Futurize and Realize teams was organized, inviting students to reflect on the balance between dreaming and acting, designing and achieving. In this way, from the conception phase, Felipíadas 2025 was designed as a space for reflection on time, identity and life project, without losing its playful, sporting and artistic characteristic, and making explicit its strategic role in school culture.

3.1.2 Project architecture as a retention strategy

Another key strategic decision was the structuring of Felipíadas as a cycle of events distributed over a significant period of the year, in order to keep the project in evidence and sustain the emotional bond between the community and the school. Based on this vision, the project was organized in articulated stages: launch and dissemination of the theme; process of selection and training of captains; team draw; War Cry; opening ceremonies over three days (by segment); Games Week; and closing ceremony.

This architecture was designed to create multiple points of contact with students and families. By planning three distinct opening days, segmenting audiences (Early Childhood Education and Early Years; Final Years; High School), it was sought to maximize the participation of those responsible, adapting schedules and formats to the characteristics of each segment. By defining that the closing would take place in an external club, with a structure for a ceremony, parade, dance performances and announcement of the champion team, the character of a large institutional event was reinforced, capable of generating affective memories and perception of added value to the school experience.

Decisions regarding the acquisition of t-shirts, distribution of invitations and organization of tickets were made with a focus on transparency, feasibility and identity, as the adoption of the official Felipíadas 2025 t-shirts as an element of participation visually reinforced belonging to the teams and the school. These choices are in line with the understanding that structuring projects can become retention devices by strengthening bonds and creating rituals of belonging.

3.2 STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND STUDENT PROTAGONISM

3.2.1 System of captains, sub-captains and student council

One of the decisions with the greatest impact on the project's dynamics was the creation and formalization of a structured system of student leadership, composed of captains, sub-captains and participation of the student council. The design of this system was intended to expand the role of students and, at the same time, create communication channels that would bring management closer to the student base.

A process for selecting captains was established with clear and documented criteria. High school students could apply, in both units, by filling out a form with personal data and justification about the desire to assume the position. The evaluation was carried out by an internal committee, based on criteria such as responsibility, family involvement, respect for standards, school performance, positive leadership spirit, communication and participation in

school events. After the selection, 12 captains were appointed – six for each team – whose list was officially released in the launch video of Felipíadas 2025.

Then, training meetings were organized conducted by responsible teachers and the school's psychologist, in which aspects such as leadership, empathy, conflict resolution, efficient communication, relationship with parents and appropriate use of official channels were worked on. These meetings were formalized through dossiers and Terms of Commitment, giving institutionality to the function performed by the students. In structuring this system, the aim was not only to ensure an efficient organization of the Futurize and Realize teams, but also to form a network of young leaders identified with the school, capable of multiplying institutional values and mediating the participation of colleagues in the project.

3.2.2 Mobilization of the internal team and people management

The mobilization of the internal team was another central axis of the leadership exercised at Felipíadas 2025. Together with the pedagogical coordinators of the two units, the responsibilities of Physical Education teachers, coordinators, teachers of different disciplines, events team and secretariat were clearly defined. Rehearsal and meeting schedules were built, validated with the management, in order to integrate the schedules into the school routine without emptying the pedagogical character of the other subjects.

In meetings with teachers, it was emphasized that the period of preparation and realization of Felipíadas should be recognized as a legitimate formative time, linked to the motor, artistic, social and emotional development of students. Specific functions were also defined for the days of the presentations (organization of students, aisle support, support to the sound team, monitoring of parents, records) and internal communication materials were produced (posted schedules, guidelines on bulletin boards, advance notices) to align expectations and reduce operational conflicts. This performance integrates the understanding of management as the coordination of collective efforts around common goals.

3.2.3 School-family integration as the axis of the strategy

From the beginning of the conception of Felipíadas 2025, school-family integration was treated as a central axis, not just as an eventual consequence of the project. This materialized in decisions aimed at facilitating, valuing and making visible the participation of families.

On the communication level, it was ensured that information about the project, schedules, days and times of opening, War Cry, Game Week and closing were disclosed in advance and through multiple channels (circulars, digital messages, face-to-face meetings),

allowing parents and guardians to organize themselves. Transparent criteria were defined for the acquisition of T-shirts and invitations, limits on tickets per student and absence of ticket sales on the day of the event, which reduced uncertainties and encouraged planning.

In the face-to-face events, the program was designed to provide moments of strong emotional impact for families: dance performances by class, parade of categories (little prince and little princess, princess and prince, boy and girl, miss and mister), solemn entries of flags with the participation of the captains, awards and final celebration of the champion team. By involving families in the preparation of costumes, authorization for participation, organization of the children's and young people's agenda, educational co-responsibility was expanded and the perception that the school is concerned with the integral development of students was strengthened.

4 INSTITUTIONAL RESULTS AND IMPACTS

The analysis of the results of Felipíadas 2025 shows relevant impacts in three dimensions: engagement and belonging, school-family integration, and maintenance of enrollments.

4.1 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND BELONGING

Internally, there was a high level of adherence of the students to the different stages of the project: expressive applications for the functions of captain and sub-captain, intense participation in the rehearsals conducted by the Physical Education teachers, creative involvement in the War Cry and consolidated presence in the Games Week. Teachers' reports indicated an increase in the sense of belonging, especially among students in Elementary School II and High School, segments that are often more susceptible to demotivation and dropout in private contexts. For many students, Felipíadas 2025 was pointed out, in internal evaluation records, as one of the most significant moments of the school year.

These findings dialogue with studies that associate participation in integrative projects with higher levels of engagement and identification with the school, reinforcing the idea that collective experiences of high symbolic impact contribute to the permanence of students.

4.2 SCHOOL-FAMILY INTEGRATION

With regard to the involvement of families, the institutional participation indicator pointed out that approximately 86% of those responsible were present at at least one of the main events linked to Felipíadas 2025. This expressive data suggests that the strategy of

early communication, the segmentation of the opening ceremonies by segments and the symbolic structure of the closing were effective in mobilizing the community.

In subsequent meetings and in internal evaluation records, many parents or guardians reported that the project reinforced their confidence in the school, both for the organization and safety of the events and for the perception that their children had educational experiences rich in values such as cooperation, respect, empathy and overcoming. This level of family participation is consistent with the literature, which points to parental engagement as a factor associated with improved performance, reduced absenteeism and student permanence in school. It also converges with analyses that highlight the importance of institutional events as spaces for symbolic approximation between family and school, strengthening institutional identity.

4.3 MAINTAINING ENROLLMENT AND STRENGTHENING CEO AUTHORITY

In the field of permanence, the enrollment renewal rate reached 82% of students eligible for renewal in the period following Felipíadas 2025. Although other institutional factors also influence this result, the percentage obtained, articulated with the high rates of family participation, indicates a scenario of important loyalty of the school community. These data are in line with studies that associate the articulation between permanence policies, qualification of the school experience and family-school involvement with the reduction of dropout and the increase in permanence.

In addition to the numbers, institutional evaluation instruments used by the school pointed out positive perceptions of families and students in relation to the project, which was often cited as a differential of Colégio Dom Felipe in comparison with other institutions. From the point of view of leadership, the direct conduct of Felipíadas 2025 by the CEO — present at the launch, the training of captains, the opening and closing ceremonies — contributed to consolidating his image as a strategic leader and articulator of the institutional culture. This visibility, combined with the consistency between discourse and practice, strengthened trust in management and reinforced the perception that the school moves with purpose, intentionality, and commitment to the integral development of students.

Taken together, the quantitative results (86% family participation and 82% enrollment renewal) and qualitative evidence (reports of belonging, recognition of the project as a school brand, strengthening of the CEO's authority) suggest that Felipíadas 2025 has consolidated itself as a strategic management device with relevant institutional impact.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The experience of Felipíadas 2025, as conceived and implemented under the leadership of the CEO of Colégio Dom Felipe, highlights the potential of socio-sporting-cultural pedagogical projects when treated as strategic management instruments and not just as one-off events. By articulating a long-term vision, school-family integration, student protagonism and strengthening of institutional culture, the project was configured as a device for engaging and retaining students in basic education.

The results observed – increased student engagement, increased participation of families, recognition of Felipíadas as the school's identity mark and positive signs in the maintenance of enrollments – indicate that the CEO's strategic leadership, close and intentional, is decisive for initiatives of this nature to achieve relevant institutional impact. By taking over the design and coordination of the project, it was possible to align pedagogical, administrative and symbolic decisions with a common goal: to strengthen the bond between the community and the school, consolidating Colégio Dom Felipe as a space of memory, presence and project for the future.

As a result, it is considered pertinent to deepen the analysis with longitudinal quantitative data on dropout, enrollment renewal, and family satisfaction, as well as to compare this experience with similar initiatives in other institutions or education networks. Even so, the report presented here already allows us to affirm that strategic school management, exercised by the CEO in dialogue with the team and the community, can transform long-term institutional projects into powerful levers of engagement and institutional impact.

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