FRESH FROM THE FIELD · FIRST EDITION

Measured. Not surveyed.

Every industry report you've read is built on what operators *say* they do. This one is built on what **actually happened**: the anonymized, measured behavior of the IntelliKid Systems network through the first half of 2026.

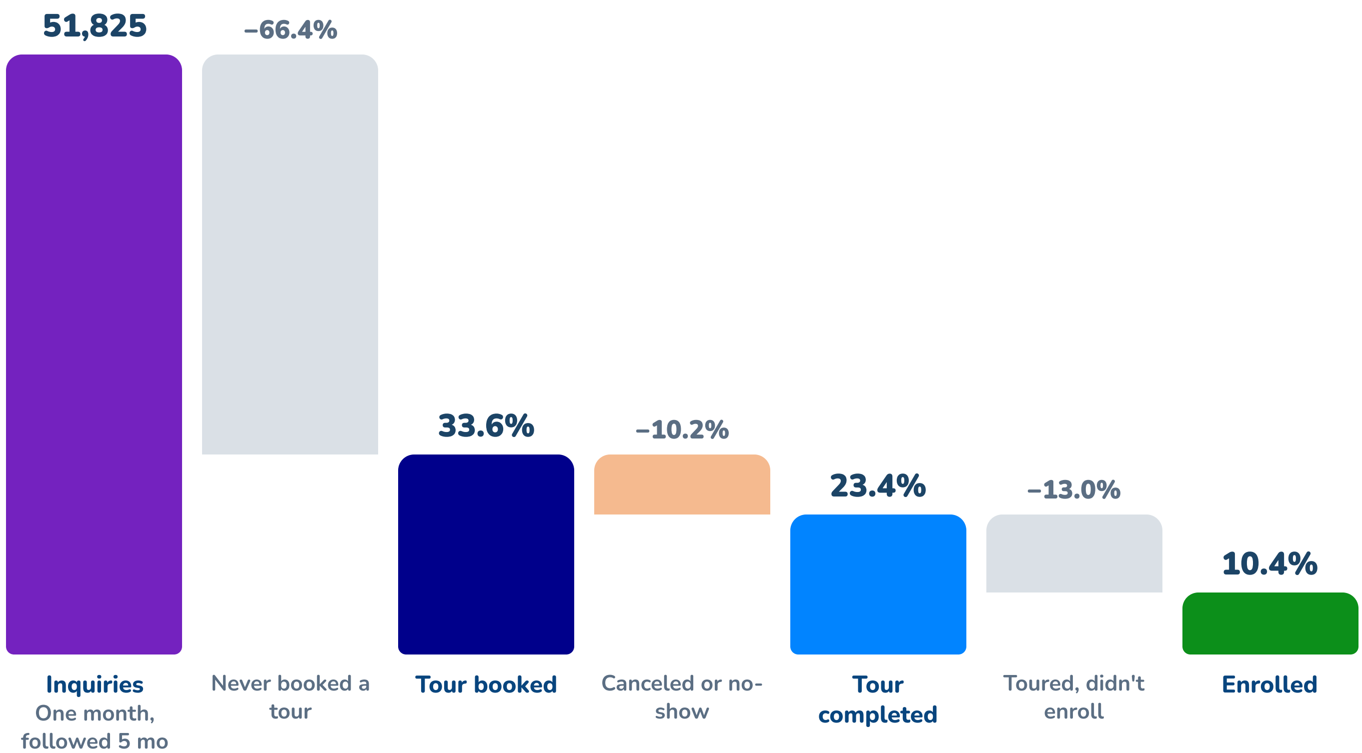
830+	~2,900	57K	355K+
SUBSCRIBED OPERATORS	PHYSICAL LOCATIONS	FAMILY INQUIRIES / MO	TRANSCRIBED CALLS, 1H 2026

No self-reporting. No survey bias. **Behavioral data, network scale.**

01 The funnel, measured

What actually converts

We took every family inquiry the network received in one month, February, removed records imported from other software, and followed all **51,825** of them for five months. Here is the funnel the average center actually runs:



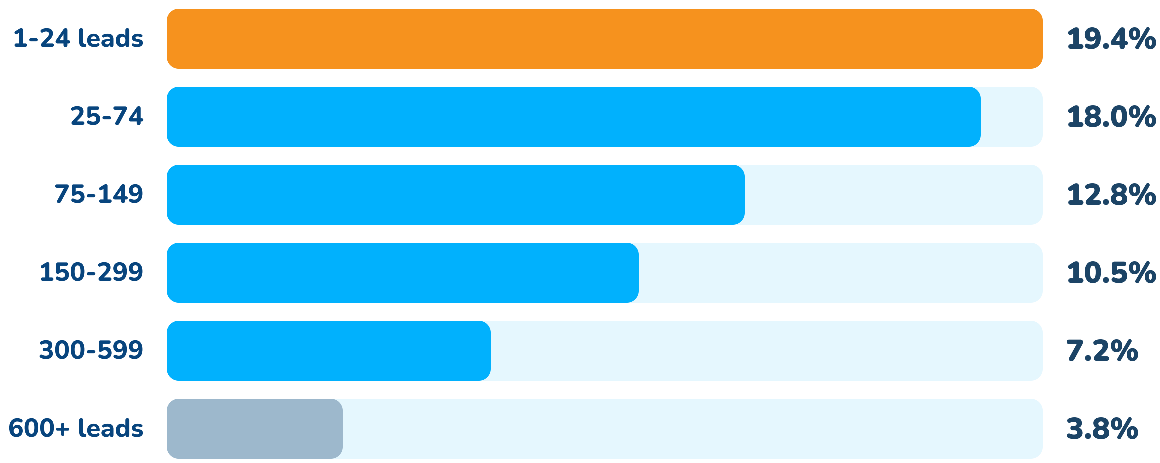
One story, four stages: two of three families never reach a tour booking; 69.3% of resolved tour bookings are completed (10.7% no-show, 20.1% canceled; 137,952 resolved 1H bookings); and just under half of completed tours become enrollments. 66% of these inquiries received at least one human touch. Enrollment = status reaching Customer, confirmed against 10-month-matured groups (10.9%), so read it as "at least 1 in 10." Staff status-marking lag undercounts; it never overcounts.

Benchmark yourself: if you can't produce these five numbers for your own center by location and month, that's finding #1.

02 The volume trap

More leads, worth less each

Digital marketing solved lead volume, and created a new problem. Across the 2,224 locations that logged at least one inquiry over a six-month stretch (July-December 2025, followed to outcome), conversion falls relentlessly as volume rises:



A location's first fifty inquiries convert at ~18-19%.

The marginal inquiry beyond three hundred converts at roughly **a fifth** of that. Enrollments still grow with volume, but the returns collapse. Volume is no longer the constraint in this industry.

At the top, centers stop working leads.

In the 600+ segment, fewer than one lead in three ever gets a human touch, by far the lowest share of any group, and the leads that are worked get the shallowest treatment. The biggest pipelines get the least attention per family, and the 6x curve (Section 04) says exactly what that costs.

Two forces, both real: lead quality dilutes as volume grows (follow-up effort held steady in the mid-buckets while conversion halved), and above ~600 inquiries working capacity

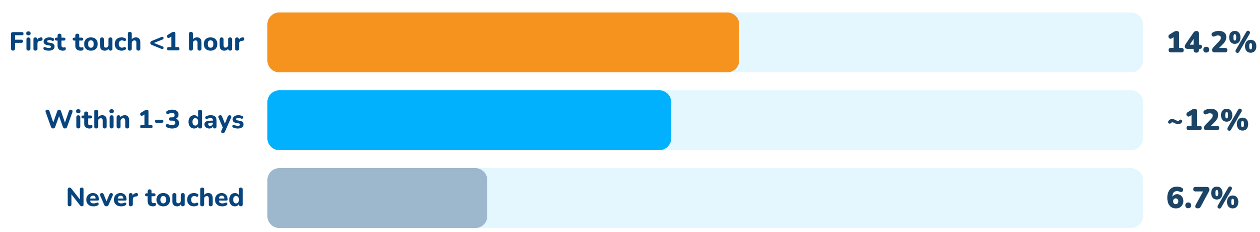
saturates outright. The winning question for 2026 is not "how do we get more leads?" It is "how do we work the ones we have?"

Robustness check: could this just be full schools ignoring leads? No. Waitlist placements FALL as volume rises (3.9% of leads at low-volume locations vs 1.5% at 600+), and counting waitlist as a win alongside enrollment shows the same collapse (23.3% down to 5.2%). Fullness doesn't explain the volume trap.

03 Silence is the killer, speed is the edge

First-response truth

2.1x **Leads touched within the first hour convert at 2.1x the rate of leads no human ever touches (worked leads overall: 1.8x).**



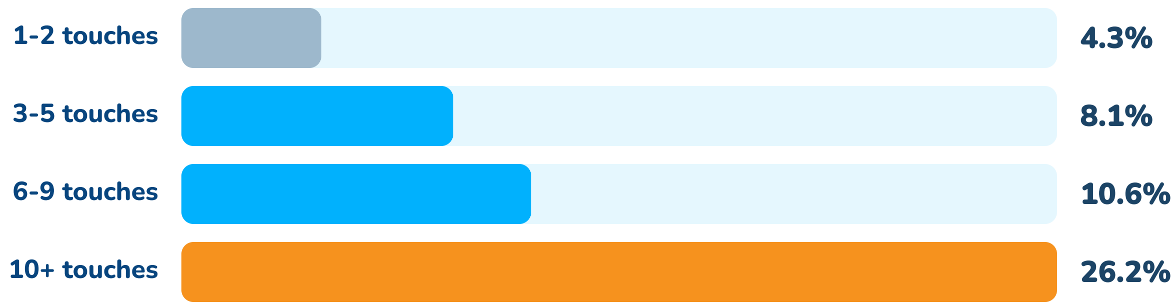
The industry sells "speed-to-lead" hard. Our measured data says speed helps: responding within the first hour carries a ~20% relative lift. But the far bigger leak is the lead nobody follows up with at all. **A third of all network inquiries never receive a single human touch.**

First manual touch = first staff SMS, direct email, or completed follow-up task. Automated workflow messages excluded (they respond instantly for everyone).

04 The 6x curve

Persistence, quantified

The single strongest pattern in the entire dataset. Same February group as Section 01, enrollment rate by how many times a human touched the lead:



"One touch and done" is the industry's most expensive habit.

30% of all network leads get exactly 1-2 touches. It is the single most common treatment on the network, and the worst-performing one. Families who received 10+ touches enrolled at **6x** the rate. Follow-up depth is the most controllable lever in enrollment, and most centers stop at the moment it starts working.

Association, not proven causation: engaged families also attract more follow-up. But the gradient is monotonic, large, and survives source-quality controls.

05

What 355,000 phone calls told us

Only measurable here

Every industry report guesses what parents want. Call AI reports the truth.

11.1% **of family-facing calls raise teachers, ratios, or staffing, more than raise price (8.0%).**

From June 2026, the most recent complete month: 72,316 calls received an AI summary, and we counted which topics each touched.

~30% **of qualified inquiry calls include an actual ask for the tour.**

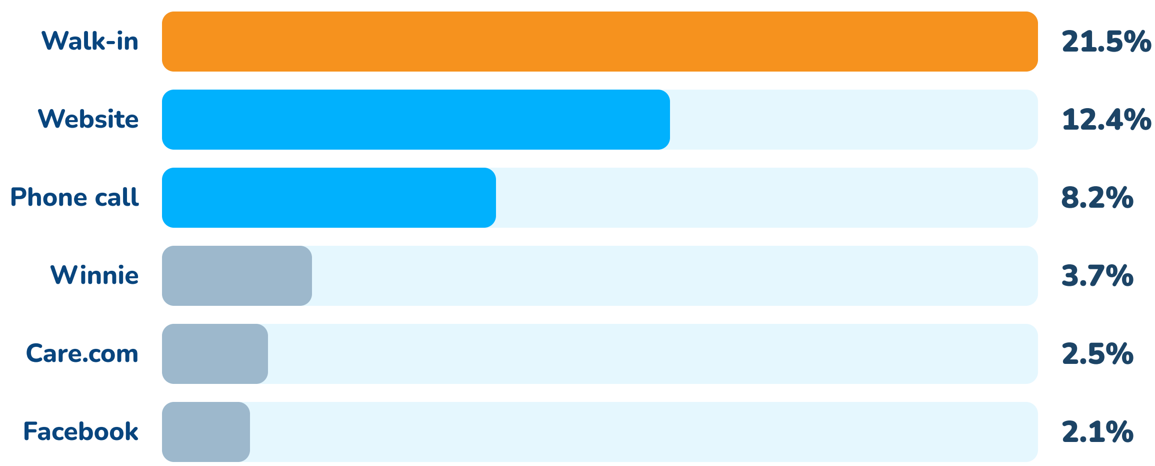
From playbook-scored call samples. When staff do ask directly, booking happens on the call at several times the drift-rate of "call us back if you'd like to tour." The cheapest conversion lever in this report.

Only ~1 in 5 inbound calls is enrollment-intent, the rest is vendors, voicemail, and administrative noise burying the calls that pay tuition.

06 Source truth

Where enrollments actually come from

Measured lead-to-enrollment conversion by source, not click-through, not cost-per-lead. Enrollment. Six months of inquiries (July-December 2025), followed to outcome:



The phone is winning, not dying.

Phone is the #1 inquiry channel, logging 162,432 leads in 1H (78% more than website), and it grew **+14.5% year over year**. Your front desk is your funnel.

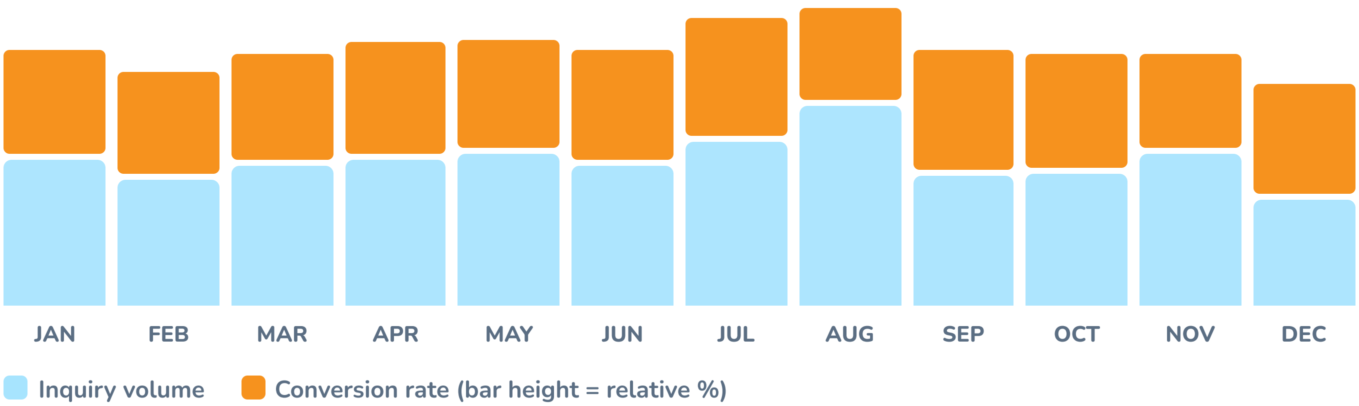
Your lead count is lying to you.

674,093 raw records entered network lead lists in 1H. **47.6%** were deleted as junk, spam, or duplicates, which is why we quote ~57K real inquiries a month, and why conversion math on unscrubbed lead counts understates true conversion by roughly half.

07 The August trap

Seasonality, 2025 full year

August delivers the year's most inquiries, and its worst close rate.



August 2025: 71,032 inquiries closed at 8.4%, while September's closed at 10.9%, a 30% relative gap at the exact moment volume peaks and staff are busiest. The biggest pile of leads gets the worst treatment every year.

And it is not the tours that break.

Tour show-rates hold steady all year, 69-71% every single month, and August is actually the year's **peak tour-booking month** (23,316 booked). The August collapse happens before the tour: the bigger the pile, the smaller the share of families who ever get worked far enough to book one. Fix the working of the pile, and August becomes your best month instead of your most wasteful.

08 Staffing is an enrollment problem

The two crises are one

Parents raise teachers and ratios on calls more often than they raise price (Section 05). The industry's own survey data agrees from the other side: when under-enrolled providers are asked why, only 12% cite lack of demand; 89% cite staffing.[†] Centers with vacancies report turning families away. Empty rooms next to waitlists.

The operational spread is the opportunity.

Real center financials (nonprofit filings, sale listings, franchise disclosures) show average centers running 1-5% margins while well-run centers clear far more. Conservatively, **8-12% of revenue** sits in the gap between average and well-run operations. Follow-up depth, tour show-rates, capacity discipline, and staffing coverage are where it hides.

09

Where do you stand?

The top-quartile profile

From everything measured above, the profile of the network's winning centers:

- **3.0+** human touches per worked lead, and no lead left at one or two
- **<1 hr** first human response to new inquiries
- **Every call** a direct tour ask on every qualified inquiry, "what time works this week?"
- **No-show recovery** tour no-shows measured and recovered, not shrugged off
- **Source math** marketing dollars judged on enrollments, not lead counts
- **Spring mindset** pipeline built before the August pile-up, then out-working it when it comes