UNDER PRESSURE

THE PLAYBOOK FOR

ENROLLMENT GROWTH

- IN -

UNCERTAIN TIMES

SchoolAdmin

Experts We Feature

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A diamond is a chunk of coal that did well under pressure.

- HENRY KISSINGER

If you're worried about hitting your goals for the coming admission season — like meeting enrollment numbers, increasing diversity within your student population, or boosting the number of full-pay families — then you're not alone. From admissions departments to enrollment teams, the school business office to the boardroom, nearly everyone in the private and independent K-12 educational world is losing sleep over the same concerns.

Some causes are beyond your control. The Coronavius, of course, impacted us all fast and furiously, flipping our way of life—and way of work—upside down. A recent explosion in the number of charter schools inevitably means more competition for non-public schools. Furthermore, millennials are less financially secure than previous generations[1]—mostly due to record-high levels of student debt—and the birth rate has dropped to the lowest number in more than three decades[2].

Couple all of this with fewer children being born and the tightest household budgets in decades, and suddenly we're facing a drastically smaller population of prospective students for your school to win over. Suffice it to say, today's private and independent schools are operating in an ultra-competitive and extremely uncertain environment.

Despite the mounting pressure, there's an issue you have the power to resolve.

Students' (and their parents') expectations have shifted, and traditional means of communication and interacting are no longer sufficient. Few schools are successfully building and maintaining authentic relationships with students and parents amid this ever-transforming digital and educational landscape—but those that do are seeing significant improvements in their enrollment numbers despite today's challenges.
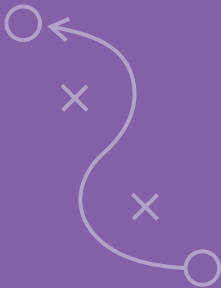
In this handbook, we're taking a look at how some of the top K-12 schools are meeting (and exceeding) their goals through the six elements of successful enrollment management maturity: people, process, culture, strategy, budget, and technology. We're sharing insights from K-12 leaders, along with several tips and examples to help you overcome your enrollment gaps, using the pressure we face today to turn coal into diamonds.

1 https://www.cbsnews.com/news/millennials-are-much-poorer-than-their-parents-data-show/
2 https://www.businessinsider.com/us-birthrate-decline-millennials-delay-having-kids-2019-5

STRATEGY

"We've worked to streamline our process so you can access the checklist and do much of it online without having to call our office — while still keeping our personalized approach. We call every single family after an application is submitted. We married the use of data — the use of a great database, to keep things organized — with a personal connection, so the family feels known."

Kieffer Williams
Director of Admission, Graland Country Day School

"The current state of the world—with all of the uncertainty and tension introduced by COVID-19— is serving as a lesson or, at the very least, a reminder to independent schools that yielding efforts do not start after you accept a student. Instead, yield efforts should start the moment a family begins engaging with your school. That first interaction might be visiting your website, meeting an admission officer at a fair, calling or emailing your office, or even meeting a current family or employee of your school in the supermarket.

It's important that our schools not only define their value propositions, but also articulate it well across all of these channels and platforms in a way that helps families understand what's in it for them at every touchpoint in the process."

Rohan M. Arjun
Director of Admission, George School
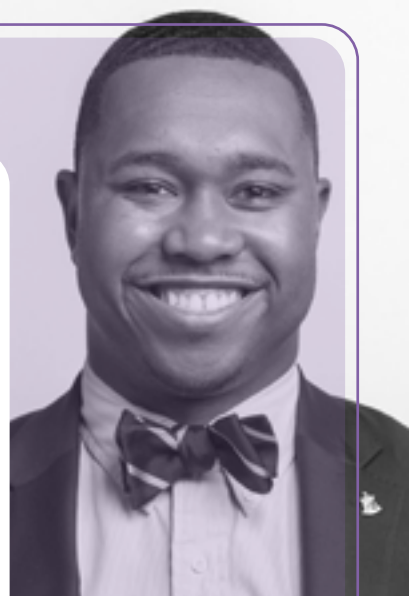
Achieving enrollment goals and presenting prospective students and families with a cohesive experience often means orchestrating several moving parts behind-the-scenes.

Every element of your school, from your staff to your messaging, your programs to your technology, reflects your institution's brand — and it's critical everything is well-aligned. Providing a memorable experience will help you stand out from the competition.

Building a powerful strategy requires time and legwork, but the results will be well worth the resources you expend.

Here are six elements successful private and independent schools include in their strategies:

1. Personalization

Today's consumers are accustomed to receiving highly tailored messages, and parents evaluating schools are no different. The communications you send should be individualized and relevant to each prospective student's needs and interests.

Start by developing personas based on your current student population. This way, you can customize messaging even before you begin amassing data on specific families. Then, as you learn more about each individual student, you can enhance your personalization efforts.

2. Touchpoints

What does your student journey look like? Take time to map it out to ensure you're connecting with prospects at each of the most critical stops along their path — from the moment they first engage through retention. Over time, as you collect and analyze data, it will become easier to identify crucial points within the student journey.

Be sure to experiment with different messaging and approaches, record your success, and use those findings to optimize your efforts and further boost your conversion rates.

3. **Branding**

How do prospective students and their parents see your school? Your brand is about more than your school's crest and colors — it's the tone and voice you use in your communications, the vibe on your campus, and the attitudes and behaviors of your faculty and students.

Before you can align your branding, you first need to define it. Determine precisely how you want prospects to feel after engaging with your school, then prepare brand guidelines to ensure all departments work together to deliver a consistent experience.

4. **Value Proposition**

Your institution's value proposition is a statement that summarizes the benefits you provide your students and their families. It should be a simple but powerful message that helps prospects understand why they should choose your school over other options.

5. **Communication Plans**

How do you keep prospects engaged after they've interacted with your school? What are you doing to ensure you're retaining existing students? If you're not regularly sending personalized, relevant messaging, your students and their families may begin looking elsewhere. A thorough lead nurturing process is essential to bolstering enrollment.

Of course, keeping in touch with each prospect or existing student individually can be challenging — especially when you and your staff are already strapped for time. That's why it's important you're able to automate these activities in a personalized way using software that helps scale your efforts.

6. **Ambassador Programs**

You and your staff can spend hours lauding your school, and it's many benefits and advantages, but hearing your students' perspectives will always weigh heavier on prospective students' and their parents' decision.

Developing an ambassador program will help you build trust and foster relationships between peers while also providing leadership opportunities for extraordinary students. Best of all, it will allow prospects a genuine glimpse into what life is like at your school.

"At the end of the 8th grade shadow day, our visitors will leave with their parents. Inevitably the parent asks, "How was your day?" and, in typical teenage fashion, the answer is usually 'fine.' It's really hard as a parent to decide to make a $60,000 investment based on the word 'fine.'

To combat this dilemma, I offer an optional parent wrap-up meeting to walk prospective parents through the shadow day experience and give them talking points to engage their child in meaningful conversations about their experience. I arm them with pointed questions like, 'How did the teachers teach?' 'How is technology utilized?' 'How did the students and teachers interact?' 'Did the students seem happy?'

I believe, at the end of the day, algebra is algebra, no matter where you take it. However, it's the environment in which your child takes their classes that makes such an impact. Selecting a high school can't be approached with a one-size-fits-all mentality. There is no formula in finding the best school, but I really encourage families to be good consumers of private education."

"We've really branded and personalized our acceptance experience. We hand deliver celebration boxes to all of our new admits with their first Nerinx Hall t-shirt, confetti cannon for a social media component, and spirit thunder sticks. The boxes are delivered on a Friday morning, and Friday night we host a "You Got In" party where all of the girls come together for the first time as the class of 2024. This year 85% of our accepted students and families attended. That bodes well for retention."

Monica Sullivan
Director of Admission, Nerinx Hall

"One of the ways our team focuses on touchpoints is something we call the 'Daily Ten.' Every day, we pull a list of prospective students who are active inquiries. Then, we divide the list up among the admissions team, with each member taking ten prospective students to personally call or text. We've seen a big impact from this concerted effort to make frequent, personal contact with the families interested in our school."

Rudi Gesch
Director of Marketing & Enrollment Management,
Eastern Christian School

"There's a lot of fear in a declining enrollment situation or a school that's not meeting budget goals, and I often find those schools are in reaction mode. It's important to take a step back and evaluate each of the inputs impacting enrollment, rather than assuming we need more people at the top of our funnel to solve our problems.

Schools that want or need to grow may need to tweak not only various aspects of their enrollment management strategy and implementation, but to look critically at their program, their school culture, and consider various forces outside their control.

Having reliable data is key to this process. The first step is to use existing data, such as gut instincts and anecdote, to start to thread a story, and build off that. Look at parent satisfaction surveys. When you overlay external market forces like the competitive landscape and demographic patterns, the full story becomes more clear. By pooling the data together and understanding the details of where you are, you can better determine what your path looks like moving forward.

Going to your Head of School or supervisor armed with data is one of the most effective ways to start to affect change across departments of your school in support of enrollment efforts."

Dana Nelson-Isaacs
Founder and President, DNI Consulting

PEOPLE

"I could not do anything I do without a president and principal who support and trust me. I'm allowed to explore new ideas and pivot when the market determines I need to. Sometimes the admissions office stands as an island all by itself, with very little support. But here, admissions is part of a team. I work closely with our communications department, and I'm blessed to have such amazing buy-in from school leadership. That relationship is one I have cultivated over the past five years."

Monica Sullivan
Director of Admissions, Nerinx Hall

Putting the Right People in the Right Places

Hiring and structuring staff is rarely a simple endeavor. Not only do you need to find people who fit within your school's culture and are committed to helping students succeed, but today, you also need to choose professionals with the right combination of technical skills, too.

The technology you choose will fuel your communication strategy, but even the most powerful software in the world is useless if your staff lacks the skills to manage it. In other words, the tools you invest in are only as capable as the people you employ.

When it comes to choosing team members and structuring admissions and enrollment departments, the K-12 schools that consistently hit their goals have five things in common:

1. **A dedicated admissions and enrollment staff**

    A full-time staff performs best when each member has their own specialization (such as a database administrator, retention manager, and more). It's also essential they're highly capable of collaborating with other teams across the institution and keep everyone abreast of admissions and enrollment activities.

2. **A multi-person admissions marketing team**

   Admissions marketing professionals should spend their time managing personalized marketing campaigns to engage prospective students through digital and in-person efforts, planning and hosting events, and guiding students' families down the admissions funnel.

3. **Amplify impact with Ambassadors**

   You and your staff can spend hours lauding your school, and it's many benefits and advantages, but hearing your students' and faculty members' perspectives will always weigh heavier on prospective students' and their parents' decision.

   Developing an ambassador program will help you build trust and foster relationships between peers while also providing leadership opportunities for extraordinary students. Best of all, it will allow prospects a genuine glimpse into what life is like at your school.

4. **Professional development opportunities and budget**

   Because the landscape is changing so quickly, your staff must be prepared for any new trends and challenges. Career development programs ensure admissions and enrollment teams have clearly defined paths, understand how and when they can advance, and receive regular performance evaluations.

   And a separate, annually renewed budget dedicated to professional development efforts makes sure staff always have the resources available to get the education and training they need.

5. **Formalized retention committee**

   As part of a school's admissions and enrollment efforts, forming a cross-functional committee that specializes in retention efforts will ensure no one slips through the cracks. This team, which should involve staff and faculty from across your school, would monitor for signs a family may leave, and can work proactively to reduce the risk with targeted, personalized communication efforts.

Because it's rare to find someone who checks all the boxes, it's a good idea to put staff members in specialized positions, encourage open collaboration, and provide the support they need to level up their skill sets. By empowering your team, you can drive continued success and innovation.
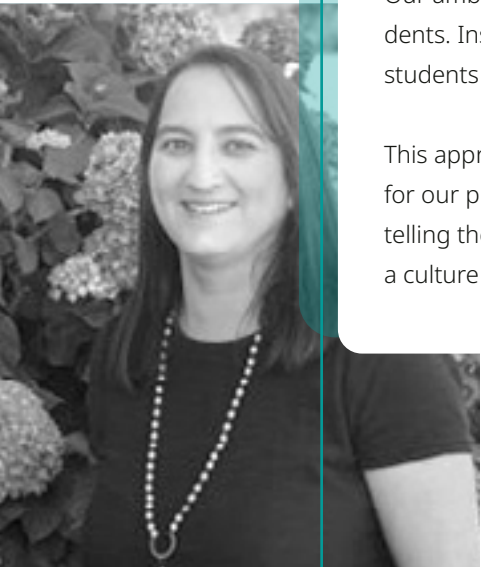
Jill Goodman
Founder, Jill Goodman Consulting

"At Gilman School in Baltimore, the advancement director made a strategic decision. She opted to move the director of parent engagement out of the development office and into the admissions office, which had a twofold impact.

First, it helped them quickly and appropriately respond to enrolled parents' questions and needs for communication, and provide a sense of community. Second, the director of parent engagement now liaises and supports the parent association, parent affinity groups, and is responsible for activities and events that promote community across all divisions, resulting in a more equitable and inclusive parent population.

By intentionally attending to the experience of parents, school leaders can create a continual feedback loop that will drive both positive culture and word-of-mouth."

"In the past, there was an application process to be a Dragon Ambassador, and I struggled with that. I wanted to be careful with who was representing our school and the ambassador title, but, at the same time, I wanted a strong number of students involved. I decided to do away with the application.

Our ambassadors are not all the same. They're not just our top academic students. Instead, they are a cross-section of the entire student body. We welcome students with all kinds of experiences and personalities.

This approach has been transformative for the campus culture itself, not just for our prospective student experience. When a hundred ambassadors are telling their own story, it engages them more within the community. It's created a culture of positivity and a willingness in students to truly engage."

Moiré M Bruin
Associate Director of Admissions,
Bishop O'Dowd High School

PROCESS

Kerryn Pincus Gallagher
Director of Enrollment Management, Bishop O'Dowd

"We've designed our inquiry form to capture information that allows us to understand who our students are so that we can personalize their process not only through the application process and final enrollment process.

This means we can start communicating with them and build a really strong customer service program, and also have multiple personalized touch points in a really effective and efficient way.

We are at absolute, complete capacity at this point, and every day we get phone calls from families that want to be here."

Like you, your prospective students' families are busy. They're balancing work and home life, rushing their kids to extracurricular activities, and striving to keep up with an ever-growing list of obligations. The last thing they want (or need) is an unnecessarily complex admissions process.

The easier you make prospects' lives, the better the impression you'll leave.

When evaluating schools, parents consider the medium and methods you use to connect. The process you leverage for recruitment and admissions represents your school, and, for students' families, it offers a glimpse into how you'll communicate if and when they decide to send their child to your school.

A complicated or outdated process can make your school appear disorganized and antiquated, unprepared for a generation of tech-savvy parents, and even savvier students. On the flip side, a straightforward and modernized process demonstrates efficiency and trustworthiness.

Here are six hallmarks of high-performing admissions and enrollment processes:

1. **Scalability**

   Your process should be designed to grow and evolve with your school and your students' needs. To ensure it's sustainable, you'll also need to optimize and refine your efforts continually.

2. **Personalized**

   Your prospective families have lots of options when it comes to choosing a private school. Your process should be designed to make them feel like VIPs every step of the way to help make their decision to enroll as easy as can be.

3. **Automation**

   Automating tedious and time-consuming manual and administrative processes frees up more time to focus on building relationships. (And scalability is rarely possible without automation.)

4. Data-driven decisions

How do you decide who to target with recruitment campaigns or what sorts of messaging will resonate with prospective students and their families? Where in your admissions process do prospects exit the journey, and what warning signs indicate a family may leave the school? Collecting and interpreting data is essential to answering these questions, and helps you continue optimizing your processes.

5. Frictionless

The families applying to your school are busy. What can you do to make the process as smooth, organized, and as easy as possible for them? We, of course, aren't suggesting you lower your rigorous standards for admission. Rather, we mean the actual steps and logistics of your process should be user-friendly and straightforward.

6. Retention-Focused

Your efforts should never stop with enrollment. Dedicating time and resources to retaining your students with targeted campaigns is essential to long-term success. Ensure your process considers the full student cycle, from recruitment through matriculation.

Remember: Your process should facilitate one-to-one connections, not replace them. It's essential you develop every aspect of your admissions and enrollment efforts with your prospective students and their families in mind.

"We've been working really hard on utilizing data to make more strategic decisions. We track historical data to narrow down who our families are, where they come from, and the factors that drive them to apply to our school.

We use this data strategically to determine how we can best connect with our families, and we built a system around our admission process that's streamlined and personalized to families' interests and needs."

Dalia Quezada,
Admissions Coordinator, Graland Country Day School

Kieffer Williams
Director of Admission, Graland Country Day School

"The number one piece of feedback we hear from parents about the Graland admission process, compared to the other schools here in Denver, is how incredibly organized and streamlined it is. Having a great database like SchoolAdmin really helps. The process can feel intimidating and overwhelming, and we were intentional about making it as easy as possible."

"A big key to enrollment success, especially in an oversaturated market like ours, is differentiating the school experience. One of the ways we do that here at Nerinx Hall is by beginning the student recruitment process early with unique programming at each level. We're a traditional 9 through 12 high school and I start recruitment programming in the third grade. I segment it by groups with different experiences available at each segment The three segments are: 3rd through 6th grade, 7th grade, and then 8th grade. We strategically approach each stage differently to move them through a funnel experientially to get them to the application. Providing unique experiences to interact with our school at each segment results in a higher frequency of interactions. Those interactions typically are a good indication of your applicant pool."
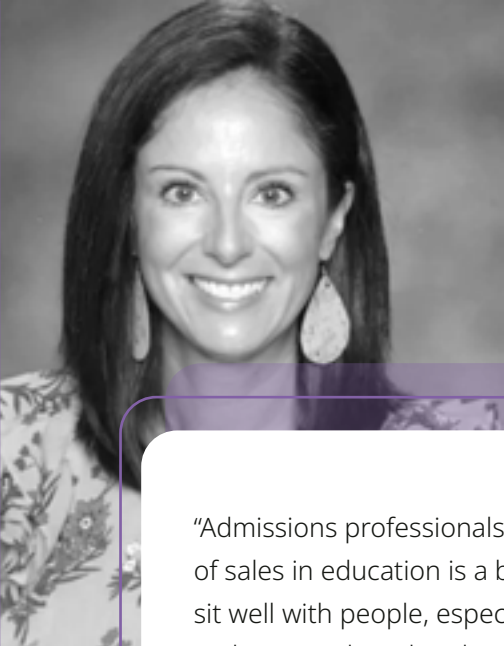
Monica Sullivan
Director of Admission, Nerinx Hall
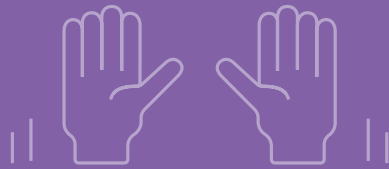
CULTURE

"Admissions professionals can't be afraid to sell. I think the idea of sales in education is a bit taboo, and sometimes it doesn't sit well with people, especially your faculty. But the more I embrace and read and research sales tactics, the more I see a return on that information.

I worked with my Student Ambassadors this summer, focusing on the concept of selling and closing deals. We looked at the Disney customer experience text 'Be Our Guest.' I encouraged them to look at how we can improve our own guest experiences on campus."

Monica Sullivan
Director of Admission, Nerinx Hall

Your institution's culture has a significant impact on your ability to attract, enroll, and retain your students.

Schools whose staff work together as one united team are often much more successful in hitting their enrollment goals each year than those whose departments work within silos. For your strategic enrollment management efforts to bear fruit, you need to ensure all teams are on board and prepared to do their part. Cross-departmental collaboration should be a core tenet of your culture.

As you focus on evolving your institution's culture, keep these four things in mind:

1. **Fight for a seat at the table**

    Admissions and enrollment pros are the unsung heroes of education. You and your team work hard behind-the-scenes, managing the admissions funnel, cultivating relationships with prospective students and their families, hosting campus visits, assisting parents through the application process, and much more.

    But while admissions and enrollment professionals' efforts are critical, they're rarely involved in boardroom conversations. To advance your enrollment management strategy, you must make your voice heard.

2. **Lead with data, not gut instinct**

    Honing your intuition and listening to your gut is crucial to decision-making in the educational world, but it's not enough. It's essential you also use hard numbers to back up your choices, and encourage your team to do the same.

    By fostering a culture where decisions are rooted in data (rather than merely experience or broad assumptions), you can avoid uncomfortable mistakes and finger-pointing.

3. **Remember sales isn't a dirty word**

    In the world of private and independent schools, the term "sales" evokes feelings of discomfort and apprehension. No one wants to think of themselves as pushing a product, but, often, that's precisely what admissions professionals are doing. It's your job to "pitch" your institution, including its values, mission, and culture, and explain why your school is the best fit for prospective students.

    Leveraging sales strategies, like researching your target audience, developing a consistent message, and using rapport to establish relationships, can help boost your enrollment numbers and strengthen retention.

4. **Willingness to embrace change**

    Now more than ever, it's obvious that our world is in a constant state of flux. Creating a culture that embraces change, rather than fights it, will have a huge impact on your school's ability to adapt to the changing times. Get your teams comfortable with the idea of continuous optimization and rapid iteration so you're able to quickly seize any opportunity that comes along.

    Change is inevitable. The organizations that fail to embrace it and adapt to shifting expectations, evolving technology, and developing trends will eventually be left behind.

Kieffer Williams
Director of Admission, Graland Country Day School

"We do a short 'start of the year presentation' for our board of directors in the fall, and a much bigger presentation summing up the admission season in the spring. That's our moment to highlight all the incredible work by our team and community and celebrate the parents and board members who helped spread the word about Graland. We also highlight our retention and attrition numbers and broader industry trends.

While we focus on keeping our presentations for the board high-level, it's a great opportunity for them to ask questions and get updated on the health and the wellness of the school and admissions process."

"If you don't have data, then you're just going to be stumbling around and working off gut instinct. You need to be able to prove it.

Every year we analyze things, like: Where are our inquiries coming from? Where do we see growth? What's the five-year pattern? What's the three-year pattern? Do we see a spike in a particular area of the country? Do we see more applications from a particular country? What are our main referral sources — word-of-mouth or print advertising or social media?

From there, we dig in and adjust our efforts as needed. We proactively investigate before we lose traction or so that we can gain momentum in that area. We also combine our internal data with trends that we're seeing through NAIS, TABS, and other professional resources to identify where we are in relation to the larger independent school world."

Kim Major
Senior Associate Director of Admission,
Operations, George School

BUDGET

"While not a panacea, I know of nothing else that can improve a school's enrollment and financial health quicker than switching to a strategy that focuses on net tuition revenue.

Although net tuition revenue models have many nuances, one simple model operates on the premise that, under certain circumstances, even after you've allocated all budgeted financial aid, it's smart for schools to fill spaces (that would otherwise go unused) with students who can pay only part of the tuition.

At its most basic level, a net tuition revenue model is simply extending the discount given to students beyond the traditional financial aid budget. There is nothing sleazy or mysterious about this; it just makes good business sense. Your school enrolls more mission-appropriate students and receives more money, and more students who have financial need receive a great education at your school."

Drew Miller
Director of Admission,
Cranbrook Schools

Many Millennial parents are so mired in student debt that, even when they're pulling in an above-average household income, they still lack the spending power of the generations that preceded them. Traditional financial aid models rarely account for this common scenario, which means an independent school education is often out of reach.

Even for families not bogged down by student loans, the unprecedented uncertainty of today's environment could very likely come into play due to the far-reaching impacts of COVID-19. This has only served to compound the financial hardships facing many of the families that we serve.

While you can't change current economic conditions in your favor, you can shift your financial aid processes in a way that's beneficial to both your school as well as the students and families you serve.

Here are two financial aid options to consider:

Move to a net tuition revenue model

Today's consumers are accustomed to receiving highly tailored messages, and parents evaluating schools are no different. The communications you send should be individualized and relevant to each prospective student's needs and interests.

Start by developing personas based on your current student population. This way, you can customize messaging even before you begin amassing data on specific families. Then, as you learn more about each individual student, you can enhance your personalization efforts.

Update your financial aid calculations

What does your student journey look like? Take time to map it out to ensure you're connecting with prospects at each of the most critical stops along their path — from the moment they first engage through retention. Over time, as you collect and analyze data, it will become easier to identify crucial points within the student journey.

Be sure to experiment with different messaging and approaches, record your success, and use those findings to optimize your efforts and further boost your conversion rates.

"Many of today's families have high income but not a high net worth. The financial aid systems used by independent schools' are not built to address families that have high credit card or student loan debt. So, when they calculate a family's capacity to pay, they're not accommodating for bills. The mathematical equation built 50 years ago is no longer reflective of the families that we serve.

There are two financial aid protocols schools can implement today to better serve the modern family.

For families with significant student debt, I calculate the rough annual cost and remove that amount out of the equation — which is far more aligned with a family's ability to pay.

The second protocol is related to the weighting of assets. The financial aid systems independent schools use often treats home equity like cash. The calculation they come up with is called an income supplement and was designed many years ago when home values didn't appreciate at the rate they do today. With this in mind, I recommend capping home equity at a reasonable dollar amount.

Implement these changes to your financial aid allocation process slowly over a couple years. It will impact your budget, so, initially, you'll feel the pinch of it. But you're more apt to have longer-term growth by meeting the modern family's needs."

Alisa Evans
Managing Partner,
Mission Enrollment Strategy Solutions

TECHNOLOGY

"Technology can be a great enabler of enrollment growth, but any migration to a new platform requires significant effort and training. You should walk before you run, especially when you're managing multiple schools as within a diocese. This allows you to understand implementation challenges and the level of training you need to utilize the new platform effectively.

There's no such thing as 'enough training' because you don't want to buy a Cadillac and drive it like a Chevy. Make sure that you're leveraging the features and functions in the application that best improve your odds of success. Don't buy an application that's bigger than what you need. Use the basics and then build upon the foundation."

Jim Sellinger
Chancellor of Education,
Archdiocese of Baltimore

The above five elements — people, process, culture, strategy, and budget — are each vital to your success in enrollment management growth. But it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to achieve success in any of these areas without the appropriate technology.

To survive in this modern and continuously changing environment, private and independent schools must be agile, flexible, and prepared to shift in response to market trends. **Without the right tech tools in place, a school is a slow-moving ship, too weighed down with archaic processes and administrative minutiae to appeal to prospects and outpace competitors.**

But with so many options available, it can be challenging to determine which software is a worthwhile investment. Plus, nearly any product you choose will require an onboarding period, plus training staff on how to make the most of the product — which often drives schools to push off the purchase. **But the longer you wait, the further behind you'll become.**

Adopting user-friendly technology, like an enrollment management system with an integrated admissions CRM, marketing automation, and tuition management capabilities will help you eliminate many of the time and labor-intensive duties burdening you and your staff.

For example, imagine how much time you could add back into your day if you could automate most of your administrative and manual tasks. (Like sending personalized communications and automated application checklist reminders, sending out and collecting registration forms, organizing paperwork and routing files, scheduling appointments, and tracking down late tuition payments.) And consider how powerful your school would be if you could base all your decisions on easy-to-locate, concrete data.

 As you compare admissions and enrollment management software, be sure to look for the following features and benefits:

- **Mobile-friendly applications**

  The average US smartphone user spends more than three hours on their phone each day[3]. From checking their bank account balance to socializing with friends, prospects' parents are accustomed to performing all sorts of transactional and communication tasks on their phones. Plus, given 47% of all inquiries and 28% of all applications for SchoolAdmin schools are completed on mobile devices[4], it's safe to say the software you choose should perform well on mobile.

- **Accessible online from wherever, whenever**

  You, your staff, and the students and families you serve are always on-the-go. Unfortunately, there may be another time where we're all forced to pivot and work remotely as with the Coronavirus. A great software option will allow you to access your data anytime from anywhere, giving you the flexibility to keep the process moving even if you can't be in the office.

- **Online applications and recommendations**

  Paper files aren't only outdated and cumbersome — they're also not very secure and are a pain for your families. It's easy for sensitive data to go missing as you pass physical files between departments—a challenge that was amplified when social distancing became the norm. Paperless applications ensure your families can easily complete the required forms and essays, and allow only authorized users have access to prospective students' information. Plus, it provides a more streamlined process for busy teachers to submit recommendations and for your reviewers to evaluate candidates.

- **Register for events online**

  From campus visits to open houses, orientation to interviews, your school likely hosts many events throughout the year. An online event registration system makes it easy for families to RSVP and helps prevent them from forgetting important dates, while giving your staff the metrics and insights needed to plan and execute a successful event.

- **Integrates with other school systems**

  Closed-loop reporting is essential for making decisions across every department, from the business office to the admissions team, the marketing department to the executive suite. If the software you choose doesn't play well with the existing systems you rely on each day, it may not be a worthwhile investment.

- **Increases conversion at every step of the funnel**

  Today a "good" admission and enrollment process isn't enough. You need to create the exemplary experience your families expect—through easy and frictionless processes, quick responses no matter the time of day, personalized and meaningful conversations, and strategic messaging and branding. A modern Enrollment Management System provides you with these tools to help you win the hearts and minds of your prospects, increasing conversion rates throughout the funnel and beyond.

Your admissions and enrollment software will play a pivotal role in helping you achieve your goals for the year ahead, so don't allow your technology purchase decision to become an afterthought.

3 https://www.emarketer.com/content/us-time-spent-with-mobile-2019

4 Internal SchoolAdmin data

"We have to be very firm with what data we want to capture on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis and year-over-year. We have hard data in Excel from our previous database, but our new database allows us to pin-point where we were and determine whether we're pacing towards our targets based on past years' performances.

That's really important because, if we see sooner rather than later that we're behind in interviews or a particular stage of the application, we can take action. For instance, if we know that we're earning more inqui-ries but we're not converting to interviews after the open house, we can segment that audience and create custom communications to guide them further down the funnel."

Kim Major
Senior Associate Director of Admission,
Operations, George School

"Admission teams play a big role in telling the story of their schools. But, for many of us, it can be difficult to specify why our school is struggling in this area or where the greatest opportunity may be in reaching desired audiences. That's why you need to get under the hood and look at how people engage with your content.

This could be your website's Google Analytics data, your blog engagement, or even the way you interact with prospective families through email marketing. Data and analytics are becoming increasingly important for enrollment success because more information is being consumed online versus in person or by phone. If you just take 15 minutes a week to start to understand these things, you can get a sense of how well your content is perceived, how your online channels are performing, and how your prospective students are interacting with your content.

The more schools begin to feel comfortable accessing this baseline to identify which efforts are working, the more empowered they'll be to make strategic decisions that lead to enrollment growth."

Jake Youmell
Co-Founder, Enroll Media Group

Next Steps

There's no denying it's a challenging time for private and independent schools. But while some institutions will struggle, others will find a way to meet their enrollment goals despite the turbulence— and the most significant difference between the two lies in the maturity of their enrollment management efforts.

Henry Kissinger famously said that a diamond is a chunk of coal that did well under pressure. If you want to succeed as a private or parochial school in the decade ahead, it's essential that you shift from survival mode to planning and growth mode to increase your enrollment management maturity in key areas like people, process, culture, strategy, budget, and technology.

If you invest the effort and resources into building your game plan today, it will pay off with a boost in enrollment and consistent success well into the future. The time and environment are right for you to turn threats into opportunities, negatives into positives, and coal into diamonds.

Want a closer glimpse of how we're putting all of this to use to help schools meet their enrollment goals?

Book your free consultation today!

SchoolAdmin

About SchoolAdmin

SchoolAdmin is a powerful and modern Enrollment Management Solution, with a customer-loved suite of integrated Admissions, Enrollment, Retention, and Tuition Management tools. Our easy-to-use software and industry-leading customer support are designed to help you and your school thrive by building stronger relationships and more successful enrollment management strategies.

Headquartered in Austin, Texas, and trusted by more than 500 of the most successful schools, our diverse and passionate team is dedicated to empowering K-12 admissions and business professionals around the world.

Learn more at www.schooladmin.com