



ALC 2010 Power Practices Compilation

The Admission Leadership Council (ALC) facilitated a series of roundtable discussions at the 2010 SSATB Annual Meeting focused on persistent independent school admission challenges. Participants were encouraged to share those practices that have yielded positive results at their schools in addressing each issue. From this, a Power Practices Compilation was created.

A summary of each roundtable discussion is provided. At the end of each summary, ALC members also compiled a list of useful topical resources to get you started thinking and learning more about the “power practices” identified.

No two schools are alike, and what works in one context might not work in another. Peruse the information and resources here for those nuggets that might be incorporated successfully in your admission office or in your school.

So that the Power Practices Compilation remains a living document, we encourage you to submit – using the form provided on admission.org – information (and links to information) about a practice you employ to share with the independent school admission community. We will be sure that all useful and relevant resources are posted within days of their submission.

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TOPIC: COMMON NOTIFICATION DATES

The issue of common notification dates was raised often in SSATB membership meetings in spring 2010 as an area of mutual concern. Yet, admission and financial aid notification is a broad topic and discussing notification in a national context perhaps makes it an even more unwieldy subject. An earlier notification may be beneficial to a small school that prefers to confirm/enroll new students in order to satisfy institutional operating budget needs. However, earlier notification may compromise some schools' ability to accurately assess financial need with the most current information. Regional pressures make the notion of a national common notification date untenable; catholic/parochial schools typically follow an earlier and different timeline, creating pressure region by region. Last, revisit days are a significant piece of the annual enrollment cycle.

Pressures/Issues:

- Overlapping markets
- Competition
- Varying day/boarding timeframes
- Family response date
- Family revisit days
- Financial aid and deposit concerns
- Yield pressures
- Catholic competition/overlap
- Rolling admission
- Early decision
- "Arms" mentality of notification

Recommendations:

- A common notification timeframe should be established. It was agreed that if schools were to advertise that notification occurs for independent schools, for example, between February 1st and March 10th, then this statement would offer a degree of clarity to families if they receive some decisions earlier than others. This timeframe would seemingly span the spectrum of issues facing schools as operating and financial aid budgets vary greatly school to school.
- A common response/reply date is the more significant date to keep consistent, allowing families, both full-pay and financial aid recipients, to consider all the options that are available. Discussion of this date should be focused at the regional level, given the range of factors inherent region to region.
- School sponsored revisit days should be a part of the annual enrollment cycle at the discretion of individual schools.



Related Resources

NESCAC, a group of small colleges in the northeast, includes a statement of notification range (amongst other things) in their group admissions statement. <http://www.nescac.com/admissions/admissions>

Atlanta Area Independent Schools' Principles of Good Practice: <http://www.aaais.org/principles>

The Triangle Independent School Consortium is composed of admission professionals from the Triangle area schools in North Carolina. This website explains the benefits of and criteria for membership. This consortium "evolved out of the desire of the member schools to work collaboratively in an effort to ease and enhance the admission process for the students, families, and other schools involved."

http://www.tiscnc.org/Becoming_a_TISC_School.html

ISAAGNY (Independent School Admission Association of Greater New York) provides principles of good practice "intended to provide common ground for the interaction of students and schools, parents and schools and schools with schools, understanding and appreciation of the interests and obligations of each will help ensure orderly and professional admission procedures."

http://www.isaagny.org/about_isaagny/principles.aspx

"The best way to understand the dramatic transformation of unknown books into bestsellers, or the rise of teenage smoking, or the phenomena of word of mouth or any number of the other mysterious changes that mark everyday life," writes Malcolm Gladwell, "is to think of them as epidemics. Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do." Although anyone familiar with the theory of memetics will recognize this concept, Gladwell's *The Tipping Point* has quite a few interesting twists on the subject. <http://www.amazon.com/Tipping-Point-Little-Things-Difference/dp/0316346624>



TOPIC: GENERATING REVENUE AT THE MARGINS

Successful schools must display a greater sense of business acumen today than ever before. To this end, the generation of revenue from sources beyond tuition can be critical in determining the financial health of the school. Admission Offices can and should play an important role in helping to identify additional practical sources of revenue so as to relieve pressure to generate revenue solely from increased enrollment or tuition increases. Individually, any one additional source of revenue may not solve a school's budgetary challenges, but collectively such programs can have a significant impact on the bottom line.

Rent the school's facilities and grounds:

- Athletic programming
- Summer camp; attendees may be the children who attend your school or may be children from other schools
- Theater groups; get an ad for the school in the playbill
- Church groups in the community; self-sustaining and they can make an annual contribution to the school
- A cell phone tower site
- Weddings
- Decorator show houses
- Retreats and/or professional development activities
- Planting and harvesting hay

Develop educational/athletic programming for the greater (and school) community:

- Summer sports camps
- Adult Summer Camp – provide opportunity for adults to study cooking, yoga, digital photography, etc.
- Campus nature center
- Afternoon programs open to public school students or homeschooled students
- Virtual school; provide on-line courses for children whose parents are in remote locations (i.e., missionaries, etc.)
- Adult Education Courses
- Pre-school enrichment programs
- "Saturday Programs for the Young" – can serve as an introduction to your school and as pre-enrollment strategy
- Build in extra "slots" on overseas/study tours and field trips; make available to others
- After-school tutoring services; parents pay for the tutors, but the school gets a "royalty"

Create new sources of revenue and/or administrative savings:

- Offer room and board to recent graduates in exchange for part-time work for one year in various administrative offices at the school



- Develop a two-week program for new students – preview; laptop w/programs/subject review (math/language/etc.); make it fun – no uniforms, social, gets children comfortable with school; ½ and full day options (separate tuition fee)
- Levy an “enrollment fee” when students enter your school. Keep the fee in an interest-bearing account until the students graduate or leave. Return the fee and or get it donated to the school (about 20-25% do so). The fee is pro-rated for financial aid students.
- Levy a special fee for international students
- Obtain a corporate contribution for capital improvement through a capital fee
- Offer tuition insurance
- Allow a homeschooled student to take a class for a fee

Exploit your brand:

- Understand that the bookstore is a “spirit shop”
- Put store where the people are; involve parent association in running it
- Create an alumni pillow – each year a different school scene
- Feature lots of logo-branded items
- Let parents establish charge accounts for their children
- Create an online bookstore



Related Resources

Through its summer rentals/residence program, Stevenson School (CA) plays host to programs in sports, music, arts, education, leadership, and community service. The campus also is a popular venue for family reunions and weddings. Dormitory accommodations for 260 and a full-service dining facility allow for residential as well as day programs.

http://www.stevensonschool.org/about_stevenson/summer/programs/index.aspx

Lancaster Country Day School (PA) has a varied and impressive offering of summer programming for kids in their community.

http://www.lancastercountryday.org/downloads/programs_camps/2010_lcds_summer_camp_offerings_20100412_114351_2.pdf

Interested in learning more about an enrollment fee? Follow the first link for a copy Stevenson School’s enrollment agreement with specific language for an enrollment fee. Follow the second link for a copy of their reenrollment contract with language about the enrollment fee.

<http://www.stevensonschool.org/data/files/pages/2010-11/admission/StevensonContract.pdf>

<http://www.stevensonschool.org/data/files/pages/2010-11/admission/StevensonRegCon.pdf>

The “Look to the Hills” summer program at Deerfield Academy (MA) is targeted at alums and parents of Deerfield Academy students. It is a good example of a simple program that generates a bit of income by using the facility and current faculty. http://www.deerfield.edu/alumni/714/LTTH_2011

St. Mark’s (TX) has an extensive summer camp program. The majority of the camps are "general interest" and "recreation" and include a number of sports camps. A summer program link appears on



the school's homepage. The school reports that summer camp students frequently become admission candidates. www.smtexas.org/summer

Expanding School Revenue Streams with Innovative Programs by Peter Gow. NAIS Leadership Series, No. 7, April 2009. See admission.org for PDF.

After a Pounding, New Grounding by Sandra R. Sabo. Business Officer (July/August 2010). National Association of College and University Business Officers. See admission.org for PDF.

If you are a member of NAIS, the pages below offer a comprehensive list of links to helpful resources on sustainability/recession ideas.

<http://www.nais.org/financial/index.cfm?ItemNumber=153558&sn.itemnumber=153562>

<http://www.nais.org/financial/index.cfm?ItemNumber=153563&sn.itemnumber=153544>

Colleges and Universities are increasing their revenues in a down economy by expanding their summer programs and offering up to 20% tuition discounts on various programs.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/22/education/22campus.html?_r=2&th&emc=th

Schools in Michigan are permitting advertising on campus to make up for lost revenues during a financial crisis:

http://www.theoaklandpress.com/articles/2010/04/17/news/local_news/doc4bca71944befd350137756.txt

Schools throughout California are generating revenue by selling their schools' surplus goods through an online auction marketplace.

<http://www.examiner.com/education-in-national/schools-generate-revenue-through-sale-of-surplus-assets>

The 2004 NACUBO Tuition Discounting Survey data allow for analysis of 15-year trend. The authors offer an interpretation of the study and tuition discounting from the 1990s to the present.

http://www.nacubo.org/Business_Officer_Magazine/Business_Officer_Plus/Online_Articles/Tuition_Discounting_15_Years_in_Perspective.html

This PowerPoint presentation offers broad thinking on non-traditional ways for schools to rethink new revenue streams. It was developed by Eduventures, a consulting and research firm focused on enterprise-building within the education arena (2002). See admission.org for PDF.

Offer online summer courses to local high school students.

http://www.iolani.org/esummer_info.htm

NESCAC, a group of small colleges in the northeast, includes a statement of notification range (amongst other things) in their group admissions statement.

<http://www.nescac.com/admissions/admissions>

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<http://www.amazon.com/Tipping-Point-Little-Things-Difference/dp/0316346624>



TOPIC: LEVERAGING FINANCIAL AID

Leveraging financial aid is a commitment to enhancing financial aid to make an independent school education sustainable for current students and accessible/affordable to new students. To ensure its financial aid sustainability, a school will apply sound financial planning and management, investigate and develop additional non-tuition revenue sources, and promote a culture of philanthropy within the community that will support a school's commitment to a healthy financial aid program to attract and retain mission-appropriate students.

Establish Guidelines and Policies:

- Survey families to get actual data about income ranges
- Track awards by size and income band to avoid middle class squeeze
- Work closely with Boards
- Give merit awards
- Are we need-blind no longer? Update principles of good practice
- Remain need sensitive and need aware
- Take an "econometrics" approach (20 years – yield bands, income bands)
- Clearly articulate what the financial aid policy means: "We want to be clear that applying for financial aid means you are applying for a finite amount of dollars; won't accept you if we can't fund you."
- Carry tuition insurance
- Finish with returning students by early February; know exactly what is left for new students
- Partner with the development office; have students communicate with the benefactor of an endowed scholarship
- Establish boarding/day + sibling policies (especially for multi-level schools)
- Put CPA on retainer to help
- View the provision of aid not through a "diversity" lens but through an "access" lens

Help Educate Families:

- Conduct financial aid webinars that include mock filling out of applications
- SSS tutoring
- Develop an affordability brochure
- Establish an early priority deadline for returning families
- Provide clause in letter reminding families about the confidentiality of the award
- Establish clear guidelines (like colleges) about a student's academic performance vis-à-vis financial aid

Understand that Financial Aid Doesn't End with Tuition:

- Provide stipend for students for necessary items (class trips, etc.); stipend differs by grade level; stipend funded through faculty gift
- Establish an expendable fund, which may or may not come out of the financial aid budget, for laundry, clothes, bus tickets, etc.
- Raise and maintain a 100K "equity fund" for extras





Related Resources

A sample “affordability brochure” from Stevenson School (CA).

<http://www.stevensonschool.org/admission/documents/Affordability.pdf>

Lakeside School (WA) developed a financial aid calculator for families. Based on family size and income range, the estimator reports the average tuition for current Lakeside families receiving financial aid with similar characteristics: <http://www.lakesideschool.org/podium/default.aspx?t=128011>

Like most schools, St. Mark's School of Texas is facing a growing challenge related to supplemental expenses. They communicate policies each year to their financial aid community. A copy of that memo (mailed late each summer) is provided. See admission.org for PDF.

Erdmann, David. “The Science of Enrollment, the Art of Admission, the Business of Financial Aid.” *Independent School* magazine, Winter 2008. See admission.org for PDF.

Tuition Discounting: A Discussion for Independent Schools. Stephen Robinson, President Southern Association of Independent Schools, February 15, 2009. See admission.org for PDF.

Pat Bassett, President, NAIS – *The Value of Data Markers in Your Financial Planning* (Bassett Blog - October 1, 2007): <http://www.nais.org/about/article.cfm?ItemNumber=150079>

Evans, Robert. “Surviving and Thriving in Hard Times.” *Independent School* magazine, Fall 2008. See admission.org for PDF.

Bassett, Patrick. “A Game-Changing Model for Financially Stable Schools.” *Independent School* magazine, Spring 2010. See admission.org for PDF.

Davis, Donna. “Sliding Scales & Sibling Discounts: Alternative Financial Aid.” *Net Assets* magazine (NBOA), Winter 2010. See admission.org for PDF.

In God We Trust...Everyone Else Must Bring Data! By Mike Szydowski, Director of Financial Aid, Woodberry Forest School (VA). *Memberanda*, Back-to School 2010 (Vol. 28, No. 1), p. 13. See admission.org for PDF.

Host a family financial aid night to educate families about the financial aid process. SSS provides a useful PowerPoint template for schools and groups of schools to use. See admission.org for PDF.



TOPIC: MARKETING MUSTS – BOARDING SCHOOLS

A boarding school's appeal must reach beyond the immediate community. The need to generate more inquiries and to convert those inquiries to enrolled students is essential. Schools must understand the hottest media for communications, consider the most effective ways of getting the message out, and know which tools have the greatest cost benefit ratio – and they must be able to do so across a number of markets. Having the tools and resources to create a concise plan with measurable results is what every school admission office needs to reach their goals.

Take Advantage of Technology:

- Use Google Translate – to feature school's web site in different languages
- Create iPod slide shows and PowerPoint presentations
- Use QR codes that take interested parties directly to the website (MS Office Ad – “Get TAG mobile”)
- Use iBooks to disseminate publications and PDFs
- Market the school with flash drives
- iPhone app for schools
- Facebook and Google track ads daily – specific targets pay by impressions or clicks; cheap at \$30/day
- Conduct Virtual Fairs
- Offer live webcast of open house (“cool factor”)
- Produce individual DVD acceptances; notes from current students on hard copy acceptances
- Create a video of the Head; deliver individualized message
- Produce a 3-minute video targeted to the highest-priority kids
- Use Email and text messages to follow up with potential students
- Create new inquiries – use billboards, train and bus ads, movie theatre slides, etc.

Take Advantage of Social Media:

- Provide Chat Rooms for interested students
- YouTube “reality” videos – student competition
- Facebook/Twitter – engage Alumni; advertise job postings
- Establish “Ask a Student” links on the school's web site
- Create and promote student blogs
- Create and maintain a unique YouTube Channel
- Establish a Facebook Group for enrolled students

Utilize Parents, Alumni, and Current Students:

- Create and support a Parent Ambassador Program; provide hand written notes on marketing material
- Maintain an International parent blog - in foreign languages
- Convene focus groups of students to meet with marketing director and provide authentic student voice and feedback about the school



- Develop Alumni Ambassador Program - Have Alumni write personal notes on marketing material and/or offer personal testimony on videos/DVDs, etc.
- Identify expertise among your constituents; ask for and get their help

Maximize the Admission Office:

- Conduct events on campus which involve “kid groups”
- Tour Guides – communicate authentic student experience through media – flip cams, movie editing software
- Use more individualized and targeted outreach, including overnight stays
- Handle initial inquiries via messages on the admission office telephone
- Mail welcome kits; kids appreciate getting hard copy mail
- Push school’s calendar of events into media outlets
- Create five “brand driver” follow-up pieces
- Send letters to prospects from teachers and coaches
- Utilize applied educational research surveys (student and family perceptions)
- Follow up with SSAT Score Reporters
- Use census data to identify new markets of increasing wealth
- Accept the Standard Application Online (SAO)



Related Resources

The first online college fair was organized by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) and held on October 9, 2001. The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS) has brought the online fair to independent schools this year with the first-ever virtual Boarding School Expos. For admission reps, this means greater reach with no travel: <http://www.boardingschoolexpo.com/>

Check out Stevenson School’s student bloggers:

<http://www.stevensonsschool.org/includesHTM/SP/main.htm>

The Benefits of a Small Boarding School: An Essay from the Alumni/Faculty Perspective by M. Bradley Rogers, Jr., Headmaster, The Gow School (NY):

<http://www.theeducationalregister.com/PressDisplay.asp?prid=82>

School Marketing and the Social Web: Can You Hear Me Now? Lorrie Jackson (Winter 2009)

<http://www.nais.org/publications/jsmagazinearticle.cfm?ItemNumber=151413>

Special Report: Asia 2010 by Aimee Gruber, Director of Outreach, SSATB. Each year, SSATB travels to Asia to glean on-the-ground information for schools about this key international student market.

<http://www.admission.org/data/files/news/SpecialReportNews/2010AsiaReport.pdf>



Mike Connor, Lead Consultant and Principal of Connor Associates and co-author of the National Association of Independent Schools' *Marketing Independent Schools in the 21st Century*, offers a comprehensive strategy to maximize marketing in order to advance your school's mission.

http://www.blackbaud.com/files/resources/downloads/WhitePaper_SchoolMarketing.pdf

The Educational Information and Resources Branch within the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs provides professional development and educational resources for advisers at the nearly 500 *EducationUSA* centers around the world and strives to strengthen links between centers and U.S. higher education institutions. Following are suggestions from advisers on how U.S. institutions can make their websites more accessible to prospective international students. See admission.org for PDF.

Recruiting beyond Eastern Asia: Realities, Strategies and Investment by John A. Williamson, Executive Director, Linden Boarding School Tours (*Memberanda*, August 30, 2010). See admission.org for PDF.

A 90-day marketing plan forces you to look hard at what you are doing.

<http://marketing.about.com/od/plantutorialsandsamples/a/90mktgplan.htm>

Consider group travel.

<http://www.tenschools.org/travel/>

Andy Sernovitz is an author, teacher, and word-of-mouth marketing veteran. These brief YouTube videos – [Tell a Friend](#) and [Give Folks Something to Talk About](#) – introduce you to some basic concepts and point you to more WOM videos. Also check out Andy's blog – [Damn! I Wish I'd Thought of That!](#) – for useful nuggets. [Gaspedal.com](#), which publishes Andy's blog, also has a free e-newsletter you can subscribe to with more great ideas.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=max4s11P0ro>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxFQLjNNNOo>

<http://www.damniwish.com/>

<http://gaspedal.com/>

The [Association of Strategic Marketing](#) has a number of live and archived webinars available for a fee.

You can also sign up for their free email blasts: <http://www.associationofmarketing.org/>



TOPIC: MARKETING MUSTS – DAY SCHOOLS

The process of marketing in our day schools is an evolving and fluid process that is influenced by the context and issues of a particular region. All schools strive to find and measure that which provides immediate and sustainable return on investment and distinguishes the school from its peers. This can often be a process of trial and error, but more often is now an outcome of meaningful data analysis. To identify a best practice for any one school requires that the desired outcomes be well defined, and must take into consideration that what works best in one school may not be suitable for another due to size, composition, mission or market differences.

Take Advantage of Technology:

- Rely more on online vs. print ads (they are more effective)
- Google alerts for schools
- Conduct a virtual school fair
- Develop videos of interviews on campus; put on your website
- Maintain Special website used for newly-accepted families (before matriculation)

Take Advantage of Social Media:

- Tweet deck for open house promotion, campus news, etc.
- Find others on campus (students) to take ownership of Twitter
- Get current students involved (blog, etc.) with candidates or potential ones
- Have tour guides market school through Facebook
- Place ads on Facebook

Utilize Parents, Alumni, and Current Students:

- Gather interested families in homes of current students; in-home, soft sell approach
- Advertise through a regional mother's clubs
- Send student groups out to do community service wearing a school t-shirt
- Offer an incentive program for current students to bring new applicants
- Advertise on lawn signs for open houses; have current families place signs on their lawns
- Institute a "bring a friend/guest to school" day
- Have students write articles for printing in local publications
- Develop marketing statement (elevator speech) denoting value of independent school education; give to parents on cards to distribute through their networks
- Develop robust school orientation program for parent ambassadors
- Address gender issues by having grade 6 & 7 boy/girl classes separate (English)

Increase Word-of-Mouth:

- Go where the kids are
- Place open house invitations in public places



- Place ads in community newsletters; place ads in grocery carts; buy a billboard
- Offer scholarships to students in public schools
- Conduct an athletic tournament to get families to your campus
- Offer school facilities for community events
- Sponsor special seminars and presentations for parents in your community; focus on issues such as college guidance, child rearing, etc.
- Sponsor community play groups/story time
- Print lawn leaf bags with school logo; magnetic bands on school vehicles to promote school events; “Silly bands”
- Produce separate publications just for students
- Personalize acceptance letters with TSB and message
- Offer Saturday classes taught by school’s faculty
- Send mailings to summer camp families
- Place TV ads based on demographics with video of campus; place quality radio ads that create a picture in the mind and be sure to own the piece
- Feature bilingual admission office staff



Related Resources

Design your facebook posts to market as much to your internal audiences (as your external) – remind them why they chose your school: <http://www.facebook.com/stevensonadmission>

Try to get your private school or your private school association added to school options websites in your city. This is an interesting website for parents but has no information about private schools that offer financial aid: <http://www.bostonschooloptions.org/>

Lakeside School (WA) has endowed scholarships that are awarded to financial aid recipients. Their experience has been positive, and the program has been successful in attracting some high-flying, financial aid recipients: <http://www.lakesideschool.org/podium/default.aspx?t=146248>

St. Mark’s School of Texas offer three types of on-campus events, each operating at a slightly different level of engagement: 1) student-led monthly tours followed by Q&A with Assistant Director; 2) three fall Morning Coffee Programs – lasting no more than an hour – consisting of informal conversation with members of the Administrative Team, a guest speaker, and an optional campus tour; and 3) a combination of all these efforts into one all-school open house. See admission.org for PDF of Open House program.

Word of Mouth Marketing Comes of Age, Currents (November/December 2005), Council for Advancement and Support of Education. See admission.org for PDF.

Parent Views on Independent Schools Given the Current Economic Situation (NAIS, April 2009). To better understand the impact of the economy on individual families and on the general K-12 independent school landscape, NAIS surveyed education consultants, prospective families, and current parents. This research offers a glimpse into the minds of parents – their plans for their children, their hopes and



concerns, and their feelings about independent education as they face a time of unprecedented financial uncertainty. See admission.org for PDF.

Looney, Scott. "Finding Opportunity in a Crisis." Independent School magazine, Summer 2009.

<http://www.nais.org/publications/ismagazinearticle.cfm?Itemnumber=151865&sn.ItemNumber=145956>

Fernandez, Kim. "How to Manage and Protect Your Institution's Online Image." Currents (October 2009), Council for Advancement and Support of Education. See admission.org for PDF.

Mark Neustadt, principal of [Neustadt Creative Marketing](#), co-founder of [Door No. 2](#) and professor of marketing in the [Klingenstein Center for Independent School Leadership](#) at Columbia University, discusses an effective marketing plan for independent schools including "chucking the viewbook" and "developing social media marketing strategies."

<http://marketingeducation.ncmark.com/2009/10/a-draft-independent-school-marketing-plan/>

Agnes Irwin School (PA) runs a lecture series of experts in the field that sell what they are trying to highlight about the school. They hire 2-3 speakers per year and create a theme around which they will talk. Both current and prospective families are invited. See admission.org for PDF.



TOPIC: Regional Collaboration in a “Dog-Eat-Dog” World

Regional associations are operated on and promote the principles of good practice – for admission, financial aid, and athletics. They provide a common forum and the ongoing support necessary for collaboration among and across schools.

The most effective associations:

- Help streamline the application process by reaching and maintaining agreements on common testing, notification and reply dates. Written agreements are signed by both the head and the admission director.
- Develop common application packets and help to ensure that all families have the same information, as well as common non-discrimination statements.
- Participate in high-quality, lower-cost professional development programming focused on persistent independent school issues such as financial aid, marketing, etc. Split the costs of guest speakers.
- Promote awareness of independent schools. Conduct joint marketing efforts, sharing the costs of advertising in various print and media outlets. Can also agree not to advertise in publications that misrepresent the school(s).
- Save resources by taking part in joint business office ventures using the same vendors and splitting the costs.
- Conduct school fairs and coordinate across all interested schools. Spread the word about independent schools and help to ensure that all schools achieve maximum enrollment.
- Coordinate open house dates.
- Offer joint financial aid information sessions for families.
- Meet face-to-face during the year to develop and/or renew working relationships.
- Ensure collaboration with Catholic schools and other K-12 schools.
- Can convene heads, helping to keep them updated on a range of important trends and tensions.
- Support collaboration between and among business officers/offices.
- Broker arrangements for starting dates for admission campaigns.
- Serve as clearinghouses to help with faculty recruitment.
- Can help arrange group travel and ensure cost savings.



- Develop and implement innovations.
- Have guidelines to ensure members' adherence to the spirit and the letter of agreements, but focus directly on the promotion of peer-to-peer accountability.
- Maintain common web sites, although this service has been fraught with tensions.



Related Resources

Bay Area Admission Directors *Principles of Good Practice and Athletic Recruiting Guidelines*

<http://www.stevensonschool.org/data/files/pages/2010-11/admission/Bay%20Area%20App%20forms/Principles%20of%20Good%20Practice%20NEW.pdf>

The Independent School Fair for People of Color was created by four Seattle area directors of admission in 2006. These women of color saw a need to expose, enlighten and engage families of color in a discussion about the options, opportunities, and resources available at area independent schools. It is the result of good collaboration and is a very successful event.

<http://isf4poc.wordpress.com/>

The Independent Schools Admission Association of Dallas engage in joint advertising, have common testing arrangements and common decision dates, conduct a combined Private School Fair that attracts schools from all over the city and all over the country, and has a common application.

<http://www.dallasprivateschoolpreview.com/>

ISAS common application: See admission.org for PDF

ISAS ad: See admission.org for PDF

Expert Advice: Choosing a Private School. Interview with Debbie Lange. KNOWAtlanta (Fall 2007). See admission.org for PDF.

Tribes by Seth Godin (2008) is a quick-read resource on how to get people to work together.

<http://www.amazon.com/Tribes-We-Need-You-Lead/dp/1591842336>

In a competitive Philadelphia independent school admission market, three single sex schools have banded together to market the value of single gender and independent schools simultaneously.

<http://www.3greatschools.org>

Regional Group Websites:

<http://www.houstonprivateschools.org>

<http://www.aaais.org>

<http://triangleprivateschools.org>

<http://www.hais.org>

<http://www.isaagny.org>

<http://www.advis.org>

<http://www.tenschools.org>



TOPIC: TESTING & ASSESSMENT FOR PK-5 STUDENTS

Assessing preschool and lower school children can be challenging because these students have limited or no exposure to academics. Often assessment of these youngest students entails assessing both school readiness and achievement. The participants in the PK-5 grade assessment roundtable shared that there are multiple sources of assessments available, but agreed that what works best is dependent on fit with each institution's mission and philosophy. In addition, the majority of participants agreed that the most successful tests are those that assess both quantitative and qualitative measures. The biggest challenge is finding an assessment that bridges this wide age/grade span that can provide consistent data.

Be Sure the Assessment You Choose Works for You:

- Benchmark current students to establish interpretive context
- Understand and acknowledge if the test is predictive
- Utilize outside consultants to “objectively” administer tests (Pro: skilled and adept at behavioral assessment; Con: provide less individual attention and don’t know the school)
- Have clear policies about under what conditions you will retest a child (i.e. separation issues, to determine test validity, at the recommendation of the psychologist)
- Use kid-friendly language to help parents prepare their child for the test (i.e. working with a teacher, pointing and talking). Do not refer to it as playing games.
- Use group observation; use table work; incorporate individual teacher interaction
- Be sure that testing is only one part of the elementary admission process
- Utilize regional collaborative arrangements with psychologists to lessen testing redundancy for families
- Assessments for this age group can be expensive; establish policies and criteria for providing test fee waivers (such as, front page of family’s 1040)
- Think critically if testing is even necessary (predictive) at the younger grades; perhaps for your school group observation and individual teacher interaction is all that is necessary
- Accept results from tests administered by and sent from the “sending” teacher; teacher feedback is key
- Be aware of test prepping

Suggested Practices for Child Interactions & Interviews:

- Call it “evaluation” rather than “observation,” as this helps parents understand better what is taking place
- Observe the child in their current school setting
- Have current student call a visiting student the night before (scripted)
- Child interviews are not part of everyone’s process, but note that longer visits allow the child to relax and be more comfortable

Suggested Practices for Parent/Family Interactions & Interviews:



- The in-house tester should not be the first person to greet the families
- Give 45-minute tours to interact with and learn more about the parents
- Show DVD of current students doing classroom activities and testing to parents during child observation
- Clarify a child's language history and preschool/daycare history
- Give parents a questionnaire during testing; this makes it possible to ask awkward questions that you don't want to put on an application
- Ask parent about the child's personality to help determine your outreach level/style to the child
- Keep parents busy during the testing process; parent ambassadors can help with this
- Establish the classroom job of "greeter" and make sure tour group is greeted by student
- Take a family photo to help remember child/family better; can use it later to market the school to the family
- Have either the Head or the consultant deliver face-to-face results to parents
- Have Admission Director or Head call all connected families (siblings, legacies, major donors) if the result is a deny



Related Resources

Prepared for and distributed at EPPA sessions held during previous Annual Meetings of the Secondary School Admission Test Board (SSATB), these charts provide information about a variety of published test and readiness assessments that could be considered for use along with the interview, observation, class visit, samples of work, and sending school recommendations in the admission process to enter the pre-primary and elementary grades. See admission.org for PDF.

This information from Virginia Tech offers a solid overview of the concept, strategies, and tools involved in "student assessment." <http://www.edtech.vt.edu/edtech/id/assess/assess.html>

Comprehensive List of Childhood Developmental Tools (February 5, 2010):
<http://www.earlychildhoodmichigan.org/articles/7-03/DevScrTools7-03.htm>

Brenna, Susan. "The Littlest Test Takers." The New York Times, November 9, 2003. This article offers a big-picture perspective on the challenges of assessing sub-kindergarteners. See admission.org for PDF.

A Well-Trained Admission Committee Identifies the 'Right' Students. To the Point (Vol. 6, No. 6). Independent School Management, October 2000. This brief offers some guidance for working with admission committees. See admission.org for PDF.

The Admission Process: What Can We Ask, What Should We Do? Prepared for NAIS by Stephanie Gold, Patricia Ambrose, and Sarah Fleisch of Hogan Lovells US LLP (NAIS 2010). This article discusses certain federal legal issues pertinent to an independent school's admissions process, particularly with respect to disability, race and ethnicity, and gender matters. See admission.org for PDF.

Anderson, Claude and Muradi, Victoria. "Lower School Assessment: Sharing of Best Practices." Presentation at SSATB Admission Training Institute, Boston, MA. September 29, 2010. See admission.org for PDF.



Some private schools in NYC are allowing students (usually ones with a connection to the school already) to undergo another round of testing if they do not score well on the ERB.

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/28/nyregion/28private.html?_r=1

Behavioral, Social, and Emotional Assessment of Children and Adolescents by Kenneth W. Merrell is a dry text, but it is important to know the theory and jargon behind assessment.

<http://www.amazon.com/Behavioral-Emotional-Assessment-Children-Adolescents/dp/0805839070>

Demystify the process for families by creating a web resource that helps families feel more comfortable about the assessment process. <http://nuevaschool.org/admissions/info/iq-faq>



TOPIC: WORKING WITH HEADS AND BOARDS

The Admission Office must help the Board and the Head understand the admission situation from start to finish, so communication is the key to developing a strong and effective working relationship with Heads and the Board.

A high-performing Admission Director:

- Locates his/her office in proximity to the Head. This provides easy access to the chief executive officer and fosters strong connections between the two offices.
- Develops a trusting and supportive relationship with the Head, and works to create a partnership with the Board.
- Is included in Board discussions (and possibly through the work of a Board-level admission committee).
- Protects the Head by keeping him/her updated on the admission process. Has regularly-scheduled meetings that focus on an agenda agreed upon in advance. Expects the Head to “run interference” from the Board.
- Provides the Head with progress reports provided on an ongoing and routine basis. These reports, anchored by the school’s vision and mission, include statistics regarding inquiries, interviews, applications, enrollment projections, etc., and can be used by the Head to prepare reports to the Board. The reports also identify potential problems and offer possible solutions.
- Articulates and communicates a student profile that is used to make admission decisions.
- Keeps the Head informed of trends, school climate, and possible big donors, as well as up-to-date information on what and ‘how’ the ‘competition’ is doing.
- Makes suggestions to the Head about potential Board members.
- Participates in ongoing discussions with the Board and other departments on cross-cutting issues such as pricing, financial aid and fund raising.
- Helps orient new Board members to the school and to important school issues like financial aid.





Related Resources

Pat Bassett, President, NAIS – *Leading from the Middle* (Bassett Blog - August 1, 2010)

<http://www.nais.org/financial/article.cfm?ItemNumber=153842&sn.ItemNumber=4181&tn.ItemNumber=147271>

This document illustrates a framework for a conversational Board report on key admission and financial aid stats and initiatives. See admission.org for PDF.

St. Mark's School of Texas' Annual Report gives the Headmaster a "one stop" location for nearly all the information about admission and enrollment that he might need. The attached table of contents provides a clear idea of the types of reports they produce. See admission.org for PDF.

Christopher Wheeler's book – *Inside Their Headships* – is a collection of interviews with 11 current and former heads of school. Each interview is an intimate and revealing look into the personal joys and challenges of independent school leadership, the impact of leadership on spouse and children, developing a close and productive relationship with the board and board chair, and the terrible consequences when a headship fails. <http://www.insidetheirheadships.com>

The Buck Starts Here: Philanthropic Responsibilities of Your Board, Ideas and Perspectives (Vol. 32, No. 3), Independent School Management. A subscription is required to view the archived publication.

http://isminc.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=73&Itemid=2315&limitstart=21

Cumming, Alison. "Data Dashboards Demystified: Why So Many Trustees are Asking for Them and How They Can Benefit the Board and the School." Wickenden Associates, Princeton, NJ. See admission.org for PDF.

McNulty, B., Marzano, R., & Waters, T. *School Leadership that Works: From Research to Results*. ASCD and McREL, 2005. Drawing from 35 years of studies, the authors explain critical leadership principles that every administrator needs to know. The book is available for purchase on the ASCD website.

<http://shop.ascd.org/productdisplay.cfm?productid=105125>

Board Report Basics. Memberanda, Back-to School 2010 (Vol. 28, No. 1), p. 3. See admission.org.

This website has links to PowerPoint presentations by Pat Bassett of NAIS which explore the basic definition of an independent school and the role of the four powerful decision-making bodies within a school (board of trustees, parents association, faculty, and head and administrative team).

http://www.isasw.org/school_resources/trustee.aspx

New to your job? This brief article is a good reminder about what it takes to start off on the right foot with your new boss. <http://career-advice.monster.com/in-the-office/Starting-a-New-Job/Build-Work-Relationship-with-Boss/article.aspx>

To cultivate the relationship with your head of school, attend a marketing workshop together.

<http://www.jtwack.com/info/marketing-institute.htm/>

