

## **Innovative Schools – Operations**

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### **Advocacy/Marketing: ISSL, HAIS**

Reframe the question: "Why do families sacrifice to send their children to independent schools?"

- They find that independent schools are "all about kids," small and intimate environments where their child will be known and loved.
- They find just the right choice among the diverse independent schools in our community so that there is a fit between the child and the academic program and a match between the school's and family's values.
- They find that a diverse environment (in terms of ethnicity, race, religion, and because of generous financial aid, socio-economic class) will serve their child well in terms of being adept in the diverse environment of college and the workplace.
- They find that the "college-prep" culture of all independent schools sets universal expectation that are achievement-oriented.
- They find, most important of all, that the freedom independent schools give to their faculty to teach what is important (rather than to teach to a test) attracts extraordinary teachers.

### **Schools Especially Successful in Marketing**

- Lexington School (KY)
- New Canaan Country Day School (CT)
- Breck School (MN)
- Columbus School for Girls (OH)
- Pembroke Hill School (KS)
- John Burroughs School (MO)
- Latin School (IL)

### **Schools Freezing or Lowering Tuition and/or More Aggressive Net Tuition Discounting To Increase Enrollment**

PFB: While freezing tuition, moderating tuition increases, a "fixed price" for a period of time, and more aggressive net tuition discounting have advocates and examples of success in increasing enrollment and net tuition income, lowering price does not have such backup data to support it. A former college president and current NAIS school head, John Trainer (Bolles School, FL) reports, "A number of private colleges tried this approach to increasing their enrollments in the face of declining enrollments in the 90's. It proved to be a very dangerous strategy. It failed much more frequently than it worked. This strategy seemed to work only in specific areas where price was the only factor in determining enrollments, i.e. where there were no other factors such as competition from other institutions. I was involved with a national organization of independent colleges and universities at the time, and the only specific success I recall was with a 2-year college in a very rural area with no alternative educational choice for the local residents. In another case, a tuition dependent metropolitan private 4-year college reduced tuition by some 10%, enrollments failed to increase, and the institution was faced with significantly reduced income for years afterwards. They did not have the ability to recover revenues by raising tuition significantly the following year, let alone by the 10% they lost. In the face of stagnant enrollments, their revenues suffered significantly for many years. The current economic situation is obviously different, but one needs to carefully evaluate the long-term

results of a failed strategic approach in this case.” Also see “Heard on the Listserves: Lowering Price”: <http://www.nais.org/resources/seriesdoc.cfm?ItemNumber=147153>

### **Schools Experimenting with Price:**

- Barnesville School (MA): For 2009-2010 we reduced our tuition in the earliest grades (EC, Pre-K) by roughly 20% in an effort to increase enrollment for future years (using the logic that once they were hooked on us, they’d stay, so let’s increase enrollment in the youngest grades). We did not see a measured increase in enrollment in these grades...though it’s hard to truly judge if it helped or hurt, as there wasn’t a basis of comparison. Did we get the enrollment we did because of the decrease, or regardless of the decrease?
- Roxbury Latin School (MA): Zero increase in the last couple of years, with good results.
- The Fay School (TX): Successfully froze Early Childhood tuition (main point of entry for our school- Early Childhood - Fifth Grade) to maintain a large opening at the top of the funnel.
- Kingswood-Oxford (CT): froze tuition and increased experimenting with net tuition discounting, particularly but not exclusively in “older” grades. Pushing the edge without being overly aggressive. So far has had good results.
- Staten Island Academy (NY): Same as above.
- Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy (OH): Successful aggressive net tuition discounting.
- Cranbrook Schools (MI): Successful aggressive net tuition discounting.
- Hawken School (OH): Successful aggressive net tuition discounting.
- University Liggett School (OH): Successful aggressive net tuition discounting, including merit aid for top scholars (top 20 scorers in an admissions achievement test)
- Pomfret School (CT): Successful aggressive net tuition discounting, including merit aid for top scholars (day students in a predominantly boarding school)
- St Paul Schools for Girls (MD): Lowering tuition:  
<http://www.admissionsquest.com/onboardingschools/2010/11/great-news-for-spsg-families.html>
- BB&N (MA): CPI+1. See NBOA Net Assets “Lion Tamers” article on NAIS website.
- St. Elizabeth’s School (CO): Sliding scale tuition (and commitment to socioeconomic diversity and balance: 1/3<sup>rd</sup> upper income, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> middle income, and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> lower income students.

### **Financial Sustainability Leaders:**

- Staten Island Academy (NY): reinvention of enrollment, marketing, discounting, and rightsizing strategies.
- St. Albans (DC): Committed internally to lower tuition increases for next 10 years AND lower highest salaries, with retirements not being replaced and reduction in activities fueling more efficient ratios.
- Maret School (DC): Annual giving on target this year and enrollment full for next year. 2% increase in faculty salary this coming year; while the school is doing ok, they are still looking at how to keep the cost of tuition at or below the rate of inflation and looking at slightly larger classes.
- Barnesville School (MA): Small school budget trimming: Cut expenses 20% in one year. Raised ratio of students:faculty from 6.9 to 7.7 (plus reduced comparably administrators and staff). Raises postponed until Sept.

- Mizzen-top School (NY): Raised ratio of students:faculty from 6.1 to 6.5 (in the middle school)
- Academy Hill (MA): Raised class capacities (from 12:1 up, in some cases, to 15:1) two years ago, before the crunch. It made it more difficult to individualize math pacing, raised the ire of some parents, and panicked a few teachers. On the positive side, it helped the bottom line, eased the problem of small social sets, and made the school feel fuller and more “happening”. That last bit has helped with middle school retention. Head thinks it will be a non-issue very soon.
- Any of the New Orleans Schools (especially Metairie Park and Academy of the Sacred Heart) and any of the Detroit-area Schools (especially University Liggett and Cranbrook): rightsizing and/or increasing student:faculty ratios have been a common strategy for three or more years now (and expanding enrollment without expanding staff via net tuition discounting and increased financial aid.
- The Children’s School (CA): Has held fast to 22 students per class with a teacher and an assistant. The Head muses, “If it were a popularity contest class size would drop to what? 18? 15? What teacher wouldn’t want fewer students—even one fewer. Parents who drink the San Francisco water all know that ‘small classes’ are a main determinant of excellent education. The truth is, though that the quality of the teacher, the methods of teaching, the learning community of the class, the culture of the school are all together about 85% of the determinants of quality. Our school could not be competitive in this environment if we reduced student load. Salaries would have to be lower and/or tuitions higher, etc. It’s industry standard in San Francisco.”
- Sonoma Academy (CA): Moved the student: teacher ratio at from 10:1 to 11:1, planned to move to at least an 11.9 ratio for the 09-10 school year, and are planning to move towards a 12:1 in future years.
- Miami Country Day School (FL): Benchmarking and transparent conversations with staff and parents to achieve more financial sustainability.
- Upper Canada College (Canada): Shared IT services with another school
- Summit Country Day School in OH  
(<http://communitypress.cincinnati.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/C2/20100407/NEWS03/4070385/>) and University Liggett School in MI: successful net tuition discounting/merit aid programs.
- Head-Royce School (CA): clear metrics on efficiencies
- Nichols School (NY): continual strategic planning posture
- Metairie Park School (LA): collaboration with other schools

PFB Notes on “New Normal” Strategies for Financial Sustainability: Key driver = student:faculty ratio which should grow to 10:1 or 11:1 by....,

- ✓ Expanding enrollment while freezing growth in staff.
- ✓ Declaring a moratorium on expansion of program (i.e., expanding staff) unless there is a sunseting of another undersubscribed program and a counterbalancing reduction of staff.
- ✓ As boomers retire, flattening the pay scale: higher starting & median salaries and lower top salaries
- ✓ Re-defining the full-time middle school and high school workload to be five classes meeting four times a week for an hour rather than four classes meeting five times a week for 50 minutes

### **Schools with Pay for Performance:**

Kamehameha (HI): “Virtual merit pay” for a year to show what paycheck would look like once program is implemented.

See Compensation

Experiments<<http://www.nais.org/resources/article.cfm?ItemNumber=148040>> monograph on the NAIS website for examples of schools with pay for performance, broadband, and faculty tier compensation systems.

### **Schools with Innovative Faculty Evaluation and/or Professional Development Systems**

Great schools have a philosophy of learning for students AND one for faculty. If your school doesn't have one for faculty, it should, as professional development and growth as a learner/teacher should be part of the expectations (and evaluation) of all teachers on an ongoing basis. The schools leading this charge have adopted professional development strategies (rounds, lesson study, digital faculty portfolios, etc.) that are prevalent in high performing countries: See my article on the topic - “Professionalizing the Profession.”

<http://www.nais.org/publications/ismagazinearticle.cfm?ItemNumber=149583>

Here are some schools that lead in this arena, so you could check with them in terms of their statements and/or practices:

- Meadowbrook School (MA): Exceptional professional development program.



Professional  
Development-ML

- Shady Hill School (MA): Exceptional professional development program & linkage to Lesley College degree program
- Westown School (PA): See Independent School Summer 2012 article, “Leading from the Middle: Enhancing Professional Development through Peer Counseling”
- Blake School (MN): Required faculty portfolios:  
<http://www.blakeschool.org/facultystaff/ETI.aspx>
- Brookwood School (MA): Faculty Rounds
- Beauvoir School (DC): Japanese “lesson study” approach.
- Prospect Sierra School (CA): Japanese “lesson study” approach.
- Shady Hill School (MA): Master’s Degree program with local university (Lesley).
- Boulder Journey School (CO): Master’s Degree program with local university (University of CO-Boulder: Reggio Emilia/early childhood education program).
- St. Paul’s Episcopal Day School (CA): research-based professional development for faculty
- North Country School (NY): videotaping of master teacher classes: simulcast for extending the course to students outside the school; archived classes are studied by small groups of teachers to discuss elements of good teaching, different learning styles children exhibit, and what one might do next time around.
- McDonough School (MD): Folios program of digital portfolios and web-based tracking. Contact: Tim Fish, [tfish@mcdonough.org](mailto:tfish@mcdonough.org)<<mailto:tfish@mcdonough.org>>
- High Tech High (CA): Project-based learning charter school with perhaps the country’s best professional development training (in its own state-approved graduate program).

You could also pose questions about faculty professional development on the NAIS deans & division heads online communities, to see what's out there in general. (See Listserves on the top menu bar on the NAIS website, under "Resources.") My shorthand question that captures the point is that all faculty each year should be able to answer this question: "What professional learning network (PLN) are you on? ("Brain-based research?," "differentiated instruction?," "formative assessment?," "digital student and faculty portfolios?," "project-based learning?," "school of the future?," "blended learning?" "flip teaching?," "iPads in the classroom?," etc.) and how are you incorporating what you've learned into your teaching?" One of my tweets on the topic points to another resource: Join a PLN like ISEnet: life-long learning and professional development you can use in the classroom, tomorrow:

<http://isenet.ning.com/><<http://t.co/SrngDvu>>

### **Schools with Non-tuition Revenues:**

See the PDF in the NAIS online bookstore "Reducing Reliance on Tuition via Alternative Sources of Revenue" (free for NAIS members to download at

<http://transact.nais.org/Purchase/CatalogSearchResults.aspx?Option=1&ProductTypeText=All&ProductTypeValue=All&Title=tuition&Author=&ProductDesc=&TitleText=Title+contains&AuthorText=Author++name+contains&ProductDescText=Product+description+contains>

### **Note the following programs:**

- Calvert School (MD): curriculum for home-schoolers (net \$1.5m/yr.). Now one version of website in Russian.
- Kentucky Country Day School: Rock and Country Concert schedule.
- Elmwood Franklin (NY): Achieve! Storefront Tutorials (projected \$100K/yr.).
- San Francisco School (CA): Kids Battle the Grown-Ups trivia game co-authored by 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Net \$70K so far. 2<sup>nd</sup> game, Kids Rule, now carried by Wal-Mart and Toys "R" Us.
- Lake Forest Academy (IL): Outsourcing to Sodexo weddings (\$500K/yr.); sale of adjoining property to high-end developer for endowment.
- Shattuck-St. Mary's (MN): Building a golf course on adjacent property and selling lots (Net \$2M in first year). Also rentals of ropes course for corporate outings. Centers of Excellence in hockey, figure skating, soccer, and the arts.
- Georgetown Prep (MD): Luxury apartments on 3 acres of leased property (income = \$1.3M year on 99-yr lease).
- St. Richard's School (Indianapolis): auxiliary education center for tutoring, technology, adult education, testing preparation (SAT, GED).
- Hilton Head Prep (SC): Women's Wellness Retreat (Summer Session for Moms and their teenage daughters); also: homeschoolers can take one course at the school for 1/5<sup>th</sup> tuition.
- The Norman Howard School (NY) -- EnCompass: Resources for Learning: struggling learner assessment, coaching, tutoring, college LD assessment & guidance; training/consultation for schools; community workshops and seminars.
- The Community School (ID): new learning and experiential program for adults, The Trail Creek Institute, featuring evening adult learning sessions, seminars, films discussion groups and outdoor program excursions.
- Many schools: adult ed in evening; sports clubs during class time & weekends (see the "Money" issue of Independent School-Fall 2003). E.g., Beauvoir School (DC): Non-tuition revenue streams: summer program adds \$600k to budget; pool memberships to the

community in the summer; speaker series that funds their PD budget; adult learning program; 12 enrichment programs bring in \$100k per year (i.e. Washington Ballet comes to Beauvoir to teach lessons instead of parents having to worry about getting their children to the ballet); 2-week online learning program about the Cathedral; plans to create a river and museum program if Cathedral program is successful.

- Many schools: Expanding the school by creating an international program: Chinese, Korean, South American, etc. kids come for ESL and full curriculum, live with school families as homestay (pay a \$10K boarding fee to the parents), plus full day-tuition and extra ESL fees.