

# 2024 Key Trends in Admissions

---



Your Guide for  
Powering a Successful  
Admissions Season





*Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."*

– John Dewey

Contents:

- Admissions Trends 3
- Five Essential Strategies to Drive Admissions Success 4
- Five Key Questions to Consider When Looking for the Right Admissions and Enrollment Solution 5
- Checklist for Admission Strategies 6
- Supercharge Your Admission Season 7



**Author:**  
**Shana Abner**

*Shana Abner is the Associate Manager of Product Marketing. She has a decade of experience in working for private schools.*

As a former Admissions Director, I know first-hand how important it is to apply thoughtful consideration to the annual admissions and financial aid awarding season planning. From adapting to the changing behaviors of families to translating the vast information of industry research into strategy, aligning your school’s strategy to industry changes is a key component to a successful admissions season. To help with your planning, we’ve created this short guide highlighting recent trends in admissions and key strategies to support independent, faith-based, and private schools during your admissions season.

**First, let’s look at some key trends in admissions and why they’re important for schools.**



## Admissions Trends

More parents are considering independent, faith-based, or private schools. According to results from the 2023 National School Choice Awareness Foundation survey, 32% of parents contemplated public charter schools, 29% private or parochial schools, 23% homeschooling, 21% online schools, and 4% micro schools or pod learning in the past year.<sup>1</sup> This is up almost 2% from the previous year's survey and underscores the increasing number of parents who are exploring diverse educational alternatives for their children.

Additionally, the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) highlighted in its *2023-2024 Trendbook*<sup>2</sup> that for the second year in a row, median enrollment in NAIS schools has increased. These upward trends are good news for schools that are proactively strategizing how to capitalize on families' interests in schools that are outside the public education system.

These rising trends will require educational institutions to extend their admissions personnel forecast and plan for future development. At the same time, schools will need to keep a watchful eye on increased retention strategies shifting the demographics of applicants, an increasing demand for greater diversity in schools, and an uptick of higher-income families applying for financial aid.

According to data from Community Brands' Ravenna® community, for the second year running, race and ethnicity information provided during the admissions process indicate increasing diversity in the enrolling populations. Strategies to reach diverse communities in marketing initiatives will help continue growing diversity among student populations at respective schools.

Schools implementing more diversity outreach tactics and amplifying their offerings to new prospective parents early and often, are seeing indicators that their initiatives are paying off. Those indicators include more interest from diverse socio-economic families, and growth in interest from families who might have previously only considered public school education for their children.





Establishing a proactive strategy to address the demands of the admissions process is a critical element in achieving favorable outcomes. Listed below are five key strategies to help ensure the success of your admissions process.

## Five Essential Strategies to Drive Admissions Success:

---

- 1** For optimal school admissions and enrollment success, school leaders should build an admissions and marketing strategy using data from your current admissions solution. Data points to gather and evaluate include an analysis of year-over-year changes in application data from shifting demographics to grades applied to and other factors attracting applicants to your school. Evaluating reenrollment data will help inform a strategy for retaining current students.
- 2** Utilize local benchmarking to evaluate your performance compared to other schools in your peer community.
- 3** Using student progress data from your student information system and tuition payment data from your tuition management solution, make sure you also have a strategy in place to retain students. Retaining students helps buoy your school's financial bottom line and keep the culture and vitality of the school strong.
- 4** Identify regions you have not done significant outreach to in the past using zip code reports from your current admission solution and create custom marketing material to introduce your school.
- 5** Highlight your school's most compelling attributes including student test scores, how you work with families to afford education, how your curriculum is academically rigorous, how classrooms work and the level of excellence of your teaching staff.

In anticipation of your admission season, it's also important to ensure your admissions and enrollment software can provide a superb experience for students, staff and families involved in the process. Here are five things to consider when identifying the best admissions solution for your school.

## Five Key Questions to Consider When Looking for the Right Admissions and Enrollment Solution:

- 1 Does your software partner work with you to create a custom application environment? Custom application environments reflect the brand and feel of the school leading to improved connection in communicating to potential families.
- 2 Does your solution give applicants the options to inquire, apply, download, and submit required documents and fees? Is the interface easy for families to use? Families benefit from easy to use, 24/7, secure payment and document processing.
- 3 Does your admissions and enrollment software give you the ability to market your school and provide your data reporting and insight capabilities? Using your data, you should be able to flex and pro-actively plan for school population growth, income, and retention efforts.
- 4 Does your solution offer flexibility to manage an unlimited number of types of fees and credits? Each school is unique in its fees/payments structures, families appreciate transparency and ease in being able to make online payments.
- 5 Does your solution simplify and reduce manual document management for staff and families, including allowing families to securely upload supporting documents necessary for admissions consideration? Reducing manual processing time for staff helps schools make quicker admissions decisions, as well as ensuring families know all their proprietary information is secure.

Seek out an admissions and enrollment solution that helps families complete necessary steps quickly and efficiently, while also adapting to the specific requirements of your school. This ensures an exceptional family experience from the start.



# Checklist for Admission Strategies

- 
- ☐ Use video clips of your school events like science fairs, athletic events, humanities events, and debate events.
  - ☐ Use parent, alumni, and student testimonials on your website and displayed on different areas of your school walls.
  - ☐ Create downloadable PDFs that serve as highlights of what your school uniquely offers. Make sure to list your students' achievements, your graduation rates, your school's recognition awards.
  - ☐ Implement search engine optimization (SEO) on your school website as an inbound marketing best practice.
  - ☐ Tie-in mobile marketing including texting to potential admission families.
  - ☐ Use social media (with family/student permissions) to highlight your school and student achievements.
  - ☐ Reach out and introduce your school and a school spokesperson to all local education reporters.
  - ☐ Use parent ambassadors, including bi-lingual parents, to speak at local events and for faith-based community event opportunities.
  - ☐ Highlight student wins in science, humanities, the arts, and athletics on your website and in your newsletter.
  - ☐ Consider creating bilingual downloadable information sheets about your school and what it offers.
  - ☐ Keep prospective families informed, engaged, and included from the time they first approach the school all the way through admission and enrollment.

## For More Ideas on How To Supercharge Your Admissions Season:

### Guide



#### How to Create a School Marketing Plan that Boosts Admissions

[Learn More](#)

### Webinar



#### Planning for a Successful Admission Season: Marketing and Tactics to Get Started

[Learn More](#)

### Success Story



#### Villa Academy

Read how using Ravenna increased their relationships with applying families.

[Learn More](#)

For over 40 years, Community Brands has supported the success and growth of K-12 independent and private schools. By providing an outstanding experience for families, improving operational efficiencies for school administrators and instructors, and empowering strategic decision making through data insights, our solutions improve school outcomes and connect the entire school community.

## Sources:

1. National School Choice Week Team. "New Survey: America's Families Are Rethinking K-12 Education." *National School Choice Week*, 13 Jan. 2023, [www.schoolchoiceweek.com/americas-families-are-rethinking-k-12-education-2023/](http://www.schoolchoiceweek.com/americas-families-are-rethinking-k-12-education-2023/). Accessed 12 Jan. 2024.
2. National Association of Independent Schools – 2023-2024 Trendbook Excerpt, <https://www.nais.org/articles/pages/books/2023-2024-nais-trendbook-excerpt-enrollment-outlook/>. Accessed 12 Jan. 2024.

*Additional Resource:* Lien, Janetta, and Kelly West. "In Practice: Bringing Admission, Communications, and Enrollment Together." *www.nais.org*, [www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/winter-2024/in-practice-bringing-admission-communications-and-enrollment-together/](http://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/winter-2024/in-practice-bringing-admission-communications-and-enrollment-together/). Accessed 12 Jan. 2024.