

From the

THE BAKER GROUP

CROW'S NEST

A newsletter for independent school leaders committed to enhancing enrollment.

SPRING 2022 | ISSUE 3



→ From the Desk of Chris Baker

President and Founder of The Baker Group



Congratulations on adjusting to the vicissitudes of an ever-evolving pandemic. Overall, independent schools have responded well to the challenges of managing enrollment during Covid-19. While enrollment in NAIS schools nationwide was down over 11 percent over the last three years, three of the seven NAIS regions saw enrollment remain steady. It is reassuring to those of us who understand the value of an independent school education that the 2020-21 school year did not have the disasterous pandemic-related results some predicted. We weigh in with more details on page 2.

In the face of the challenges posed by the pandemic, many schools have sought new leadership in enrollment management and/or conducted audits to strengthen their enrollment management practices.

This has been evident in the 32 chief enrollment officer searches the Baker Group has facilitated over the past 21 months. It is also reflected in our focus on key enrollment leadership traits in recent newsletters. While "nimble" and "agile" were mentioned as effective leadership pandemic approaches, the theme of this newsletter as well as of our 22nd annual Crow's Nest conference will be "strength

and resilience" – characteristics aligned with the element titanium. Crow's Nest information is included on page 4.

While enrollment success can never be assured, two strategies can improve the likelihood of meeting your enrollment goals. One is to conduct an audit to assess the effectiveness of your current recruitment program and inspire more effective strategies. The second is to strengthen your re-enrollment and retention programs. We can help with both!

Warm regards,

Chris Baker

Chris Baker

WHAT'S INSIDE

Letter from the President → P1

Two Strategies to Strengthen Retention Efforts → P1

TBG 2021-22 Enrollment Leader Searches → P2

Admission and Enrollment Management Audits → P3

What's Happening → P4



ABOUT US

The Baker Group helps school leaders identify creative enrollment strategies and solutions.

As the premier independent school enrollment management firm in the country since 1999, The Baker Group has successfully partnered with over 900 independent schools to improve their enrollment management practices and create opportunities within shifting markets.

We provide a comprehensive suite of services to assist each school in meeting their unique enrollment goals.



Two Strategies to Strengthen Retention Efforts

Regardless of your school's attrition rate, every school should make a concerted effort to gauge student and parent satisfaction and carefully consider the factors that contribute to a successful student/family experience.

1. Create a School-wide Retention Team

Create a school-wide retention team of faculty and staff whose goal is to regularly review and refocus retention efforts, including early identification of potential attrition, developing division/grade-appropriate strategies to address controllable attrition, and instilling school-wide accountability for student retention. Each situation must have a senior administrator's attention focused on learning the reasons for a family's decision to leave. Administrators should present follow-up reports on assigned attrition cases at regularly scheduled retention team meetings.

2. Develop an Internal Research Strategy

Develop an internal research strategy to inform retention team conversations. These conversations should be grounded in qualitative and quantitative data that explain student and parent satisfaction or attrition. Gauge the satisfaction of both parents and students by administering an online parent satisfaction survey and a student satisfaction survey for students in grades 5 and above. Regardless of the attrition rate, all schools should be sensitive to parents' expectations and satisfaction levels. Instead of relying just on anecdotes and assumptions, schools will benefit from hearing directly about the satisfaction level of all current parents and students. Important "nuggets," both positive and negative, can be found using this tool.

We also recommend exit surveys and personal interviews with all departing students and parents, including those who are graduating.

The NAIS Enrollment Management Handbook



HAPPY 10th ANNIVERSARY to the NAIS Enrollment Management Handbook.

It's still the best resource to rely on as schools shift from an admission practice to an enrollment management mindset.

→ <https://tinyurl.com/EnrollmentManagementHandbook>

Get in touch:

info@thebakergroup.com
508.429.9178
thebakergroup.com

→ The Effects of the Pandemic on Enrollment, Tuition, and Financial Aid at Independent Schools

Now two and a half years into Covid-19, enrollment management teams continue to adjust to its impact. The full impact of the pandemic has yet to be determined, but regional data in key areas such as enrollment, tuition, and financial aid are beginning to emerge. Enrollment over the past three years, for example, was down in four out of seven NAIS regions. However, the pandemic did not have the disastrous results in 2020-2021 some had predicted. While tuition increases over the three-year period averaged 3 to 5 percent, those increases moderated slightly during 2020-21, ranging from 2 to 4 percent. And while the three-year trend in financial aid expenditures reflected an average increase of 6.1 percent, the average growth decreased in 2020-2021 to 4.1 percent. In short, enrollment was flat or down across the nation, tuition increases moderated slightly, and the average growth in financial aid expenditures declined.

Drew Miller, Director of Admissions at Cranbrook Schools cautions against drawing conclusions based only on 2020-2021 data. "One thing the data do not tell us is whether the decline last year in enrollment in most regions was due to decreased demand for independent schools or to schools' capping their enrollment to keep students physically distanced in the classroom. Some schools saw an increase in demand but could not take advantage of that growth due to

the need to keep students safe."

The three-year picture is also complicated by the fact that the high tuition/high aid discount model did not hold true in all cases. For example, the three regions where enrollment increased (average increase of 0.3 percent in New England, the West, and the South) saw an increase in tuition of 4.4 percent and a growth in financial aid expenditures of 5.8 percent. The four regions experiencing enrollment losses

(average drop of 2.3 percent in the East, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, and Southwest) saw tuition increase on average 3.7 percent and financial aid expenditures grow 6.4 percent.

The data suggest that regions experiencing enrollment growth have seen higher tuition increases but more moderate growth in financial aid expenditures. Regions experiencing enrollment declines have seen on average lower increases in tuition but higher financial aid expenditures.

(Source NAIS)

The Effects of the Pandemic on Enrollment, Tuition, and Financial Aid at Independent Schools

3-Year Trend	Enrollment	Tuition	Fin Aid
All NAIS	-1.11%	4.01%	4.25%
New England	0.08%	4.10%	8.46%
East	-2.42%	-3.35%	7.31%
Mid-Atlantic	-1.83%	3.67%	2.18%
Midwest	-2.59%	3.65%	10.22%
Southwest	-2.43%	4.02%	5.80%
West	0.71%	5.21%	5.46%
South	0.03%	3.97%	3.43%

Source: NAIS

2020-2021	Enrollment	Tuition	Fin Aid
All NAIS	-0.57%	3.74%	6.89%
New England	0.33%	4.36%	13.00%
East	1.84%	1.94%	8.92%
Mid-Atlantic	0.71%	2.78%	3.41%
Midwest	-6.88%	2.09%	-13.21%
Southwest	-1.59%	3.50%	2.83%
West	-2.10%	3.17%	15.77%
South	0.91%	3.13%	-2.26%

→ 5 Fun and Inexpensive Ways to Market Your School

1. Supply shareable content.

Provide school constituents (especially parents) with frequent, newsworthy, bite-sized content to share positive news about your school on social media and verbally through their networks.

2. Remember the press release.

They still work - especially

with video! Submit stories, photos, and videos of students engaging in stand-out projects, community service, or notable accomplishments to local news outlets.

3. Launch "wear your swag proudly" campaigns.

Initiate photo contests or other incentives to encourage families to wear

their school spirit gear in and around communities. It's a great conversation-starter!

4. Participate in local races or volunteer as a school.

Set up a team and wear your school T-shirts. Run or volunteer with spirit, promoting your school, while offering community support.

5. Give gifts that are shareable.

When choosing gifts for applicants or current students, consider ones that they would share with a friend, like playing cards, pool toys, etc. (and of course make sure it aligns with your brand).

By Ayesha Flaherty, Founder of AKF Consulting, LLC

→ The Baker Group 2022 Enrollment Leader Searches

Dubbing the early period of the pandemic as "the year of the enrollment manager," we have since assisted 20 independent schools in their efforts to strengthen their enrollment management leadership. Nothing says "financial stability and sustainability" better than a school's enrollment health, and school leaders are acknowledging the imperative of changing markets and the new enrollment strategies they require.

The Baker Group assisted these schools in finding directors of enrollment management in 2021-2022:

State	School	Position Filled	Position Available
California	Crossroads School for Arts and Science	●	
	Flintridge Preparatory School	●	
Connecticut	The Frederick Gunn School	●	
Massachusetts	Park School	●	
	The Rivers School	●	
New Jersey	Moorestown Friends School	●	
Pennsylvania	Merion-Mercy Academy		●
	William Penn Charter School	●	
Rhode Island	Portsmouth Abbey	●	
Washington, DC	National Cathedral School	●	
Wisconsin	Madison Country Day School	●	

→ Admission and Enrollment Management Audits

How effective is your school's admission and enrollment effort? How successful are your enrollment management practices?

An audit might be just what you need to determine both. While selectivity and yield rates of your applicant pool and retention rates of your currently enrolled students are indicators, it is important to clarify just how well your school's overall enrollment health is and how you measure up to industry best practices. With unanticipated market shifts following on the heels of the pandemic, optimizing your school's admission efforts and enrollment management practices is imperative. Much like getting an annual physical to check your own health, an admission and enrollment management audit is a way to gauge the health and sustainability of your admission

and enrollment strategies. An audit will highlight those areas of your operation that need your attention. To do that, you first need to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of your current recruitment efforts. Here are some suggestions when considering an audit:

- Use the Baker Group's Enrollment Management Grade Report and school community survey to determine what is and is not working. See side bar
- Synthesize and analyze admission and enrollment data.
- Gauge current market conditions and identify opportunities and challenges. Assess demographic information on your school's current market.

- Develop enrollment goals based on school's mission and strategic plan.
- Review current admission office and enrollment staff roles, organizational structure, and practices.
- Outline admission office and school-wide enrollment management strategies.
- Facilitate an admission office planning retreat with staff to review enrollment data, survey responses, etc. and incorporate this information in your upcoming admission cycle.
- Identify goals and strategies and draft an Enrollment and Admission Action Plan

By conducting a comprehensive admission and enrollment audit, you can effectively determine the best path to enrollment success.



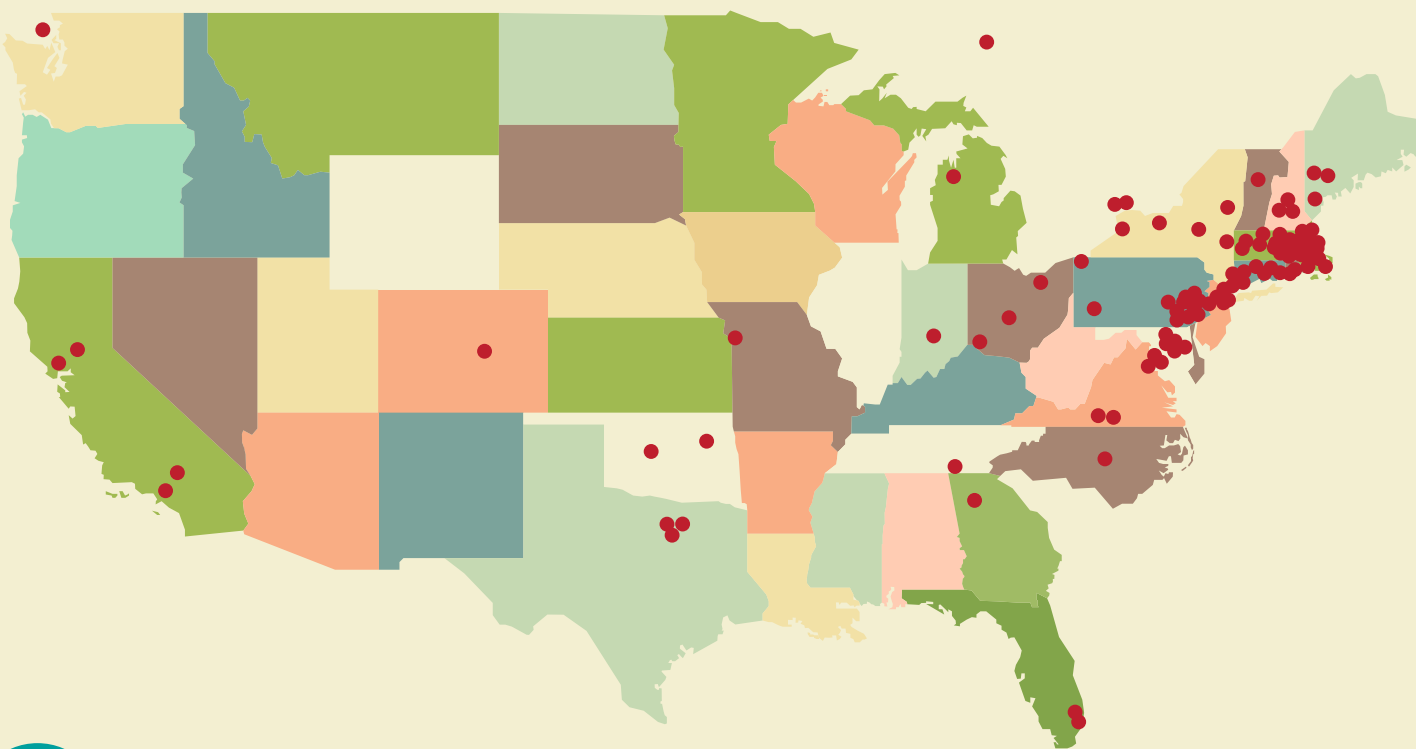
Enrollment Management Grade Report is the True Test

We recommend thinking strategically and collaboratively about enrollment on an ongoing basis.

Reach out to us at cbaker@thebakergroup.com to get a free copy of The Enrollment Management Grade Report for you and your team to use and gauge where you and your school are with enrollment management practices.

Baker Group Audit Map

This map highlights the **107** current and recently completed audits



“

“The Benjamin School retained the Baker Group for an admissions office audit last spring which has played a crucial role in the redesign of our department. The report was remarkably insightful including staffing needs, local demographics, as well as providing national benchmarks and best practices. The Baker Group didn't miss a beat on this important work for our school.”

~ David Faus, Head of School Benjamin School (FL)

”



Check our website for active searches:

thebakergroup.com/director-searches

LET THE BAKER GROUP HELP YOU DEFINE YOUR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT NEEDS AND IDENTIFY CANDIDATES WHO MATCH THOSE QUALITIES.

Join The Baker Group email list.
Get in touch:
info@thebakergroup.com
thebakergroup.com



→ What's Happening



JOIN US at the 22nd CROW'S NEST INSTITUTE – June 27, 28 & 29, 2022

The Crow's Nest Institute, a three-day educational conference for experienced directors of enrollment management/chief enrollment officers in Kennebunkport, Maine, is less than four weeks away. Only a few spaces remain. The theme for the 22nd Crow's Nest is "Titanium (the 22nd element of the periodic table): Strength and Resilience." We invite you to rediscover your firmness and flexibility in thoughtful dialogue and warm comradery! Details available at thebakergroup.com.

Top Reasons to Consider attending The Crow's Nest

1. BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT YOUR PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL GROWTH

You will not find so many top admissions and enrollment professionals in one place as you will with The Crow's Nest Institute. While challenges of these pandemic years have been stressful and unpredictable, they have provided you with a unique opportunity for professional growth. Take the time to come to Maine and engage with your colleagues in a serene but inspiring setting. Attending Crow's Nest will help you return to your school with a new growth mindset.

2. IT'S TIME TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Research shows that investing in self-care can help you avoid burnout, increase energy, be more

focused on productive work and increase your creativity. Coastal Maine in June for enrollment and admission professional development is as good as it gets! You will become more confident in your leadership capacity and more self-aware with the opening "Tending to Your Inner Captain" session. By cultivating your own resilience, you will be more able to build your team's resilience and emerge more agile and inspired than before.

3. CREATE MORE CERTAINTY

Neuroscience research has shown that we crave and need certainty. While there may be uncertainty in our current environment, we will help you focus on what you know, identify what you don't know, and advise you on mapping out a strategy to close the gap

with ideas and suggestions from your colleagues and faculty. At Crow's Nest, you will learn how to "Navigate Your Charted Course" with our three-day, carefully crafted schedule. You will not leave Maine without clear goals that will contribute to improving your performance.

4. UNDERSTAND THE BIG PICTURE WITH STRATEGIC THINKING

The experience level of our participants allows many of our discussions and conversations to be strategic. In developing a strategic mindset, the bigger picture will come into focus. "Scanning the Horizon" sessions will help you draw lessons from past happenings, be fully aware of what is happening around you, and keep your mind on what you envision for the future.



5. EXPAND YOUR PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Crow's Nest has been attracting some of the best in the independent school admission and enrollment world for 21 years. Join the Crow's Nest network and make new friends in the process.



PO Box 1088 | Kennebunkport | ME | 04046