

Ashley Stryker: e-Letters

December 2013-June 2014

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Private School News

November 2013—Vol. 12 No. 8

(29.1% open; 8.5% click through)

Teacher Evaluations: Help Yourself by Helping Others

(17% of clicks)

In a recent article, *Education Week* questions the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's donations in terms of the quantity, quality, and focus of allocated funds to K–12 education. At the forefront of their examination lies the foundation's recent focus on teacher-related research and programs. One such applied-research experiment, their Measures of Effective Teaching or MET, focuses on a multifaceted approach to teacher evaluation geared toward public education. Its efficacy has yet to be fully vetted, though [early analysis appears optimistic](#).

Some unions, teachers, and districts regard the process and the Gates Foundation itself with suspicion, according to [Randi Weingarten](#), president of the American Federation of Teachers (an organization that has received approximately \$11 million from the Gates Foundation). Not only is the influence of an enormous private philanthropic organization regarded with mistrust, but “[it’s] hard to convince people that the foundation wants anything other than a ranking system of schools, students, and teachers”—all of which may result in job loss or massive reorganization of established systems.

But considering negative repercussions is the wrong focus altogether. The primary drive of evaluation and retention systems should focus on the engagement and development of the faculty involved—particularly as it improves the implementation of your school's unique mission and characteristics of professional excellence (essentially the core values you look for and nurture in your faculty).

No one private school is the same as another. Thus, the one-size-fits-all approach of public education research and formulaic implementation proposed by MET will never work as intended in a private school setting. No school will be the “average” result, and no school—or teacher!—should try to be so.

In ISM's approach to professional development in its guide [Comprehensive Faculty Development](#), the goal of any faculty evaluation should be to improve the teacher's performance, not to punish. In brief, we feel that a school's professional development plan for its teachers should include:

- **Collaborative short- and long-term professional development plans** as the cornerstone of teacher evaluations, empowering them to take control of their professional growth while aligning with the school’s specific mission and providing a measurable scale against which to measure teacher progress;
- **Frequent and often informal observations** by academic administrators, eliminating the “dog and pony” show traditionally scheduled observation periods can engender and giving supervisors a truer picture of each teacher’s abilities;
- **Thoughtful, timely conversations and feedback** through **peer and supervisor mentoring sessions**, demonstrating dedication to the development process and fostering a congenial, team-oriented atmosphere; and
- **Consistent, predictable reward structures** for those who meet their personal goals, and thoughtful consideration of selective contract renewal for those who do not.

Sometimes the end of the road gets lost in the twists and bends of the journey, and the Gates Foundation has brought the goal back in focus by renewing the conversation, regardless of whether their methodology is deemed effective or not for private-independent schools. Staff and faculty alike can become caught up in the evaluation and process for its own sake (and the immediate impact on their own lives); they forget that, ultimately, the reason for these programs is to help their students.

Through ISM’s own research and others’, we believe that, when faculty are consistently supported in their professional development by their schools and supervisors, a new academic environment emerges in which student performance, satisfaction, and enthusiasm is greater than ever before.

And that is a place where everyone—student, teacher, administrator, and parent alike—wants to be.

Additional ISM articles of interest:

[*Effective Teacher Professional Development: What the Literature Says*](#), published April 2012 by Hanover Research

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 7 [*Does Your Teacher Evaluation System Include Professional Development?*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 9 No. 5 [*The Teacher Evaluation Stalemate in New York*](#)

Additional ISM articles of interest for Gold Consortium members:

ISM Research Area: [*Research Outcomes: The ISM Student Experience Study 2010-11*](#)

I&P Vol. 37 No. 5 [*The Student Culture Profile II*](#)

I&P Vol. 33 No. 3 [*Faculty Recruitment: Teacher Quality vs. Quantity*](#)

I&P Vol. 32 No. 16 [*Building Your Faculty’s Characteristics of Professional Excellence*](#)

I&P Vol. 37 No. 2 [Comparing and Contrasting Evaluation Approaches](#)

I&P Vol. 30 No. 5 [Pizza, Compensation, and Faculty Culture: Is It Time for Merit Pay?](#)

I&P Vol. 31 No. 13 [Faculty Evaluation, Student Performance, and School Leadership: An Update](#)

I&P Vol. 34 No. 13 [New Research: The Relationship Between Faculty Development and Student Performance](#)

Homework: What It Is and What It Could Be

(25% of clicks)

Homework! Students hate doing it, parents hate policing it, and teachers hate assigning it. In recent years, [current homework philosophy has come under fire](#) by teachers, administrators, and parents alike. Modern students bear a heavy homework burden, and schools rarely offer solutions to rectify the situation.

Enter [Cathy Vatterott](#). An associate professor of education at the University of Missouri, author of resources like [Rethinking Homework: Best Practices That Support Diverse Needs](#) and a former middle school teacher herself, Vatterott presents her research on homework to thousands of educators and parents around the world. She advocates a new “homework paradigm” which calls for schools to:

- **Design homework that emphasizes quality** of skills practiced and assessed rather than sheer quantity;
- **Identify which skills should be reviewed** in out-of-class work, as opposed to those that should be done with teacher supervision;
- **Deemphasize grading** to place the focus on retention and application rather than avoidance of a “punishment” in the form of a failing grade;
- **Improve completion rates** by studying why a student could not complete the homework instead of focusing on the failure itself; and
- **Provide homework support programs** that can bolster performance in the home.

All of this is wonderful on paper, but it can be a challenge to apply practically. Every school presents its own opportunities and challenges, so there can be no “one-size-fits-all” homework solution. Regardless of where you want to go, consider the following two aspects to evaluate where your school currently stands.

Current Homework Policies

Before implementing new rules, you should determine your school's overall policy structure. Do teachers set their own homework policies? Or, does a school-wide policy exist?

The implementation (or overhaul) of your schoolwide homework policy may be the most important aspect of the situation. Homework researcher Harris Cooper of Duke University [advocates a ten-minutes-per-grade homework policy](#) in younger grades and no more than two hours for high school students. But, what happens when teachers fail to communicate their assignments to each other? Teacher and blogger Pernille Ripp [discovered that her failure to coordinate](#) with other teachers may have piled more on her students than they could handle.

"I was reminded to use the old formula—ten minutes times the grade of the child... Now, this is what my brain should have thought: 'Wait a minute, Pernille, forty minutes of homework, a night? Plus twenty minutes of expected reading with parent initials? And a book report every six weeks? And math tests every three? Not to mention science and social studies quizzes, which really are tests but just with a friendlier name. What in the world am I saying?'"

If this dilemma exists for your students, you may wish to adopt a schoolwide calendar, enabling teachers to cooperate and assign projects or tests in a more conscientious manner, such as NYC private school Dalton's [five-week assessment rotation](#).

Parents' Opinions on Current Policy

If you're considering new homework policies, you must ascertain what your students' parents think of the ones already in place, whether they believe their children have too much, too little, or even the right *type* of homework altogether.

Opinions can and will vary wildly among schools and populations. Some parents feel as though their children become "[sleep-deprived teen zombies](#)" under the weight of the work assigned by private school teachers and call for a decrease in assignments; others believe that [only a few entitled students suffer](#) from an overload of work.

Still others think that the amount of homework assigned correlates directly with the quality of education received. As one mother of a private-school student [said in a letter to the New York Times](#), "We who struggle to pay the mammoth tuition want to believe that we are helping our children get a better education, better discipline and possibly better access to an Ivy League school. Do we really want these schools to ease up on homework? Would the tuition paid each year justify this?" Anticipating and having an answer for these protests will help your transition.

Whoever said that change is hard was a champion of understatement. But, when it's your students' health, happiness, and success at stake, a little self-evaluation can go a long way to smoothing the road ahead.

Additional ISM resources of interest:

The Paradox of Homework Webinar

ISM Update for School Heads Vol 9. No. 4 [*The Pressure on High School Students to Build Their Resume ... Whose Best Interest Is It?*](#)

ISM Update for School Heads Vol. 11 No. 1 [*Surveys: What You Really Know Makes You Stronger*](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium Members:

I&P Vol. 38 No. 14 [*The Benefits of Schedule Design Change*](#)

I&P Vol. 35 No. 4 [*Scheduling and the Harried Teen*](#)

December 2013—Vol. 12 No. 9

(30.5% open; 9.7% click through)

Must-Reads for Aspiring Leaders in 2014

(39% of clicks)

It's New Year's resolution time again, and since you finished the books from last year, we'd like to take the opportunity to compile some of the recommendations from educational professionals and leaders from all disciplines. These books should help all leaders in your school, from high-achieving faculty to the School Head.

- [*You Don't Need a Title to Be a Leader*](#) by Mark Sanborn
 - On his blog [Life of an Educator](#), former principal Justin Tarte recommends this book as one all those in education should read, and after some digging, we have to agree. Anecdotes of unsung heroes pepper this volume and add weight to Sanborn's philosophy of the smaller ways everyone can make a difference. That said, this book may be more appropriate for ambitious younger leaders in your school rather than the established folks. Still, the premise is solid and encouraging for people at all levels of leadership.
- [Linchpin](#) by Seth Godin
 - Eric Sheninger, public school principal and author of *Digital Leadership*, listed this book on his must-read list posted to his [personal blog](#). *Linchpin* could be read as a companion to *You Don't Need a Title to Be a Leader*, but its reach is broader. It's a call-to-action to find your unique gift or talent and allow it to drive you to be better than you were. While marketed for a more general audience than teachers, we feel *Linchpin's* core message of personal discovery and passion is easily applicable to the private-independent leadership sphere.
- [*If You Don't Feed the Teachers, They Eat the Students!*](#) by Neila A. Connors, PhD
 - Found on Education World's [Best Professional Books list](#) compiled from recommendations by principals, this book takes a humorous approach to the trials and tribulations of an educational administrator. *If You Don't Feed the Teachers* is light fare, laden with anecdotal advice rather than research-backed practicums. For those looking for an easily-digested dose of inspiration and practicality, though, this book may fit the bill.
- [Do the Work](#) by Steven Pressfield
 - A great way to stay motivated about the projects you have planned, educational consultant [Lisa Dabbs](#) suggests using this book as a no-nonsense kick in the rear to start new endeavors and complete old ones. The techniques can work from the classroom level all the way to a school-wide campaign.

- ***7 Habits of Highly Effective People*** by Steven Covey
- This book comes highly recommended on just about every must-read list out there, and we'd be remiss if it didn't make ours. Covey's practical advice for changing how you approach your work and life to become an effective, successful individual is timeless, and if you've read it before, it's worth reading again.

Additional ISM resources

Private School News Vol. 11 No. 3 [2012 Recommended Summer Reading List](#)

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 4 [Summer Reading Suggestions 2013](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 10 No. 9 [Summer Reading for Faculty](#)

Forget Diamonds—Social Media Mistakes Are Forever

(26% of clicks)

It was all over the news the last week of December, but just in case you missed it: Justine Sacco, now ex-communications director for huge parent company InterActive Corp (IAC), made an [ill-advised racist tweet](#) directly before her twelve-hour international flight to Africa. Sacco had to turn her phone off for the duration of the flight, so she was blissfully unaware of the social media maelstrom her 140-character message had generated:

“Going to Africa. Hope I don't get Aids. Just kidding. I'm white!”

At first, some thought it was a hoax. How could anyone possibly be so insensitive as to post such an inflammatory commentary on such a public venue? But no, previous [derogatory comments on her Twitter and other social media accounts](#) were found by amateur cyberjournalists obsessed with the story, making it extremely unlikely that her account was hacked.

“#HasJustineLandedYet” was a trending topic on Twitter for the duration of her flight, with Twitter users [taking photos of her and informally interviewing her family](#) about the tweet as soon as she landed at the airport.

An [IAC spokesperson quickly reassured](#) an outraged public that “the offensive comment [Sacco made] does not reflect the views and values of IAC.” The following day, the company “parted ways” with their former PR person. Sacco apologized for the tweet, and so passed her 15 minutes in the Twitter spotlight.

While Sacco would love the tale to die a quick, noiseless death, the story is worth resurrecting for the lessons it teaches us as social media users, both privately and professionally. First and foremost, it's a great chance to examine the nature of social media. As Jeff Bercovici [mentions in his column](#), platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest are

“shoot from the hip” collections of thoughts and ideas we have throughout the day. Items that gain the most traction—shares, likes, retweets and repins, whatever it may be—will be the most shocking or inflammatory. (Sacco’s own story provides a perfect illustration of this point. What story is more delicious than a *public relations professional* getting fired for a social media misstep?)

For private-independent schools, social media is the informal partner to your press releases and printed materials, and that’s a good thing for today’s quick-bite audience. That great strength, however, may prevent comments from referencing a broader context. One commenter, for example, [brought up that Sacco is South African herself](#), and she may have felt justified at making a joke at her own people’s expense. While there’s no excuse for the inherent racism illustrated by Sacco’s tweet, perhaps there was a backstory for her lack of judgment, one for which the “trial by social media” failed to account.

Consider, too, that Sacco [had fewer than five hundred followers](#) when she published her “tweet heard ‘round the world.” Accounts vary on the exact number, but the fact remains that you can’t count on relative obscurity to gloss over an ill-fated tweet or post. All it takes is one person re-tweeting a thoughtless remark, and you’ve got the makings for your own social media disaster.

Does this mean you should never post or tweet again and cower in fear, refreshing your monitor every thirty seconds in anticipation of a parent’s scornful reply? No, of course not! But should you be deliberate in what you say online and demand the same care from your faculty? Absolutely.

Additional ISM resources

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 2 [Managing Your School’s Social Media](#)

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 5 [Social Media: Weighing the Risks](#)

Private School News Vol. 10 No. 4 [Social Media Disasters: Costs, Dangers, and Quagmires](#)

Private School News Vol. 11 No. 5 [Start Off the New School Year With a Killer Social Media Plan](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 10 No. 4 [Good Social Media Protects Your School](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members

I&P Vol. 35 No. 1 [Faculty and Staff Use of Social Media Sample: Policy](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 5 [Conducting a Communications Audit](#)

Racial Diversity at Sundance Film Festival

(9% of clicks)

There's a noteworthy new documentary on the block, *American Promise*, that premiered at Sundance Film Festival 2013 and went on to air on PBS. The film follows Idris Brewster and Seun Summers, two African-American boys, when they begin their first year of kindergarten at Dalton, a prestigious private-independent school in New York City. Both boys struggle with learning disabilities, disciplinary problems, and failing grades, despite early indicators of high academic potential.

Race is a central consideration of the film. Early on, Idris's mother, Michele Stephenson, says that she hopes that by attending Dalton, Idris will not only be better prepared for college, but also be more comfortable around white people, something she can't do easily despite her own professional successes in an integrated workplace. While no open discrimination occurs, a racial tension charges the documentary. At some point, a young Idris says, "If I was white, I'd be better off," leaving his parents understandably shocked.

This tension is not due to any official atmosphere of disenfranchisement at Dalton itself. Indeed, the school is [lauded for its self-awareness](#) in understanding "that diversity doesn't work automatically, that it takes a special effort on [the school's staff's] part." Part of [Dalton's stated mission](#) is to "[cultivate] values of respect, integrity, compassion and justice to encourage community responsibility, combat prejudice and engage students as participants in a democratic society and global community," which naturally [encourages a diverse student population](#) beyond the traditional applicant pool.

The issues of diversity and how to better accommodate students from nontraditional backgrounds run rampant in *American Promise*, though no single solution seems to be presented as a cure for some of the struggles Idris and Seun experience during their tenures at Dalton. Maybe more importantly, the documentary has started a conversation about the retention of diverse student populations at private-independent schools.

In [Judith Ohikuare's review](#) of the film, she says that minority students transfer out of private schools because the schools aren't "able to handle the diversity they think they want," not because the students become financially or academically incapable. The same situation plays out in *American Dream*—Idris and Seun don't graduate from Dalton together, with one of them transferring to a nearly all-black public school for his high school years.

In the end, both students are happy, functional members of society who credit their years in private education for helping them become the people they are today. *American Dream* is a success story of sorts for the modern diversity movement. More than that, it's an illuminating

look at private school life from a perspective that few of us ever have the privilege of witnessing.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Business Officers Vol. 11 No. 3 [*Should You Implement Diversity Training?*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 11 No. 3 [*Ask Michael*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 11 No. 5 [*Public Schools Recruit International Students for Income Diversity*](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 38 No. 12 [*Defining Diversity in Your School's Culture: Implications for Planning*](#)

I&P Vol. 38 No. 13 [*Your School's Statement on Diversity*](#)

I&P Vol. 38 No. 13 [*Tuition Discounts and Your School's Sustainability*](#)

January 2014—Vol. 13 No. 1

(32.1% open; 9.6% click through)

Stereotypes of Generation Y and—Ooh, Shiny!

(15% of clicks)

Editorial by ISM Staff Writer

My mother always taught me that it's rude to ask a lady's age. Nowadays, it goes beyond impoliteness: [Age is a legally protected, nondiscriminatory class](#), just like gender or race. But laws don't stop the spread of generational stereotypes, young or old. It's high-past time for someone to take a stand against the (often negative) stereotypes previous generations tend to believe about my peers and me. I've decided—for this article, at least—for that person to be me, a bonafide Generation Y young adult in the workforce.

As we approach that time when you'll be advertising staff open positions, I want to take a moment of your time to explain some of the more common misconceptions about Generation Y. That's not to say you won't find people who fit these descriptions—you will (and often!). But, a few bad apples haven't spoiled the bunch, and it's worth taking a second look at some of your younger candidates.

We only write in obscure acronyms and have abandoned apostrophes altogether.

Let's start off with something a bit lighter (and easily remedied). With the advent of cellphones and instant-messaging shorthand, sometimes it feels as though you're swimming through [a world of "LOLs" or "TTYLs,"](#) especially when you're [reading e-mail from younger employees](#).

There used to be another sort of shorthand used at work. My grandmother was a secretary and typist at a steel mill in Pittsburgh, and Dad says that she could write in [Gregg shorthand](#) as fast as someone could speak. We found an entire paternal family tree after she died, written entirely in Gregg shorthand. We can't read it, though; I look at it and see nothing but chicken scratch. Today's abbreviations are modern chicken scratch.

I make no excuses for these people who apparently decided to sleep through my favorite class (English!). I, too, wince when I see [abused apostrophes or comma splices](#). At the same time, I don't assume it's only twenty-somethings making the errors. A little patience and empathy might be needed for those who are learning that messages can be longer than 140 characters.

We aren't loyal.

Members of Generation Y have been seen as a liability, since we can't sit still and [work through the traditional hierarchy to earn a higher position](#). Then again, in such a tumultuous job market, can you really blame us for not trusting in job security like in the "[good old days](#)" when people spent their entire lives working for one company? Widespread eradication of perks like pensions and [raises beyond cost of living adjustments](#) lead to job hopping, which is often the best way to receive a substantial pay raise.

But forget about competitive salaries for a second. The bigger problem here isn't that we lack drive or loyalty to remain for an extended period of time with one company. We would be willing to do so, but only for the *right* employer.

Mark Hudson, the managing director of Hudson's Asian branch for hiring talent, put it perfectly when he said that Generation Y is "[a highly aspirational generation](#) and [has] many expectations of what the workplace should be. This is then perceived as a lack of loyalty, but it is actually that *the company hasn't managed to engage [its] workers and create the infrastructure and environment to contain their interests for long*" (emphasis mine).

All of this adds up to terrific news for private-independent schools. We want to work for your mission; we want to see you grow and be a part of something that will make an impact on other people. We will remain dedicated to your cause.

We have the attention span of a gnat, so short that—SQUIRREL!

Oh, the classic "All young people must have ADHD!" scenario. From social media and television to video games and parties, it feels like Generation Y is moving from one "fad" to the next without ever settling in. In fact, the CNN article "[Millennials need fun, flexibility at work](#)" claims that short attention spans are one of my generation's defining characteristics, adding that we don't "expect necessarily to be tied to a job."

I have a different perspective on this facet of my generation: We need to believe that what we're doing matters (and has consequences!). Otherwise, we won't stick around or focus on a mundane task that must be done. A paycheck is no longer the end-all and be-all of employment, so private schools should find ways to remind us often that our efforts—no matter how menial or quiet—are both appreciated and supporting the school's overall mission.

We are the "trophy generation," constantly needing praise.

Time Magazine ran a feature story last May entitled "[The Me Me Me Generation](#)," an article that inspired some reflection by *Forbes Magazine* to look at the "[three paradoxes](#)" of my generation. One of the nice things they addressed was the stereotype that everyone received an award for anything, turning mediocrity into a celebrated state, and now Generation Y feels entitled to be praised and rewarded for any little thing.

It's not that we need trophies. Personally, I don't need a line of certificates hanging on the wall in front of my desk to be validated as an accomplished, competent writer. For much of my freelancing work, I never even got a byline. That's not the validation that I—and I suspect my peers—crave.

We need recognition for a job well-done and frequent conversations with our supervisors to ensure that we're on the right track, professionally-speaking. Think of it like the speedometer on your car. It's the biggest dial on your dashboard for a reason—it reminds you that there's a speed limit and you need to stick to it. We speed up or slow down based on the little glowing hand and the giant numbers on road signs.

Professionally, that's how we expect things to work in the office. We expect our blunders to be corrected quickly and kindly. One study found that over half of Generation Y respondents said that [they desire a mentoring relationship](#) to become a better employee, and that's something I completely agree with as a young professional.

Of course, there's no smoke without fire. There's no denying our sense of what we can handle has been severely overinflated, illustrated by the (in)famous article declaring [the median grade at Harvard an A-](#). But when faced with real-world challenges in the workplace, most of my peers realize their hubris much sooner than you'd expect.

For a private-independent school, this desire means that the coaching relationship we outline in [Comprehensive Faculty Development](#) should be used not only for current faculty, but also for newer staff. Predictability and support of your staff will get you far with my generation. (A huge dose of patience will help, too!)

We are self-entitled and lazy.

I can't describe to you my horror and sheer disbelief when I read a blog post called "[I Can't Find a Good Employee From Generation Y](#)." I strongly disagree with Ms. Peterkin, but the real travesty of this piece is the idea that "[our] parents have spoiled these kids so much over the last decade—they've taught them that everybody has a Gucci bag."

This sweeping generalization takes my breath away. I can only speak for myself and those I know, but not every kid was raised with the kind of wealth it takes to make Gucci bags a reality. Even for those of us who were blessed with financial stability, not all parents believed in sheltering their kids or placating bad behavior with money.

When given a chance to shine, my generation seems to do quite well in spite of our "sheltered" childhood and education. (Just read about [Nina](#), [Christine](#), [Star](#), [Nick](#), and [others](#) to learn about some of the success stories of other Generation Y folks besides [Mark Zuckerberg](#) of Facebook fame.) A bit closer to home, I have friends on

Fulbright scholarships abroad and prestigious internships here at home. One friend can't tell me what she does due to national security.

We *work* for our educational and professional opportunities [despite incredible competition](#), and we would do the same for you, given half a chance. We are *hungry* for the opportunity you could give us, and we're not afraid to work to show what we can do when presented with a challenge. The question is, are you ready to work with us?

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Private School News Vol. 8 No. 5 [Employee Recognition Awards Are Shifting From the Tangible to the Intangible](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 9 No. 9 [Are You a Reluctant \(or Unwilling\) Mentor?](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 7 No. 6 [The New Generation of Teachers and Personnel](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 8 No. 5 [Part One: A New Generation of Parents](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 36 No. 14 [Generational Differences: The New Management Paradigm](#)

Tuition Remission and You (19% of clicks)

Tuition remission for faculty and staff means so many things to so many private-independent schools. To some, it's a way to promote the school's mission of inclusion. To others, it's a perk, a way to find and retain wonderful staff and faculty. Even more people remember their own education or a friend whose schooling was supported through programs like this and wish to continue the tradition.

ISM theory, as we've written in [The Tuition Book](#) and discussed during [podcasts](#), states that it's possible to accomplish your mission of caring and trust without offering hugely expensive (and potentially unnecessary) discounts. Don't believe it? Let's tackle some common arguments in favor of tuition remission and outline some ways to keep the program's positives.

“Our school's mission promotes quality education to all, regardless of a family's financial situation! How can we say no to our faculty's children?”

Well, you can reject faculty or staff member's children for several reasons, poor mission fit being the most important. At the same time, not offering tuition remission doesn't mean that

you don't support your employees. It simply means that the school's strategic financial plan doesn't support free tuition—especially if it supports generous financial aid.

Instead of an automatic tuition waiver, why not have those teachers and staff who wish to enroll their children apply through regular channels and apply for financial aid, just like any other family? This scenario has the dual benefit of providing assistance for those on your staff who can't afford the education, as well as showing parents that you treat all students equally, regardless of who their parents are.

“Tuition remission is a huge perk for our faculty and staff! How else can we get great people to work for us?”

The short answer to this question is “the school's mission.” Offering tuition remission can muddy the waters as to your potential employee's motivations to work for you. If they have school-age children and you offer this benefit, you run the risk of them working while their children are in your school then leaving when they graduate. If the reason an applicant decides not to join your school family is that you don't offer free education for his or her children, maybe that prospective teacher wasn't the greatest mission-fit to begin with.

Furthermore, there are so many qualified and wonderful people job hunting these days, it shouldn't be difficult at all to find someone willing to work without this seemingly necessary perk. As *The Chronicle of Higher Education* put in [a recent commentary](#), “The history of the tuition benefit harks back to a time when colleges needed to offer such perks to attract candidates to lowly paid campus jobs. But the academic job market today is flooded with too many applicants for too few jobs in plenty of disciplines.” This logic applies perfectly to private-independent K-12 schools as well as colleges.

Finally, it's unequal in terms of monetary benefits. Say two teachers are paid \$50,000 a year in salary at a school where the annual tuition is \$20,000. They have the same workload and teaching experience, but one has children and the other does not. If the first takes advantage of the tuition remission program, that teacher is effectively making at least \$70,000 from what amounts to a tax-free \$20,000 bonus if even *one* of his/her children attends, creating a huge wage disparity.

“We've always had tuition remission! How can we suddenly just stop now? We'll have a riot on our hands!”

That's a tough one. One school recently [tried to announce changes](#) to its tuition remission policy at a faculty meeting, with no (obvious) staff input; the changes were handed down from administrators. However, the administration quickly realized that “further discussion of the issues was necessary” and decided to table the discussion while improving their overall communication.

There's no need to repeat this mistake, though. Communication with faculty and transparency concerning your reasons for dissolving the program will go a long way to smoothing the path for this change. Try grandfathering in the policy change to allow current beneficiaries to keep the benefit while not starting tuition remission for new hires. Slowly, you'll change the culture to one where people want to stay for the work they do every day instead of the incidental perk or two.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Podcast: ["The Biggest Tuition Setting Mistake Schools Make"](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Business Officers Vol. 12 No. 1 *Employee Benefits You Might Not Think Of As Benefits*

ISM article ["How Much Does It Really Cost Your School?"](#)

ISM article ["Affordability: Is Tuition Remission the Answer?"](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 27 No. 7 *Stability Markers and Tuition Remission*

I&P Vol. 38 No. 13 *Tuition Discounts and Your School's Sustainability*

I&P Vol. 31 No. 9 *The 2005 School Head Compensation Survey: Personal and Professional Benefits*

I&P Vol. 35 No. 15 *The Real Cost of Financial Aid*

Hoarders: Retaining and Disposing of Subjective Data

(17% of clicks)

Open a newspaper or your home page and you'll see dozens of stories about data misuse, like this [parent who faces felony charges](#) for changing her children's grades or this [student who posted thousands of student records](#) on an anonymous online forum. These security breaches should be anticipated and guarded against, but sometimes the question lies in not who got into your network, but what information you're keeping.

A Timely Question

Certain information needs to be saved electronically in designated servers and systems, but which data you should keep in the first place has become the subject of heated debate.

Awarded public school principal Carol Burris recently had a [blog post published in the Washington Post](#) about the controversial decision to have students' truancy and suspension records uploaded to New York State Educational Department's ["inBloom" cloud database](#) via their EngageNY Portal. According to the [official EngageNY Portal site](#), the data is necessary to "support improved instruction and student learning outcomes," while opponents argue that it's a gross breach of privacy.

"There is simply no justifiable reason for a state education department to know whether an individual student was ever suspended," Burris writes. Combined with [other states' concerns](#)

over inBloom's security, her argument to decrease the amount of sensitive information contained online is timely, at the very least.

Collecting sensitive and (occasionally) subjective information is often necessary for your school to operate smoothly. [ISM believes](#) these items should not be kept any longer than necessary, with access to that data restricted on a need-to-know basis. Your official schoolwide policy must regulate purges of unneeded information. But as we firmly settle into the Information Age, record keeping can very easily turn into record-hoarding.

Case Study

One adjunct recently reminisced about a private-independent school she'd heard about during a workshop. It collected teacher evaluations during its admission process, with the stipulation that all such documents will be destroyed once final decisions are made. All portions of a prospective student's application (including the evaluations) were reviewed, with the student's privacy maintained with specific information shared only with the appropriate team members. Acceptances and rejections were mailed, electronic student files were archived in the school's computer system, and the year continued on.

Shortly after the letters were sent, a couple entered the Admission Office, demanding to speak with the director to ask why their child was not accepted. In an effort to promote transparency, the director read over part of the child's archived file and found that the child's previous teacher had written a blunt evaluation for officials' eyes only—with a destruction date clearly marked on the bottom—which had led the selection committee to decide the child was not well-suited for the school.

The Admission Director gently shared this information with the couple, who left to confront the teacher who wrote the evaluation ("You're the reason my son didn't get into XYZ Academy!"), shocking him that the evaluation was ever shared with the parents (and that the document still existed at all). The teacher told his Division Head about the revelation, who then shared it with the School Head and the Trustee Board.

All of this lead to a lawsuit by the school district against the private-independent school for sharing confidential information. The expenses were so astronomically high, the private school declared bankruptcy and closed its doors.

The Moral of the Story

In sharing this case study, we want to draw attention to the fact that the Admission Director had direct access to such records. If the records had been purged per school policy and the agreement on the bottom of the page, the lawsuit never could have happened. It's not just the Admission Office at risk, either—from faculty to Trustees, everyone has archived sensitive information that needs to be addressed and periodically disposed of. Even [e-mail chains should be monitored](#) as sources of subjective information.

Certain data in the wrong situation could condemn your school to a dark hole of lawsuits and bad publicity from which it will never emerge. Selective data retention protects everyone from lawsuits and bad judgment, so it's time for that policy to be more than just a line in the handbook.

Think about what your school has kept longer than it should. How does your school handle the disposal of sensitive paper and electronic documents? Do you have some sort of "shredding party" atmosphere every year? Tell us in the comment section!

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 8 No. 2 [*Guidelines for Maintaining Your Gift Documentation Records*](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 32 No. 10 [*Records Retention in the Admission Office*](#)

I&P Vol. 38 No. 3 [*Maintain Personnel Records Diligently to Protect Your School*](#)

February 2014—Vol. 13 No. 2

(28.7% open; 7.4% click through as of March 4, 2014)

Why Teachers Quit

(40% of clicks)

In a [recent Huffington Post article](#), young professionals regard teaching as a “starter job” rather than a career choice. It’s something noble to do for a few years, but new teachers leave for other professions. Maybe you’ve struggled with a “revolving door” at your private school, resulting in expensive and morale-killing teacher turnover. In cases like this, keeping new talent in the classrooms can seem like an impossible task. The first step in retaining excellent teachers is to discover why they quit.

Teachers Love What They Do, Where They Do It

It’s not that they dislike teaching. According to an [independent survey of UK teachers](#), 68% of polled teachers still enjoyed their work, and an astounding 91% of all respondents said they “get a buzz” whenever they see a pupil progress in his or her studies.

It’s not (necessarily) that their pay is too low. One school system in Chattanooga, NC, [boosted their faculty recruitment by offering bonuses](#) if previously underperforming classes showed “significant improvement.” Hardly any new teachers from outside the district—only 28 of over 300 teachers were new to the district in 2006—took the Board up on its offer. The study concluded that “money was not the only or even the primary reason that most teachers moved to or stayed” in the district.

“I Refuse”

So where is the disconnect? Why would a teacher leave a career from which he or she receives such professional satisfaction? The same UK poll listed workload as a major concern for those teachers who considered leaving their jobs (79%)—something that may have also prevented prospective teachers in Chattanooga from taking up the challenge of a failing district.

But one former private school social studies teacher and current professor at the University of Pennsylvania specializing in teacher turnover, Robert Ingersoll, says that he quit teaching at K-12 schools due to an “intangible” but “very real” reason. “It’s just a lack of respect” from administrators, he told [The Atlantic in an article on teacher turnover](#), adding that “respected ... lines of work do not have shortages.”

Of course, teachers quit for a variety of reasons—family obligations, illness, cross-country moves, etc.—but by and large, this lack of respect and support seems to be the biggest contributor to teacher turnover. Uncommunicative and unsupportive environments leave teachers feeling disenfranchised from the very institution they are trying to support.

[One study](#) found that lack of administrative support was the primary reason a teacher might leave or consider leaving. This perceived lack of support meant more to teachers than internal politicking, classroom autonomy, facilities, respect from students and parents, state testing, or school safety.

One teacher, disgusted by his current teaching situation, [posted his resignation letter online](#) to air his grievances about the educational system he believed was failing his public school students. “I refuse,” he wrote, “to be led by a top-down hierarchy that is completely detached from the classrooms for which it is supposed to be responsible,” adding that he was “tired of hearing about the miracles my peers are expected to perform, and watching the districts do next to nothing to support or develop them.”

Professional Development and Respect

While certainly inflammatory in its phrasing and delivery, this teacher highlights a common failing within schools: The expectation that teachers will “perform miracles,” whether through higher test scores or improved Portraits of the Graduate, with little to no commitment to their professional development from administrators.

In fact, an expressed commitment to professional development may be the missing factor in schools looking to retain their newest recruits. A [study published by Ingersoll](#) states that a simple induction package consisting of mentor support and regular communication with a superior—be it a Department Chair, Principal, or other administrator—increased retention over those schools that had no induction process at all.

On the other hand, Ingersoll’s study noted that beginner teachers who received a more comprehensive induction process—including professional development seminars and group planning time with other teachers in the same subject—were less than half as likely to leave at the end of the first year than those who had no induction.

Professional development, then, isn’t just a way to improve your teachers’ classroom capabilities or morale—by supporting and empowering your faculty, you strengthen your retention rates. Yet, in the 2007-08 school year, only 5% of beginner teachers recorded in the Ingersoll study received a “comprehensive” induction.

No school should have a “revolving door” of teachers. It’s costly, constantly training new teachers; it’s incredibly destructive to faculty morale; and most importantly, it negatively impacts your students’ school experience. An official professional development strategy like one outlined in [Comprehensive Faculty Development](#) is not a bonus, but absolutely critical for your retention efforts. Quality professional development like [webinars](#) and [educational conferences](#) prove to your faculty that you respect their need to grow as lifelong learners and professionals.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Business Officers Vol. 12 No. 1 [Employee Benefits You Might Not Think of as Benefits](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 1 [Teachers: The Lifeblood of Your School's Success](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 11 No. 4 [Team Professional Development Adds Value to Lessons Learned](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 33 No. 7 [Compensation, Broadbanding, and Teacher Impact](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 10 [Budgeting for Professional Development](#)

I&P Vol. 32 No. 8 [The Changing Paradigm for Professional Development](#)

I&P Vol. 28 No. 14 [Scheduling Professional Development for Faculty and Staff](#)

I&P Vol. 28 No. 8 [Technology and Your Faculty's Professional Development](#)

Bullying: Address the Problem, Attack the Cause

(17% of clicks)

How do you define “bullying”? Each state has a [unique legal definition](#) of what it means to bully, but what do you think of when you hear that one student has bullied another? Is it the boy who had his head flushed in a toilet, or the girl whose lunch money was taken? Sure, but bullying can also be more subtle and insidious. Take Colin, an eleven-year-old boy suffering from a sensory disorder similar to Asperger’s syndrome. Colin told his mother that [he didn’t want a birthday party because no one would come](#). While indirect, this social ostracism certainly constitutes a sort of bullying—all the more difficult to combat because it’s so hard to identify.

Colin’s mom was so upset when she heard her son say this, she [started a Facebook page campaign](#) to collect happy birthday messages for Colin so he might not feel so alone when his birthday rolls around on March 9. But, is this campaign to gather the greetings of strangers really the best way to handle Colin’s isolation?

Slate writer Sarah Dwyer-Olson doesn’t think so. In [her response](#) to the recent media storm surrounding Colin and his lack of friends, Dwyer-Olson asks if Colin will understand that these people are not truly his friends offline. “It is so easy to like a [Facebook] page and write a two-sentiment to someone you have never met,” she says, adding that “it is much harder to ask that awkward child who lives down the block to come over and play, to your children’s total dismay.”

Dwyer-Olsen hit the proverbial nail on the head: It's easy to "fix" the immediate consequences of bullying. It's much more difficult to address the foundational attitudes of a community that allowed the bullying in the first place.

Private-independent schools are seen as safe havens from this sort of harassment. ISM surveys and [national studies](#) corroborate parents' perception of private schools as places free from violence and bullying. Even Victoria Beckham perpetuates this perception, commenting in [a recent interview](#) that she "didn't go to a private school" and that she "was bullied because [she] was different from all the other children at the school."

Popular TV shows like Fox's "Glee" have pushed private school as a respite from bullying. An openly gay character transferred to a private school halfway through the show's second season, just to escape the dangerous attentions of a violent bully. A few seasons later, that [bully tried to hang himself](#), his own tormentors driving him to the reckless act.

In a [CNN interview](#) about the climactic scene and the consequences of bullying, actor Max Adler discusses how, because some teachers are discouraged from discussing difference in their classrooms, bullies believe their abusive behavior is condoned by authority figures. The school culture becomes one of exclusion instead of inclusion, of misinformation because none was shared at all.

Of course, there are behaviors that are acceptable in a school setting—kindness, courtesy, integrity, etc.—and those which are not. In the end, however, a culture of positive peer pressure to promote a healthy, positive environment will help the students "self-police" such inappropriate behavior in their peers.

In a sterling example of positive peer pressure, an elementary school's football team in Massachusetts saw how their water boy was teased by his classmates for wearing suits to school and practice. So, this ["band of brothers"](#) got together and all wore suits to school one day to show their support of their teammate, creating a safe environment for one young man.

This supportive, inclusive environment is one everyone wishes to encourage and cultivate. How do you do this? In a word: Educate. Without outside guidance, families and faculty alike will respond to provocation, occasionally in well-intentioned but misguided ways.

For example, one mother found her daughter had misused her social media accounts to harass a fellow student online. Shocked, the mother had her daughter sell her iPod and donate the proceeds to a bullying-awareness group. All of which was fine, until the mother forced her daughter to write a sign detailing her crime and punishment. The mother photographed her daughter with the sign before posting it online for all to see. The punishment was nothing if not fitting in an "eye for an eye" sort of way, but as the story went viral, it inspired questions as to whether the picture was, itself, [a case of cyberbullying](#).

To avoid situations like this, educate your students on what bullying looks like in all its form—electronic and in-person—and how to respond. Educate your faculty and staff on any state statutes on bullying, new forms of harassment, and how *they* should respond to specific cases while supporting a class-wide community of inclusion. Educate your parents and families on how to encourage their children when they are the victims of bullying behavior—and how to react when *their* children are the bullies.

No matter how (seemingly) homogeneous the environment, every group of people will have outsiders. While admitting mission-appropriate students and faculty strives to reach this universal moral and ethical alignment, the fact remains that these outsiders will still be found in private schools, from children’s cliques to adult “teams.” But, by raising awareness of bullying on all levels and nurturing a supportive, inclusive environment, it is possible to make your private school a true “safe haven” for all who enter its halls.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Risk Managers Vol. 3 No. 2 [Fight Bullying With an Acceptable Use Policy](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Risk Managers Vol. 4 No. 4 [Wisconsin Bullying Case Dismissed: Private School Note To Blame](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 10 No. 8 [The “Bully” MPAA-Rating Controversy](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Risk Managers Vol. 2 No. 2 [Tips for Students: Managing Bullying](#)

Private School News Vol. 10 No. 5 [Cyberbullies Need Protection, Too](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 36 No. 3 [Addressing Bullying and Sexual Misconduct](#)

I&P Vol. 34 No. 2 [The ISM 37-School Parent Survey: Convenience Factors at Private-Independent Schools](#)

“Welcome! Bienvenue! Huanying!”—Three Benefits of International Students

(17% of clicks)

International students can be an enormous boon to your private-independent school, but are you taking full advantage of the opportunities they offer? Read on if you’d like to find three reasons why your foreign students’ presence can give your private-independent school a boost.

Increased Diversity

International students provide a perspective to your school’s community unavailable to students in schools without such programs. Today’s kids are already connecting with students around the world on the internet—and as powerful as the Internet is for

communication and education, experiences are still limited. When your school hosts international students, it fosters varying perspectives on important issues. Students can develop their own opinions while learning to respect the differing views of their peers.

Such diversity efforts can grow beyond anyone's expectations. For example, after sending Palestinian and Jewish students to a conference in Illinois, the [Pacific Ridge School](#) in Carlsbad, California, will host the "[Hands of Peace](#)" conference this summer, welcoming international youths from the Middle East and the United States to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and attempt to understand their cultural "enemies."

Josh Kahn, a Jewish Pacific Ridge student who attended the Illinois conference, [told the San Diego Union-Tribune](#) that "growing up, I had a very black-and-white opinion that Israel was never wrong. Now I'd say my opinion is very much gray"—an outcome that is as fine an example of open-mindedness as any diversity program could ever hope for.

Marketing Benefits

From a marketing perspective, international students can give your educational program serious clout in the eyes of potential parents. In recruiting efforts, fund raisers for international programs, and special events featuring foreign students, international students can provide extra media exposure for your school at both local and national levels.

After all, would we have mentioned Pacific Ridge in this article if the school not hosting international students this summer? No matter how excellent their program may be or wonderful their community, this one act of outreach has given them a powerful marketing opportunity.

In [an interview with USA Today](#), Newcomb School District Superintendent Clark "Skip" Hults, a champion of international students in his own schools, adds that the publicity goes both ways. Students who study abroad in America return home, he says, "very much friends and allies of America. It really does help us do away with the stereotype of the 'ugly American.'"

As the international student program grew in his schools, families moved to his district *because* of the school's newfound diversity. By making the international program a public effort, Hults has doubled the number of students in his schools—a tangible benefit to the "free" marketing provided by foreign exchange students.

Financial Gain

And, of course, there is the fiscal benefit of enrolling international students. Student exchange programs are enormously profitable. International students contributed [more than \\$20 billion](#) to the U.S. economy in the 2010-11 school year through tuition and living expenses, making education for foreign students the fifth-largest U.S. service export. And, according to [a study by Foreign Affairs and International Canada](#), international students

added \$8 billion to the Canadian economy for tuition, housing, and tourism, making Canadian educational services Canada's number-one export to China.

Any student who studies abroad in America must, according to federal law, "pay the full, unsubsidized per capita cost of education," with the [estimates for public school costs ranging from \\$3,000 to \\$10,000](#).

In Newcomb public schools, Hults estimated that the international student program [brought in a quarter of a million dollars](#) during the 2012-13 school year—and that's just from students paying \$5,000 in tuition! While your school should stay true to its financial aid policies, the prospect of filling full-tuition seats at your school with mission-appropriate students should make anyone excited about expanding the international student program.

International students offer a myriad of opportunities for your school by diversifying your academic community, presenting chances for organic media coverage of your school and its mission, and bolstering your school's income to fund mission-appropriate projects. This specialized segment of the student population is worth cultivating for the immediate return, as well as beneficial in the years to come.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM's [International Student Accident and Sickness insurance](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 11 No. 5 [Public Schools Recruit International Students for Income, Diversity](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 8 No. 4 [More International Students Are Finding Their Way to American Campuses](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 12 No. 3 [Developing Your International Students' Networking Skills](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 37 No. 13 [The Student's Role in Re-recruitment](#)

I&P Vol. 37 No. 4 [Look Beyond Your Traditional Marketing Allies](#)

March 2014 – Vol. 13 No. 3

(30.0% open; 8.4% click through as of July 15, 2014)

Wake Up on the Right Side of the Bed—Start School Later!

(30% of clicks)

(Taken down due to President's dislike of the premise & the presence of research that suggests this is NOT the right way to go.)

Waking up can be a drag. With all the apps and gadgets available to help late risers roll out of bed on time, clearly rising and greeting the morning remains the greatest pre-coffee hurdle for many. Such dysfunction can carry over to your classrooms, particularly in your homerooms and early courses. Here's an idea to solve the yawns: Delay your start time! Several private-independent schools across the country are experimenting with later start times and seeing positive results.

One study at a private high school in Rhode Island discovered that delaying the start time by thirty minutes resulted in [improved attendance and fewer trips to the health center](#).

A private high school in Canada has taken this a step further by [starting classes at 9:45 a.m.](#), citing a need for students to get adequate sleep. In fact, the National Sleep Foundation says that [teens need about 9.25 hours of sleep every night](#) for optimal function the next day, yet only 15% of teens report sleeping for even 8.5 hours on school nights. By allowing teens to "sleep in," later start times can increase alertness and participation in the classroom.

Scheduling later times may also [help reduce bussing expenses](#), as the Duluth Public Schools District in conjunction with local private schools discovered while examining their current schedule. Such a schedule change may interfere with current bussing configurations, but [flipping the start times](#) with elementary and primary schools so *they* start first and the high school students start later might be an easy solution.

[Another study](#) found that delaying the start time by one hour in selected public North Carolina middle schools resulted in increased standardized test scores overall. The greatest improvement was seen in students with below-average scores, suggesting "later start times would narrow gaps in student achievement." Furthermore, the later start time resulted in less television, more time spent on homework, and fewer absences as noted by schools in the study.

Moreover, *not* changing your schedule could result in greater repercussions than increased yawns and distractions. The researcher in the North Carolina study remarked that "high-achieving students in a school that changed to an *earlier* start time might transfer to private schools" (emphasis added).

Other research in public high schools across eight schools, 9,000 students, and three years showed that [academic performance improved in schools starting at 8:30 a.m. or later](#). After one school in the study moved its start time to 8:55 a.m. from 7:35 a.m., car crashes from teen drivers rushing to school were reduced by 70%. Tardiness and absentee rates were lower than before, and more than 60% of the students were able to get the recommended eight hours of sleep or more during the school week.

Have you tried out a different starting time and seen changes? Let us know in the comments below!

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 4 [Is Your Schedule Toxic?](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 10 No. 4 [Teens Would Benefit From Later Morning Start](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 30 No. 1 [The Symptoms of a Toxic Schedule—And the Remedy](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 6 [Scheduling the Upper School Calendar](#)

International Recruitment Strategies

(15% of clicks)

[Last month](#), we talked about some of the benefits international students can give to your private-independent school. But how can your school increase its international enrollment? It's not like teachers can knock on potential students' doors and invite them to a meet-and-greet next Saturday.

Well, actually, they could. One school system in Canada has devised a way to increase the visibility of their international student programs by ["lending out" its teachers](#) to Chinese school districts. In doing so, these schools in Richmond, British Columbia, cultivate a relationship with international students in their home schools. If these students desire a English-driven education abroad, they'll look first to the districts from which their first Canadian-English teachers hailed.

Of course, paying for teachers to hold classes in another country away from your students may not be a feasible option. So, here are some recruitment alternatives for those pining for international diversity in their classrooms.

- **Commit to sending your staff to the country itself** to demonstrate your dedication toward recruitment of international students.
- **Create focus groups of international families already part of your community** so you can learn how to make better appeals to those of foreign cultures.
- **Develop relationships** with international student recruiters and "sister schools" abroad.
- **Partner with international education associations** to increase visibility.
- **Post dynamic online content**, like blogs or videos of current students, to encourage applications.
- **Create recruitment materials in the native languages of targeted countries**—e.g., your school desires more Japanese exchange students, so make a Japanese FAQ Web page and brochure available.

- **Find and train teachers**—not just your international admission team!—who understand the culture and language of the majority of your international students.
- **Establish resources** for international students, such as adjustment counseling and peer-mentoring programs for the duration of their stay.
- **Reach out to local communities** with residents from the country you wish to engage to garner some grassroots campaigning for your international program.

By federal law, all international students holding J-1 and F-1 student visas need insurance. ISM's [International Student Accident and Sickness Insurance plan](#) meets or exceeds requirements and can follow your students [through their college years, too!](#)

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 8 No. 4 [More International Students](#)
 ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 11 No. 5 [Public Schools Recruit International Students for Income, Diversity](#)
 Private School News Vol. 13 No. 2 ["Welcome! Bienvenue! Huanyang!" Three Benefits of International Students](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 37 No. 4 [Look Beyond Your Traditional Marketing Allies](#)
I&P Vol. 37 No. 13 [The Student's Role in Re-recruitment](#)

Merit Pay: The Debate Rages On

(26% of clicks)

Adequate compensation for teachers has long been the subject of debate, in both private-independent and public school spheres. Recently, merit pay has become the focus of renewed compensation efforts, particularly in its implementation. Should pay be based on student performance, or on other factors? Public schools using merit pay based on test scores have seen little success. Private schools, on the other hand, use merit pay for faculty growth and retention purposes.

In an [interview with CNN](#), founder of [StudentsFirst](#) and former DC schools chancellor Michelle Rhee said:

"...for [ineffective] teachers to be paid the exact same amount as our effective teachers makes absolutely no sense whatsoever—we *have* to engage in a system where we're looking at teachers as individuals, not as interchangeable widgets who should all be paid the same amount of money."

Rhee's merit-pay proposal has gained traction in all aspects of education. In public schools, merit pay takes the form of rewards and bonuses for more students scoring higher mandatory standardized test scores. Private schools can more easily implement merit pay based on faculty performance in line with a school's mission and goals. Such pay scales are often one of several factors considered in competitive compensation packages for private schools across the board.

Of course, not all people agree on the efficacy of merit pay as implemented by public schools. CNN blog writer and New York University Research Professor of Education Diane Ravitch believes that [merit pay has been tried before without effect](#), citing a failure of teachers in Nashville, Tennessee, to gain the [offered \\$15,000 bonus if their students' test scores rose](#). Furthermore, Ravitch contends that teamwork and collaboration are destroyed in a school using merit pay as the proverbial carrot on the end of the motivational stick.

On the same blog, special education teacher Colleen McGurk rebukes Ravitch's narrow view of merit pay, stating that [teachers associate merit pay with a school's recognition of excellence](#) and that "paying teachers more for demonstrated excellence will say loud and clear that teaching is synonymous with quality and high expectations." Differentiated pay—along with better evaluation methods—is how McGurk suggests schools attract and retain their top talent.

Other studies, like this one sponsored by the National Bureau of Economic Research, [may corroborate McGurk's claim](#) that merit pay increases respect. The study found that teacher salary incentives can be correlated with higher levels of student performance, though it was inconclusive whether such improvement was driven by the incentives themselves or if other "variables [of] unobserved school quality"—like teachers' awareness of their administrators' respect—were at play. Such a result would make the teacher incentives indirectly associated with (though not causing) improved student performance.

Private-independent schools have taken the lead in merit-pay and "broadbanding" styles of financial compensation. Roughly half of the private schools in New York City have [longstanding merit-pay systems](#), with many of the rest experimenting with adjustments to their own pay scales. [Rohan Woods School](#) in St. Louis, Missouri, bases one-third of any teacher's raise on individual performance, while the remaining two-thirds is based on the school's performance as a whole and cost-of-living adjustments.

In situations where merit pay seems to fail, the financial incentive (as a bonus or raise) is usually [linked to a single point of evaluation](#), typically measured by a test. Merit pay disappoints when its distribution hinges on achievement of a single goal measured at only one time; rather, use merit pay as a tool for rewarding and retaining high-performing teachers.

A teacher's work is constant through the year. Why should his or her compensation be based on a single incident? Such a system echoes archaic evaluation plans, where an administrator will visit a class once a year at a prearranged time. How can the teacher be fairly evaluated in a single instant? It's impossible. So link merit pay to a broader evaluation scheme like the one outlined in [Comprehensive Faculty Development](#), in which faculty compensation is related to achievement of various predetermined professional goals during the year.

For more information on ISM's research concerning appropriate use of merit pay and when it's most effective, check out this month's *Ideas & Perspectives* article "[Merit Pay: A Caution](#)," available for [Silver and Gold Consortium members](#).

If you'd like ISM's help creating an effective merit-pay system for your private-independent school, you can attend our **Summer Institute** workshop "[Comprehensive Faculty Development: From Recruitment to Evaluation to Retention](#)" in Stowe, Vermont, from July 13 to 17.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Business Officers Vol. 9 No. 2 [Merit-Based Pay Is More Than a Trend](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 3 [Make a Merit-Based Pay System Work for Your School](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 11 No. 7 [Considering Merit Pay: Motivation, Fairness, and Retention](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 30 No. 5 [Pizza, Compensation, and Faculty Culture: Is It Time for Merit Pay?](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 15 [Merit Pay and Bonuses for Private-Independent School Teachers: Boon or Bust?](#)

I&P Vol. 38 No. 4 [A Simple Merit-Pay Approach for Private-Independent Schools](#)

I&P Vol. 39 No. 4 [Merit Pay: A Caution](#)

April 2014—Vol. 13 No. 4

(30.3% open; 8.1% click through as of July 15, 2014)

Professional Development: Just Ask!

(5% of clicks)

ISM believes that quality professional development for faculty and staff directly correlates to higher levels of student engagement, satisfaction, and performance. But, not all private-independent schools place professional development high on their priority lists. You may need to ask directly for continuing educational opportunities. Knowing this, how do you request for professional development from your supervisors?

Do Your Due Diligence—Research!

Let's say you want to attend ISM's [Advancement Academy](#)—a professional “boot camp” specifically designed for private-independent school Advancement Teams hosted in San Diego, California—but your school has never sent its staff or faculty members to an overnight workshop. You'd like to approach your boss to ask if you may attend because you believe your development efforts must become more cohesive if they're to be successful, but you don't know where to start.

People are more likely to contribute school resources (e.g., time and money) to projects that are thoroughly thought out and planned. Why would you treat your professional development with anything but the greatest of forethought and planning? Even if you see an email or flyer for a conference that looks fantastic, don't rush straight to your boss requesting funds or time off—arm yourself with information.

Brazen Careerist recommends that [you find out about any fees or related expenses](#) like lodging and travel *before* going to your managers to request professional development. (In the case of our Advancement Academy, all lodging and meals are included in the conference fee, so that's one worry already taken care of.) Location and timing are important to know, too, as are tangible benefits to the school.

Ask yourself, “How can this specific program benefit not only me, but also my school?” Use the answers you find when you present your case for professional development.

Time Your Approach

You've researched ISM's Advancement Academy and you've decided that this program will give you the biggest bang for your buck in terms of quantifiable benefits for your school's current program. Great! You're ready to talk to your boss.

But wait a second! There's a time and a place for everything, and making your manager drop everything *this second* to talk with you might not be the best plan. If you demand an

immediate answer, the gut reaction will most likely be a denial. Give your manager every reason to say yes and plan when you approach him or her.

AllThingsAdmin suggests that you discuss professional development [during a slow time](#) when your manager will be in a more positive frame of mind. Perhaps try verbally suggesting the opportunity to your manager, then following up later with written details via an email or packet on his or her desk.

Above all things, *AllThingsAdmin* advises, do NOT approach your manager with your request in front of colleagues. Maybe the budget only has enough money to send you, but not your co-worker. (Perhaps the manager wants to send your co-worker and not you!) There are dozens of reasons why this is a terrible idea, so just don't do it.

When They Say “No”

Sometimes we don't always get the response we're looking for the first time. Swallow your disappointment and keep trying! *BusinessWeek* suggests [following up your conversation](#) after a little bit of time has passed with a brief email.

In the email, you can (respectfully) clarify a point you were unsure about during the initial meeting, or suggest a way around obstacles your manager presented. Can the school not afford to send you to Advancement Academy? You could, perhaps, ask to register for a [webinar](#) or a series of webinars covering similar material. These are less expensive, but less personalized and productive.

But let's pretend that despite your best arguments, your boss is simply not in a position to allocate the funds or time off needed for your ideal professional development session. In such cases, *U.S. News* reminds us that we can [take our professional development into our own hands](#) by investing personal resources in [a guidebook](#) or webinar.

Apply the knowledge you've gained at your school, cite the source when revealing the improvements, and perhaps next time your manager will think differently about funding your professional development requests.

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 5 [Summer of Professional Development](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 7 [When Professional Development Is Useless for Your Teachers](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 7 [Does Your Teacher Evaluation System Include Professional Development?](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

ISM Research Area—[Effective Teacher Professional Development: What the Literature Says](#)

Why Go Private?

(31% of clicks)

When choosing education options for their children, parents weigh many different considerations before making final decisions. ISM research shows that safety, academic rigor, and "value-added" educational opportunities to be top priorities for parents when they "go private." Still, numbers only tell you half of the story. Here are some parents describing their families' experiences in the private-independent school universe, and why they decided to "go private."

Culture Shock

Marilyn Johnson told *Watchdog* reporter Mary Tilotson that [she couldn't see her son thriving in her city's public school system](#), and so she enrolled Marshall at St. George's Independent School.

Marilyn says that families and friends ask how she can afford to send Marshall to a private school. Her response? "How can you afford not to? My child is my investment."

As for why she picked St. George's, Marilyn says that the school's mission aligned with her personal ambitions for her son. Tilotson reports that students "aren't allowed to cheat or steal, and they attend chapel services a few times a week." The school's culture is a great fit for Marshall, too. Marilyn says that she overhears her son and his friends talking with enjoyment about their school, dressing respectfully, and participating in "good plain clean fun."

Embracing Special Needs & Diversity

Huffington Post writer Jennifer King and her husband [sent their son](#), diagnosed with ADHD, to a private school for the "traditionally structured environment in a smaller school with more accountability for his school work, a lower student-to-teacher ratio, and a stronger emphasis on discipline" to help with his potential learning difficulties.

As for their daughter, they wanted a place "where she can stretch herself beyond her comfort zone" academically. They felt a private school was the best place for her to do so.

Perhaps surprisingly, King writes that they chose the school they did in part due to its "socioeconomic and ethnic diversity, reflecting the community and world in which we live." King wryly adds that "[yes], the private school is more diverse than the public one."

“Value-Added” Faith-Based Alternatives

For other parents, like Dean Bill Henk, the [decision to “go private”](#) ended up being a theological one. Initially, Henk and his wife hadn’t considered keeping their daughter Audrey in private school past her preschool days. But, Henk says, “curious and unexpected outcomes occurred” thanks to Audrey’s enrollment in a Christian-based preschool, like her stories about what she’d learned about God at school.

As Audrey grew older, the Henks kept her enrolled at Christian mission-oriented schools for the “value-added” aspect of her educational experience. Bill Henk is quick to qualify their experience, saying that “[if] the education our daughter was receiving at ANY school struck us as academically inferior, she’d be attending elsewhere.” In the end, the “value-added” of a Catholic-oriented education was the deciding factor.

Skeptic Turned Believer

U.K. journalist Janet Murray became a private school parent, despite her previous cynicism, because of her daughter Katy’s particular needs. She writes about her evolution from skeptic to believer in the private school system in her biographical article for *The Guardian*, [“Why I Sent My Child to a Private School”](#).

Because Murray is a working mother, she needed a preschool program that took her professional working hours into account. The local public school program, with its two-hour daily sessions, wasn’t going to cut it. Besides, Katy had difficulty adapting to new situations, and Murray didn’t want to toss her into anything Katy couldn’t handle.

Then, she found out about the local prep school that offered full working hours for its preschool program in addition to holiday care, which gave Murray pause for thought. She describes her first visit as “welcoming” and mentions the direct attention the nursery manager gave to both Murray and her daughter (“The nursery manager made me a coffee and sat and talked to me about my child—a real contrast to other schools I’d seen.”) Because of the manager’s personal attention to Murray, the preschool gained a new student.

Now that Katy is grade-school age, Murray has kept her daughter in the private school sector. Murray credits small class sizes and the private school atmosphere to Katy’s achievements, which Murray describes as “way beyond expectations for her age.”

As for private schools overall, Murray says that she’s seen many schools over the years as a reporter on education topics, and “while each [private school] has a slightly different feel, underpinning that are always strong discipline, high standards and a healthy sense of competition.”

Stop guessing why families love your school and start *knowing!* With help from [ISM's Survey Services](#), you can get hard data reflecting your school's unique situation, as well as professional analysis to help you understand the results.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Trustees Vol. 12 No. 8 [A Report on Why and How Parents Choose Private Schools](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 8 No. 5 [The Private School Teaching Difference](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 7 No. 7 [Quality Advisory Sets Private Schools Apart](#)

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 11 [Find Out What They Think Before They Leave the School](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 30 No. 3 [Focus on Your School's Unique Family Demographics](#)

I&P Vol. 34 No. 2 [The ISM 37-School Parent Survey: Convenience Factors at Private Schools](#)

I&P Vol. 35 No. 4 [Family Satisfaction and Retention in the Current Economic Climate: 2010](#)

The New SAT Exam: What You Need to Know

(20% of clicks)

The SAT exam's distributor, the College Board, has (yet again) [announced sweeping changes](#) to the exam. Its president, David Coleman, fresh from his work on the new Common Core academic standards, [said in March](#) that the SAT has “become disconnected from the work of our high schools” and will change to better reflect the realities and demands of 21st Century education.

So, what will the test look like in 2016?

The Writing Portion and the Dissolution of “Five Dollar Words”

Perhaps the largest change announced is an overhaul of the writing component. In two years, the essay portion will be optional and the “critical reading” section will be changed almost beyond recognition. The [new essay section](#) will allow students 50 minutes to complete—instead of the current 25-minute restriction—and will require analysis and appropriate citation of provided documents to support the writer’s argument.

Furthermore, the (required) critical reading section will focus on “relevant” words that commonly appear in the professional and academic spheres rather than esoteric lists of long “five dollar words” that have little or no bearing on everyday speech. The College Board hopes that this renewed focus on commonly used professional words will allow students to demonstrate [“how word choice shapes meaning, tone, and impact”](#) of a passage.

The Math Portion and the (Re)introduction of Algebra

The math portion of the exam will also be revamped. Rather than focusing on a wide range of mathematic topics, the redesigned 2016 SAT test will [focus on three primary areas](#): linear equations, more complex quadratic functions and equations, and proportional reasoning like ratios and percentages. The test designers feel that renewed focus on fewer topics—those central to postsecondary educational work—will improve the SAT’s predictors of the test taker’s likely success in college.

Furthermore, the [College Board’s released specifications](#) for the math portion state that for 20 out of the 57 total math questions, calculators will be banned. Fifteen of these questions will be multiple choice, and the last five will feature the “student-produced response” grid answers.

Wider Changes

With the elimination of the writing portion of the exam, the high score will once again be 1600 instead of the now-high grade of 2400. But wait! That’s not all that has changed in the SAT’s scoring system.

In a move that affects both math and critical reading sections, the College Board will [remove the quarter-point reduction for incorrect answers](#) on the multiple-choice sections of the test, as well as [decrease the number of potential answers](#) from five to four.

Also starting in spring 2016, the exam will be [offered both digitally and in print](#). This development will (hopefully) mean a faster turnaround time for results, resulting in reduced overall costs.

Collaboration With Khan Academy

Finally, the College Board has announced a new partnership with nonprofit Khan Academy to provide free test-preparation services to students who cannot afford traditional (and expensive) private tutoring and test preparation. When announcing the coalition, President Coleman [said](#) that “[the] College Board cannot stand by while some test-prep providers intimidate parents at all levels of income into the belief that the only way to secure their child’s success is to pay for costly test preparation and coaching,” adding, “It’s time to shake things up.”

Khan Academy will have access to previously unreleased SAT questions from past exams. Additionally, Khan Academy will be designing activities and online instruction based on the new standards to assist with preparation for the 2016 exam.

This alliance doesn’t give Khan Academy a monopoly on the new material, however. Other organizations will receive updated test questions for preparation purposes as the College Board further refines the new and improved exam. In fact, ABC News collected some [“draft questions”](#) that the College Board has released to give us an idea of what new questions students will see in the revised test.

For better or worse, changes are once again coming to the SAT, and teachers must wait two years to see how these broad statements translate into the nitty-gritty test scenario. New information will be released as we get closer to the release date in 2016. But, for now, all any educator can do is teach his or her students as well as possible—and really, isn't that all anyone can do, test changes or no?

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 9 No. 6 [*Ambitious Course Names Don't Measure Up to Higher Standardized Test Scores*](#)

Private School News Vol. 8 No. 9 [*Private School SAT Facts*](#)

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 2 [*Test-Taking Technology Advances*](#)

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 9 [*Teacher Anxiety Is Contagious*](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 36 No. 1 [*Advanced Placement: A Critical Study*](#)

May 2014—Vol. 13 No. 5

(29.1% open; 6.9% click through as of July 15, 2014)

Give IT Some TLC

(13% of clicks)

More and more, technology plays a bigger role in the classroom. We use it to create, explore, communicate, and store important pieces of a puzzle that, when assembled, help create part of your students' overall educational experience. With increased use, however, comes an increased need for technical support and expertise.

Cue your IT department!

Whether that department is one dedicated professional or a team caring for all your private-independent school's devices and software licenses, these people work hard to keep your school safe and moving forward into the 21st century. But sometimes it can feel like your priorities and theirs aren't on the same page. Here, then, are some tips on how to work well with your IT department.

Reboot first, then call.

No, the IT people are not dismissing your problem when they ask if you've restarted your machine. As it turns out, rebooting your computer or device often fixes some of the more common issues. Tech writer Chris Hoffman says that when software code is to blame, restarting your computer [allows the code to start from "square one"](#) and (often) makes the computer run smoothly once more.

Don't download questionable software or apps.

Common sense, right? And, on a related note, don't get upset when your school's firewall blocks you from certain sites that have been identified as security threats or prevents you from downloading certain attachments. The firewall means that, while you can't always get the schedule for the next division meeting, you also won't have your school's network compromised because you [downloaded that seemingly innocuous "agenda.zip" attachment](#).

Know what your IT people can and cannot do.

Not all information/technology people are good at the same things. If they're really good at working out Office program suite glitches, for example, they might not know how to repair the fax machine that's spitting out random cover pages. Assuming your tech person knows how to perform miracles with every program and piece of hardware in your school will lead only to heartache and anger on all sides.

Just like catching flies is easier with honey than vinegar, exercising large quantities of patience when your IT Department is struggling with a new or large problem will go further than unleashing your frustration. Remember, this crisis will pass (sooner or later), and you'll need their goodwill later on, too.

Read your email!

Sure, there's a chance that [a squirrel ran into the transformer](#) when your email (or power) is out, but it may be scheduled maintenance requiring certain services to be taken offline. Being aware of downed services—especially Internet for tech-heavy classrooms!—before the scheduled maintenance allows folks to make contingency plans. Often, your IT

Department is your best defense against unexpected delays or problems. Before you get caught off-guard by a similar scenario, make a point to read all email from your IT people.

Follow instructions.

It's easy to comply with commonsense items like "[Remember to log out of computers in the computer lab!](#)" or "[Change your password often!](#)". Sometimes, though, instructions from the IT Department mean we have to change our computer habits, and that's rarely easy.

Take operating system (OS) updates. When a user learns one OS—responsible for how software executes and peripherals are controlled—he or she could be wary of updating to a new one. But, as IT people know, staying with an outdated OS merely for comfort's sake presents security risks for that device and all others connected to it over the local network.

For a real-world example of this problem, think about the repercussions of keeping Windows XP on *any* device connected to your school's network, now that [support and security updates have ceased as of April 8](#). Keeping an old OS could lead to your IT system getting hacked, like the April Fool's prankster who sent out a mass text to families enrolled at an Australian school, saying [school was closed due to fire damage](#).

On the flip side, you shouldn't upgrade to the "latest and greatest" gadget or program on a whim. Wait until your IT Department has given the green light—usually once team is sure it can handle troubleshooting the new system—before spending money and resources on an upgrade.

(For the record, the recent hack for Windows XP that claims to update XP for the next five years is [not recommended by Microsoft](#) as the new updates "are not tested against Windows XP.")

So what does all of this have to do with you? When your IT person tells you that it's time to change to a newer OS, email program, or other software—it's time to change. When your device is connected to the school network, you may be placing everyone at risk if you don't follow the IT Department's directions.

In the end, recognize that your IT people are an integral part of your school, and that everything they do is intended to help protect and promote your school's best interests. Take some time to bring them some coffee and a kind word, and you may see your broken laptop go to the top of their priority list.

Is your school integrating new software and hardware into your classrooms? Does implementing a 1:1 BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) program feel like an impossible dream? Send your IT Department to ISM's workshop [Directing a Mission-Appropriate Educational Tech Program](#) in Stowe, Vermont, if you want to upgrade your school's use of technology.

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 10 No. 5 [BYOT: Cell Phones Approves For Classrooms](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 6 1:1 [Laptops in the Classroom—Where Are We Now?](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 10 No. 4 [Good Social Media Policy Protects Your School](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 6 [School Is Five Days a Week \(Except When It's Not\)](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 35 No. 3 [The 21st Century School: Curriculum and Technology](#)

I&P Vol. 28 No. 13 [Technology Self-Assessment and Your Strategic Plan](#)

I&P Vol. 28 No. 8 [Technology and Your Faculty's Professional Development](#)

Four Things You Didn't Know About School Gardens

(24% of clicks)

School gardens certainly gain popularity this time of year, when the day lengthens and the air grows warm. While it's a nice, "feel good" sort of activity, there are other advantages to having an agricultural bent to your curriculum, like chicken therapy. (No, really! "[Bird therapy](#)" has helped at least one student's attention span.) Continue reading for four more interesting facts about garden and horticultural programs schools are using to engage students and community alike.

1. You can sell the produce of your garden.

Well, in California, anyway. [Law AB 2367](#) allows schools to sell produce raised by students to fund improvements and maintenance to those gardens. Schools in [Chicago](#), [Kansas](#), [Virginia](#), [New York](#), and [South Carolina](#) can all sell their produce under various laws and regulations, so check your local statutes to see if this is a possibility for your school!

2. Your garden can fuel lunchtime.

If you don't feel like organizing a farmer's market, why not serve the food your students grow? [LifeLab](#) collected [a variety of protocols](#) from across the United States to assist new garden-to-cafeteria programs, including handling and serving recommendations. (Quick tip from the blog: If you use a vendor for your lunch service, adjustments to the contract might be required!)

3. Gardens can be (relatively) inexpensive and easy to accommodate (spacewise).

Dreams of cultivating a school garden don't have to wither and die from lack of space or funds. Just talk to [startup-millionaire-philanthropist Kimbal Musk](#) and his nonprofit [The Kitchen Community](#) to find out about special "[learning gardens](#)" available for educational use. School gardens don't require maintenance-heavy raised wooden beds or permanent concrete beds to get growing. Musk's recycled-plastic, modular garden beds allow for schools to create their own green space despite a lack of available soil-space.

And if you're low on space in general, you could give [Woolly Pocket gardens](#) a shot. These special pockets can attach to fences in sunny locations to allow gardens full of produce to grow vertically, rather than taking up ground space. "[Woolly School Gardens](#)" come with complete set-ups with customized seed packets and sample curricula for various grade levels, and the site even features [a fundraising page](#) if you need some extra help coming up with the funds!

4. Use your garden to teach science!

If you're looking for a neat way to combine your school garden with a more "traditional" class lesson, why not collect some fall leaves?

It sounds crazy, but those colorful leaves can introduce chromatography to a science class, according to a post by Michigan State University Extension. Students can separate the different pigments from the leaves by using a simplified version of the process scientists use to separate different solutes within a solution. If you'd like the full process to use in the classroom, [go here](#).

Other teachers [use the gardens to teach](#) local ecosystems, plant structure and reproduction, decay, and even gravity! (That's why plant roots always go down instead of up, apparently.)

If you want more lesson plans and teaching curricula, check out *Syracuse Grow's* [Youth Gardening Resource Directory](#) for a fairly comprehensive list of online resources available for any school to use.

School gardens are not only a great idea, but also a great resource for your school to teach its mission in new, "green" ways! What ways have you incorporated your school's garden into the curriculum? Share in the comment section below!

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 5 [Connecting Your School Garden With Others](#)

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 3 [A New Publication About Greening Your Curriculum](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Risk Managers Vol. 1 No. 5 [Garden Safety Guidelines](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 28 No. 3 [Planning School Grounds for Outdoor Learning](#)

I&P Vol. 31 No. 15 [Roofscaping: The Benefits of 'Green Roofing'](#)

I&P Vol. 32 No. 7 [When Urban Sprawl Threatens Your Country Day School](#)

Advancement Team, Assemble!

(46% of clicks)

Your private-independent school receives funds not only through predictable hard income from tuition, but also through unpredictable funnels, such as your school's development efforts and various philanthropic events. When ISM talks about a school's "advancement plan," then, we're really talking about all of these financial efforts combined, not just admissions or development alone. One person—or even a whole department!—can't accomplish everything, which is why your school's Advancement Team is so important.

But who's on this team, and how does each member contribute to the overall effort?

Development Director

When someone thinks about his or her school's advancement plan, the Development Director is one of the first people who pops to mind. For donations to the annual fund, endowment, and other fundraising initiatives, the Development Director is certainly a fundamental implementer of the advancement plan.

Admission Officer

The Admission Director (or other admission representative) is often the primary school administrator who reaches out to the local community. He/She introduces prospective families to your school's mission and culture. At the same time, the Admission Office collects

information about said families for use by other school administrators—though, of course, taking every precaution to maintain legal confidentiality!

By “driving the bus” on school composition through admission decisions, the Admission Director is an integral part of the Advancement Team.

Marketing/Communication Director

Whoever directs your school’s “formal” marketing efforts—including event coordination, social media maintenance, and traditional advertising through print and digital media—should have a permanent seat on your school’s Advancement Team. Marketing efforts should be clear and coordinated across divisions and offices, creating a core message that can be tailored for your school’s various audiences (prospective and current families, students, alumni, donors, etc.).

The only way this type of coordination can occur is if the person in charge of your marketing knows what’s going on in *all* offices and where everyone would like to go. (Group editorial calendars keeping track of all campaigns and events would be a good addition, too.) Furthermore, by putting your Marketing/Communication Director on the Advancement Team, innovative ways to spread the word about new initiatives or campaigns can be created and implemented with input from all parties, not just a select few.

School Head

As the “de facto” leader of advancement at your school, the School Head is a primary piece of the advancement puzzle.

As the chief representative-leader of your school to the general public, your School Head should be aware of advancement initiatives and understand how his/her support is integral to those initiatives’ success. Also, as the person in direct, regular contact with the Board of Trustees, the School Head helps the Advancement Team keep its plans mission-based and grounded in the school’s long-term strategic plans.

Important Allies

Who else helps your school’s Advancement Team? Division Heads and Department Chairs, for a start. Because they interact with your constituency more directly and more frequently within school walls, these team members may be your best “advancement ambassadors” with current families and can alert you to changing trends others may not spot.

Business Managers, too, can offer great resources for the Advancement Team. Their intimate knowledge of the school’s budget and expenditures can inform goal setting for the team’s various efforts, as well as keep your more idealistic members grounded into real-world realities.

The Whole Team

Recognizing each individual “player’s” contribution to the overall advancement plan is important. At the same time, all members of your Advancement Team must know who does what, where, when, and why—and how it can impact an individual’s work. Only in working together can the Advancement Team enact a brilliant, progressive, and effective school-wide advancement policy.

Thrust your Advancement Team into the fire and forge them into an unstoppable force to be reckoned with at summer’s [Advancement Academy](#)? Held in sunny San Diego, the Advancement Academy provides time with expert mentors to help your team develop custom

plans for implementation this fall, as well as courses to further refine individual members' skill and expertise.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 6 *Fund Raising. Development. Advancement. What Does it All Mean?*

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 10 No. 10 *It's Summer ... What Should the Development Committee Be Doing?*

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 12 No. 6 *Admission and Development Go Hand in Hand*

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 30 No. 16 *The Comprehensive Advancement Model*

I&P Vol. 37 No. 6 *21st Century Schools: The ISM Advancement Model*

I&P Vol. 34 No. 2 *The Shared Roles of Your School's Advancement Offices*

I&P Vol. 35 No. 10 *Integrating Faculty Into the Advancement Process*

June 2014—Vol. 13 No. 6

(31% open; 11.3% click through as of July 15, 2014)

2014 Summer Reading List for Private School Administrators

(54% of clicks)

While the warm weather invites people to step outside their offices for some well-deserved relaxation from the stress of the school year, summer break also presents an opportunity to catch up on some books from your “read when I get a chance” list. Here’s *our* list of must-read books for private school administrators for the summer.

[Blah, Blah, Blah: What To Do When Words Don't Work](#)

by *Don Roam*

Ever zone out during a presentation—or worry that your audience is lost during yours? That’s a common problem, and Don Roam believes it’s because we default to using broad, vague images and vocabulary rather than quickly presenting the point of a problem. In *Blah, Blah, Blah*, Roam offers exercises and tools to help us understand what the most pertinent aspect of a problem or situation is, and present that point in the most convincing way possible.

[The Dip: A Little Book That Teaches You When to Quit \(and When to Stick\)](#)

by *Seth Godin*

As much as you love offering the best education to your community and inspiring the next generation of students, sometimes the pressures and troubles of daily life can force you down into a “dip,” which Seth Godin defines as “a temporary setback that will get better if you keep pushing.” But what’s worth pushing against, and what’s worth dropping as a waste of time? That’s where *The Dip* really shines. Through various exercises and real-world examples, Godin demonstrates how to distinguish between the obstacles worth fighting and the ones zapping your time and resources from worthier projects.

[The Smartest Kids in the World: And How They Got That Way](#)

by *Amanda Ripley*

On its surface, the basic structure of the book doesn’t seem all that exciting. However, *The Smartest Kids in the World* becomes a fascinating case study of global teaching pedagogy. Amanda Ripley puts her investigative reporting skills to use when she follows three students during their year in a study abroad program. What’s unique about these high-performing American students is that each spends his or her year in countries categorized as “high performing” according to international standardized testing. Using a combination of the students’ narratives coupled with research and data from Ripley’s observations on the various educational systems and how they help (and hurt) their students, *The Smartest Kids in the World* becomes a fascinating glimpse into how a school’s mission influences and molds the young people of the world.

[Word of Mouth Marketing](#)

by *Andy Sernovitz*

With a snappy sense of humor coupled with pragmatic methods to grassroots marketing, Andy Sernovitz's book illustrates the fundamentals to good marketing, and why some inexpensive advertisements and other multimillion-dollar campaigns collect figurative dust. The secret? Honesty and transparency creates satisfied "clients" (read "families") who become community advocates for your school. For more real world examples on how to capitalize on such momentum, grab *Word of Mouth Marketing* for your summer vacation plans.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 12 No. 10 [Summer Reading for the Admission Office: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Officers Vol. 12 No. 10 [Summer Reading for the Development Office: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 12 No. 10 [Summer Reading for School Heads: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 10 [Summer Reading for Division Heads: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Business Officers Vol. 12 No. 10 [Summer Reading for Business Officers: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 25 No. 6 [Marketing New Teachers](#)

I&P Vol. 39 No. 6 [Leadership Findings: A Review](#)

I&P Vol. 34 No. 14 [The 21st Century School: Teaching Time](#)

I&P Vol. 38 No. 4 [Waiting Pools: Base Enrollment on Class Needs and Mission](#)

“What Your Students Did Over Summer Vacation”

(5% of clicks)

For most students, summer vacation offers a time of relaxation and rest before the start of another jam-packed school year. For others, though, summer marks the beginning of new adventures and opportunities otherwise unnoticed during days full of classes and nights full of homework. What are your students doing this summer? Read on for a glimpse into the possibilities of summer break.

Summer Camp Programs

Many private-independent schools offer summer camp programs ranging from the artistic to the academic. Boarding schools especially are [in a great position to offer sleepaway camps](#), as they already possess overnight accommodations. Other schools offer programs only to current students or those recommended by current families as a fun recruitment activity.

Of course, summer programs aren't held at school alone. Students can choose day camps or overnight camps, wilderness camps or theater camps, and even secular or denominational camps. For a list of some phenomenal summer camps, check out *Top Education Degrees's* [“50 Most Amazing Summer Camps in the U.S.”](#) or—for those desiring “beautiful locations and top-notch facilities”—*Forbe's* [“America's Priciest Summer Camp”](#) list, where camp tuition can be more than \$10,000 for a single session.

College Visits

When there's no class to keep you from travelling long distances, summer can be a great time to visit universities and colleges. Today, many students focus on finding the right "fit" for their higher education plans, and the way a college comes across on paper might be very different than the impression they offer on a tour. Zola Schneider encourages the visit in her book [Campus Visits & College Interviews](#), as it's a great opportunity to ask questions of "real" people.

Besides, as Dave Berry at *College Confidential* [points out](#), "it's sometimes easier to combine visits with summer vacation plans." So don't be surprised if your upper school students return this fall with stories of beautiful beaches—and interesting campus tours.

Get a Job!

Forget about the money summer jobs earn for students—college admission counselors look highly on employment during a student's high school years.

According to [The College Board](#), "working teaches students about responsibility," as well as demonstrating "maturity, [...] independence, and initiative." Others on *College Confidential's* forum [agree](#):

- "Admission officers want to see that you aren't just the student who does nothing but sleep, do the minimum amount of schoolwork to get good grades, and relax. Because they want a student who at least shows they can be dedicated to something they are not legally required to do. A part-time job may not be academic, but it does show that you can dedicate yourself."
- "Colleges want to see what you do with your time. Absence of information means all you do is play video games and grow mold, so a part-time job is as good as most other [extra curriculars]."
- "[One student] used to do a lot of odd jobs and errands for an elderly couple who lived next door, gratis. He mentioned that on his app and at least one scholarship he received mentioned that specifically as something that impressed them."

For students looking to expand their repertoire of college admission topics (and earn some extra money), show them *MoneyCrasher's* ["12 Great Summer Jobs for High School Students"](#) and AOL *Jobs's* ["Best-Paying Summer Jobs"](#) based on forecasts from the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). (Hint: Pharmacy technicians and lifeguards are great picks.)

Summer break is a time to explore, whether that's opening a new book or travelling to new places. Get ready to hear some wild tales when your students return to school this fall!

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Risk Managers Vol. 1 No. 8 [Summer Safety Tips for Parents and Summer Program Leaders](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 8 No. 2 [Student-Led Conferences](#)

Private School News Vol. 13 No. 4 [The New SAT Exam: What You Need to Know](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 37 No. 11 [Redesign a Benefit-Oriented Summer Program](#)

I&P Vol. 28 No. 11 [How High-Achieving Students Search for a College](#)

Take Note: Four Private School Blogs to Emulate

(36% of clicks)

Blogging can be one of the easiest and most reliable ways to get your private school's message onto the Web and into the community. However, worries about the time commitment or whether you have anything of interest to say can stop your school from publishing that first post. To inspire you for next year, here are four private-independent school administrators who are doing a marvelous job blogging their school's mission to cyberspace—and whose example you can follow in your own blog.

Dane Peters's "[Dane's Education Blog](#)"

Peters served as the School Head of the Brooklyn Heights Montessori School for 11 years, leaving behind a legacy of professional development so strong that the school has a [fund dedicated to continuous education for faculty](#) in his honor. Today, his blog aggregates fantastic TED talks, books, interviews, and articles of interest for parents, teachers, and private school administrators alike.

While no longer directly promoting his former school, Peters's blog nonetheless demonstrates the priorities and philosophy of his school. Using a similar format as a "content aggregator" to illustrate your school's dedication to mission could be a simple and (relatively) quick way to get the word out on the Web.

Noteworthy posts:

- "[It Was the Children,](#)" featuring an NPR interview with a Mormon bishop who stood as a homeless man outside his church
- "[A Conference Call in Real Life,](#)" featuring a TED talk and a hilarious re-enactment of common meeting failures
- "[The Triple Package of Success,](#)" featuring Peter's own article "Is Good Best," as well as a TED talk and a NY Times article on the same topic

Michael Ehrhardt's "[Thoughts Between Class](#)"

Ehrhardt is the Head of [Cary Academy](#), a 6–12 private-independent school in Cary, North Carolina. The blog is a friendly mix of original content in the form of school news, as well as other content from sites like *edublog*. Most notably, Ehrhardt uses the blog as a great way to demonstrate his school's mission of "discovery, innovation, collaboration, and excellence" by using these touchstones as themes for posts.

By combining personal anecdotes with the school's mission, Ehrhardt allows for a deeper and more intimate connection with a seemingly abstract philosophical goal.

Noteworthy posts:

- [“Luck,”](#) featuring a discussion of the school’s debate team and the nature of chance on competitions. (It’s listed under the “Discovery” category.)
- [“Makers,”](#) featuring a story about duct-tape wallets and the need to preserve teamwork and innovation throughout a child’s educational years. (It’s listed under the “Collaboration” and “Innovation” categories.)
- [“Sleep,”](#) featuring a TED talk and study on the importance of sleep and its impact on performance, particularly the brain’s “processing” capabilities and “memory consolidation.” (It’s listed under the “Excellence” category.)

Steven Tobolsky’s [“Head of School Blog”](#)

As Head of the [Chestnut Hill School](#) in Newton, Massachusetts, Tobolsky’s school blog focuses less on presenting interesting outside sources than using those sources as a launching point for his own take on an issue. In light of all the [legislative changes](#) and [cultural backlash](#) surrounding private-independent education in the U.S. and abroad, Tobolsky takes a proactive approach. Rather than waiting for the media to put words in his mouth, he speaks first.

Noteworthy posts:

- [“The Either-Or Fallacy,”](#) featuring a discussion on the public sphere’s tendency to focus on one subject to the detriment of others, rather than a more Renaissance-style education
- [“Girl Power,”](#) featuring a great video on girl empowerment and reminding us of the changes Title IX has brought to all schools
- [“Facts and Values,”](#) featuring a list of recent educational paradigms and the difference between learning *facts* and absorbing *values*.

Mike Davis’s [“Head of School’s Blog”](#)

Davis has served as Colorado Academy’s School Head since 2007. In his blog, Davis becomes the “one stop shop” for the small, weekly anecdotes within school walls that wouldn’t make it to a newsletter or website snippet. Like Tobolsky, Davis uses these stories as a touchstone to share his school’s own views and mission. No event is too small—and no topic too grand—for Davis’s Head of School blog.

Noteworthy posts:

- [“Doing Something Good,”](#) featuring a Colorado Academy seventh grader’s presentation of a book she cowrote with a professional photographer on life in Haiti and “demonstrating the tenacity [they] love at CA”

- [“Little Things Make Big Things Happen,”](#) featuring a plethora of small news items like a collaborative art & music project by the second graders and a reenactment of the Second Battle of Bull Run by the fourth graders—all illustrating that small efforts collectively comprise an excellent education
- [“Remarkably Sage Advice,”](#) featuring wise words from CA kindergarteners for graduating seniors—gems include “Don’t randomly go into the wrong bathroom at a restaurant” and “Always be fancy at parties”

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 7 [Five More Top Educator Blogs](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 7 [Four #EdTech Blogs to Bookmark](#)

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 2 [Education Blogs You Should Be Reading](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 37 No. 4 [Look Beyond Your Traditional Marketing Allies](#)

I&P Vol. 27 No. 11 [Cyber News: Designing Your Online Newsletter](#)

I&P Vol. 35 No. 3 [The Growing Importance of Technology in Parent Communications](#)

July 2014—Vol. 13 No. 7

(31.6% open; 7.3% click through as of January 5, 2015)

Lessons for Private Schools From Comcast Call Catastrophe

(31% of clicks)

What do you think of when someone says “customer service”? Terrible wait times and unresolved problems at mammoth corporations spring to mind, but these impressions are the opposite of what customer service *should* be. Every organization—including private schools—should strive for excellent relations with its clients. Your school must actively foster relationships with families, faculty, and students. Careless interaction can sometimes lead to big publicity problems.

Take Comcast’s recent customer service faux pas. A long-standing customer of the cable giant decided to cancel his service when moving to a new area. Instead of complying with the client’s request, the customer service representative tried to convince the client to stay, almost to the point of harassment. After interminable minutes on the phone getting nowhere, the client [recorded the session](#) to post on the Internet.

So why are we talking about this? Well, we think there are a couple of important lessons your school can take from this episode when considering future client-school relations.

“The balance between selling and listening”

During the conversation, the Comcast representative repeatedly asked his client why he wanted to cancel service with the company. When the client finally responded—bad customer service—the representative refused to acknowledge the negative response and kept asking the same question. [Comcast's CEO Dave Watson responded](#) to this aspect of the conversation in a memo, writing that Comcast must “reexamine how we do some things to make sure that each and every one of us—from leadership to the front line—understands the balance between selling and listening.”

Private School Takeaway:

Think back over the past year of interactions with parents, teachers, and staff. Does your school's research, exit surveys, or general parent feedback produce information you look for and need to improve? Is there a chance that the answers are there, but they aren't the easy or guiltless solutions you sought?

In other words, are you justifying your current program? Or are you truly listening to someone else’s concerns?

It’s these hard answers—the answers we don’t particularly want to hear or know—that help schools the most in the long run. Be careful of assumptions, and don't let your school's

arrogance be your downfall. Listen to what your parents, students, and teachers are saying about your school and try not to justify why things are fine they way they are.

Biggest game in town?

Some believe that Comcast uses sales-heavy tactics because they're often in markets with no direct competition. In fact, 66% of respondents to a recent Consumer Report survey believe that [little or no incentive exists to improve their customer service](#) if Comcast's bid to merge with Time Warner Cable is approved by Congress due to the resultant lack of competition. Comcast, then, believes that people will continue purchasing cable services from the company because they have no alternative.

Private School Takeaway:

But is that really true? Let's look at this from a private education perspective. While your school's enrollment may be at an all time high this year with a healthy wait pool, there will always be other schools—private, public, or charter—waiting to pop up and steal your students with seductive programming or spiffy new facilities. When that competition comes looking to enroll your families, those families will remember how your school treated them during difficulties or other tense situations—and will act accordingly.

Ultimately, parents and faculty want your school to keep its mission promise to the school's community. Furthermore, they want their suggestions and critiques to be heard. Staying faithful to your mission's philosophy inside and outside the classroom will accomplish the first, but the second goal can prove more elusive.

Speaking to parents and faculty proactively about potential issues while truly considering their points of view will go a long way to establishing trust and a listening-first attitude that will mitigate problems before they become poisonous. High retention rates and the (current) absence of competition is no excuse for your parent-school relations to be tinged with arrogance.

Work now to establish positive parent-school (and faculty-administrator!) relationships, and you can trust your community to ignore others' shiny marketing gimmicks in favor of your school's good culture and attitude.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 12 No. 10 [Emotional "Banking": Evaluating Unfit Applicants](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 11 No. 6 [Rebuilding Working Relationships](#)

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 9 [Forget Diamonds--Social Media Mistakes are Forever](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 33 No. 11 [Target Your True Recruitment/Retention Issues](#)

I&P Vol. No. 36 No. 5 [Conducting a Communications Audit](#)

“What’s for Lunch?”—Private Schools Providing Healthy Meals

(23% of clicks)

The [annual conference for the School Nutrition Association \(SNA\)](#) took place a few weeks ago. Vendors lined up in rows, all plying their goods and demonstrating how their products are not just tasty, but also in compliance with [tougher U.S. federal guidelines](#) for lunches, effective July 1 this year.

But appearances can be deceiving. [According to an attendee](#), one vendor mentioned that school nutritionists rarely ask for ingredient lists, satisfied with flyers that claim the food would pass federal muster—and be tasty, too. [Public health lawyer Michele Simon tweeted](#) pictures from participating food corporations like Dominos and PepsiCo that looked out of place at an event striving to promote healthier eating.

Admittedly, the balance between taste and health is a delicate one to strike. The SNA [claims](#) more than 1 million students have ceased purchasing lunch at school since the stricter 2012 nutritional standards went into effect. The association adds that public school cafeterias have wasted almost \$4 million in fruit and vegetables, since students just throw out the food they don’t want to eat.

The SNA conference vendors mostly appealed to public school cafeterias, which must adhere to federal guidelines. But how are private schools meeting the increased demand for nutritional lunches?

[Calhoun School](#) in New York City hired Chef Robert “Bobo” Surles to improve the food at their cafeteria in response to parent criticism that students were not eating enough healthy foods, instead—according to [a New York Times article](#)—eating “plain white pasta, untarnished by sauce, day after day.”

To combat unhealthy options, Chef Bobo began an all-natural regime that included whole-grain pasta and banned ketchup from the cafeteria. Most students enjoyed the food, though there were concerns that the lunches were a “little adult” for fifth-graders. Absorbing the feedback, Chef Bobo reintroduced ketchup and lightened up on some other organic food policies.

Some private schools use their cafeterias as an opportunity to showcase their dedication to environmental issues and healthy lifestyles. [Lawrenceville School \(NJ\)](#) eliminated trays to reduce food waste and now [composts scraps](#) on campus. [Oak Hill School \(TN\)](#) supplements its regular cafeteria fare with [additions from the school garden](#)—planted and maintained by students.

Other private schools embrace a health-conscious cuisine, albeit occasionally rather than constantly. [Brophy College Preparatory \(AZ\)](#) is determined to ensure students have some alternatives to the traditional cafeteria menu, [according to ABC 15](#). Chef Michael DeMaria makes an effort to provide restaurant-quality food for his students, especially on “Healthy Tuesday” when the school offers meals prepared “hours before lunch just like it would be in a restaurant,” featuring lean meats and veggies.

Whether your school decides to reinvent itself as an organic lunch provider or “stay the course” with the current menu, make sure you look over the ingredient lists of your cafeteria food—you may be surprised at what you discover.

What healthy eating choices do your students enjoy? Share below in the comments!

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Business Officers Vol. 9 No. 8 [Sustainable Lunch Programs](#)
Private School News Vol. 10 No. 7 [Healthier School Lunches](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 29 No. 6 [Food Services for Day Schools: Mission and Planning](#)
I&P Vol. 29 No. 8 [Food Services for Day Schools: Student Wellness](#)

Private School Sixth-Grader’s Science Fair Experiment Cited as “Pilot Study” in New Lionfish Research

(8% of clicks)

There’s much to be said for being raised by two ecologists and attending a private school that encourages scientific exploration. In fact, with the kind of support Lauren Arrington received from her family and school, it’s no surprise that her science fair experiment was [cited as a “pilot study”](#) for groundbreaking ecological research on invasive species—all [before she was old enough to drive](#).

As a sixth-grader at [The King's Academy](#) (FL), Lauren had a personal appreciation for the impact lionfish were having on the region’s waterways. As the Executive Director for the Loxahatchee River District (LRD), Lauren’s father, Dr. Albrey Arrington, encouraged her

interest in local ecology. In fact, the LRD funded [preliminary lionfish studies in the estuary](#) led by biologist Dr. Zachary Jud and adviser Dr. Craig Layman at Florida International University.

But why the interest in the exotic fish? Lionfish, originating in the South Pacific Ocean, are [an invasive species](#) along many Atlantic-state coastlines due to unauthorized release of the fish from private aquariums. With no natural enemies, an extremely high reproductive rate, and a voracious appetite, lionfish pose a serious problem for native species—especially during the juvenile/prawn stages of many native fish.

Traditionally, lionfish are found only in the ocean. However, [an early study by Dr. Jud and Dr. Layman suggested](#) that they could move inland to brackish, lower-salinity environments, which would pose a threat for the natural “nurseries” of native fish. Using their study as a springboard, Lauren wanted to find the lowest salinity the lionfish could tolerate. At sufficiently low levels, lionfish could invade further up the estuary than anyone had assumed.

Using [six lionfish in separate tanks](#), Lauren discovered that the fish can survive with no repercussions in water with a salinity of six parts per thousand (6 ppt). To put [this discovery in perspective](#), fresh water is typically less than 0.5 ppt; brackish—estuarial—water is between 0.5 ppt and 17 ppt. (Average ocean salinity is 35 ppt.)

In [an interview](#) with Dr. Layman, Lauren said that lionfish might survive in even lower salinities. Apparently, the lionfish “were alive and apparently very comfortable at 6 ppt—they really fed voraciously even with the salinity at 6 ppt!”

Later research by Dr. Jud and Dr. Layman confirmed Lauren’s science fair findings. Her project was even cited as a [“small pilot study that showed lionfish could survive and feed at 6% \[6 ppt\] for short periods of time,”](#) and she was credited with “[helping] give rise to [the] experimental design” of Dr. Jud’s January 2014 study expanding on her initial findings.

None of this would have been possible without the support Lauren received from her family and private school. By challenging Lauren and her peers to stretch to the limits of scientific imagination, The King’s Academy has facilitated new discoveries that help biologists everywhere combat invasive species in previously unexpected areas.

Is there a student who’s done something spectacular at your school? Share your student and school accomplishments in the comment section below, and you might be featured in upcoming editions of *Private School News*!

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 10 No. 8 [Put Your Students’ Projects in Space!](#)

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 2 [3-D Printing Initiative Attracts International Attention](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Business Managers Vol. 12 No. 9 [Saving Money at the Office](#)
[Printer](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 27 No. 14 [Creative Ways to Demonstrate Programmatic Success](#)

I&P Vol. 29 No. 7 [Private High School GPAs and Credits: Still a Competitive Advantage?](#)

August 2014—Vol. 13 No. 8

(31.1% open; 6.4% click through as of January 5, 2015)

Robin Williams: Inspiration From His Private School

(31% of clicks)

Entertainer Robin Williams passed away the morning of August 11, 2014, to the shock and dismay of everyone who had been touched by his gift for illustrating the human condition through his acting and comedic standup. Even [President Obama commented on the tragedy](#), offering the First Family's condolences to "everyone who found their voice thanks to Robin Williams."

His untimely passing sparked a [worldwide campaign of remembrance](#), quoting a scene from his award-winning performance as a private school teacher in *Dead Poet's Society*: "[#OCaptainMyCaptain](#)." This quote strikes a deeper chord for those in private-independent education, as William's presentation of English teacher John Keating was inspired by his own private school experiences.

In an interview with *Inside the Actor's Studio*, Robin Williams discussed the lasting impression one particular history class at Detroit Country Day School left on him as a young man:

[John Campbell] was wonderful and kinda gave me a very dark view of history. One great quote was that history, if you look back on it, is full of very dark comedy. If it [weren't] for the fact that people died, it's hysterical.

Campbell also talked about the passion for something, whether it's mathematics, it didn't matter. He talked about the poetry of mathematics, which is the poetry of physics, the poetry of architecture, the poetry of art—anything where there's that passion for something, that you're into it, and there's a beauty to it.

It's like Einstein's quote about God, where he said, "My sense of God is not as a deity but as a profound sense of wonder." That's what mine is. It goes back to that sense of wonder of science, but also poetry, creation ... and it all drives the same fascination.

(Play the video below for the full interview.)

Campbell clearly left an indelible, permanent impression on Williams, as decades later, he returned to the classroom as a teacher molding a new batch of malleable minds—even if it was only on a movie set. As Keating, Williams encouraged his students to achieve *carpe diem* and read the pieces of literature as a testament to the human spirit.

And it was human spirit his students evoked in the film's stirring climax. While Williams' character must leave the school and his students, his former protégés salute him by climbing on desks and quoting the Walt Whitman poem "O Captain! My Captain!" in a final salute:

The character John Keating in *Dead Poet's Society* affected a handful of students; Robin Williams' performance in that movie and so many others affected thousands of people around the world, many of whom are teachers today. With his passing, many have come forward with stories about how this "teacher" influenced their lives directly and indirectly.

In fact, [one creative writing lecturer said](#) that William's portrayal of the private school teacher helped him understand that "education isn't just one little part of your existence, it is life. ... It's not just learning Wordsworth by heart, it's about feeling it and understanding why it's important."

So as another semester begins at your private-independent school, let the memory of the teacher who inspired you motivate you again to become a "captain" worthy of leading a new crew. After all, you never know when someone's life will be touched, or how that person will go on to inspire and lead others.

(Primary image credit to [Global Research](#))

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 1 [Teachers: The Lifeblood of Your School's Success](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 9 [Dear National Teacher Day: A Letter to First Year Teachers](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Business Officers Vol. 12 No. 2 [Pushing Through Life's Hardest Moments](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

Research: [Great Expectations: Teachers' Views on Elevating the Teaching Profession I&P](#) Vol. 34 No. 15 [Why the Worst \(and Best\) Teachers Matter](#)

Herd Immunity and Vaccination Exemptions in Private Schools

(15% of clicks)

This year, three families brought suit against the city of New York, claiming that their religious freedoms were violated due to the city's school vaccination policies. Their unvaccinated children had been banned from school, sometimes for a month at a time,

when vaccine-preventable diseases were suspected on campus. In June, Judge William Kuntz II ruled that [families could not claim violation of religious freedom due to the city's health requirements](#).

While the case remains unsettled—the families are requesting a retrial—the judgment reopens the debate on religious exemptions from vaccinations and the low rate of vaccination in some of our nation's private schools. Where should schools draw the line between overall student safety and a family's right to decide?

This lawsuit is the latest in a rash of media coverage about the anti-vaccine movement, particularly with the outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases across the country. From [Idaho](#) to [Ohio](#) to [Minnesota](#), people have fallen sick to diseases thought eradicated 50 years ago thanks to medical breakthroughs and preventative shots.

According to the [National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases](#), the reason for this apparent “failure” of vaccinations lies not in the vaccines, but the dissolution of something called “herd immunity.” When a critical percentage of a population of individuals is immunized, most unvaccinated members of the population are protected from the disease, as there is little chance that unvaccinated people could encounter an infected individual.

For example, if 80%-86% of a population is immune to smallpox, the CDC says that [herd immunity would be achieved for the entire population](#). (If you're interested, check out [this graphic by Harvard Health Publications](#) for a more dynamic explanation of herd immunity.)

However, as fewer people are vaccinated, the likelihood of infected individuals transmitting the sickness to unvaccinated people increases. People forget to take booster shots for vaccines which lose effectiveness over time. Sometimes, [a patient's body doesn't react](#) to the dead viruses or proteins in the vaccine, which means the appropriate antibodies aren't created. Others [can't receive certain vaccines](#) due to allergies and other medical complications. Herd immunity, then, protects those who can't protect themselves.

But herd immunity has been fading, thanks in part to an antivaccination movement that started in the late 1990s with Andrew Wakefield's paper on the MMR vaccine causing autism. While the [study has since been retracted](#) due to [conflicts of interest and manipulated data](#), many still believe that vaccines and early onset autism are linked.

Some families have religious objections to giving their children and families vaccinations, which brings us back to New York City and the religious exemptions from child vaccination. One of the parents, Ms. Dina Check, [told the New York Times](#) that “Disease is pestilence, and pestilence is from the devil. The devil is germs and disease, which is cancer and any of those things that can take you down. But if you trust in the Lord, these things cannot come

near you” — which justified her refusal to vaccinate her daughter, even after the school barred her from attendance for her own health and safety.

Ms. Check has enrolled her daughter at a private school that allows her religious abstention from the vaccination requirements, but that may have placed her daughter in even greater danger. According to data from the New York State Department of Health, [245 New York City private schools had vaccination rates less than the critical percentage required for herd immunity](#). In fact, 37 schools had rates lower than 70%, and nine schools had rates ranging between 41.5% and 18.4%.

While decreased oversight by federal, state, and local governments is a blessing to many private schools, the safety and well-being of students should always come first. Ask yourself and your peers: “What would we do if a vaccine-preventable outbreak occurred on our campus?” From there, find ways to best protect your students from these and other foreseeable tragedies.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 8 No. 2 [Swine Flu Vaccine: Balancing the Possible Side Effects Versus the Rewards](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 7 No. 7 [The Ongoing Gardasil Controversy](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Business Officers Vol. 10 No. 2 [Reducing Student Risk With Up-to-Date Medical Records](#)

Private School News Vol. 8 No. 2 [Top Ten Vaccines for Teenagers](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 29 No. 6 [Random Drug Testing Policies for Students](#)

I&P Vol. 30 No. 12 [Disaster Planning: What Are Your Insurance Options?](#)

Body Image in Private Schools: A Selection of International Studies

(10% of clicks)

We’re approaching the end of “bikini season” throughout most of the United States, a time when obsession with cellulose, BMI, and diets seems to run rampant. Societal pressures—like being swimsuit-ready for Instagram selfies or slimmed down for yearly school pictures—[can lead to painful and potentially fatal eating disorders](#). Early identification of those with “low body image” could help prevent new cases of eating disorders, so let’s examine some factors that may influence low body image.

The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) has [suggested cultural pressures via mass media, age, and even racial bias](#) are indicators of a person's likelihood to develop low body image and eating disorders. But what about other parameters?

Of particular interest to us: How might private school students' self-perception differ from the norm? We wanted to know if these students would be more or less likely than other populations to cave to mass media pressure to be thin.

As it turns out, several research teams worldwide have tackled this question. The answer? It depends.

Dr. Maria Conti, a body image researcher, has published two papers concerning student body image in both private and public schools. The first study, ["Body Image Dissatisfaction During Adolescence and its Relation to Sexual Maturation,"](#) drew its sample from the students of a private school in Brazil. Dr. Conti and her fellow researchers found that post-pubescent females were more likely to exhibit body dissatisfaction than either the male students or their younger female peers.

In a follow-up study published in 2014 (["Body Image in Different Periods of Adolescence"](#)), Dr. Conti drew from a larger population of students from rural public school districts in southeast Brazil. Her findings showed that there was an overall lower prevalence of body dissatisfaction in this sample of public school students than had been found in previous studies conducted by other groups—including the previous study sampling only private school students in more urban areas. However, Dr. Conti also noted that “adolescents seem to increase their personal expectations after menarche, being more dissatisfied with changes related to the accumulation of body fat” in females, a finding which echoes those suggested some 10 years earlier.

Dr. Renee Carey from the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research, along with her team, also explored low body image in local private schools from the perspective of “cliques” and friend groups’ influence on individual body perceptions in her 2013 paper ["Adolescent Girls: A Hierarchical Linear Modeling Analysis."](#) Those students in cliques at all-girls schools apparently “exhibited similar levels of body image concern and dieting behaviors,” having been influenced by their peers, whereas counterpart cliques in mixed-sex schools did not exhibit the same trends.

Finally, Dr. Tamara Mousa from the University of Jordan studied how the “Westernization” of the country affected both private and public school students and their body satisfaction, considering the transition from traditional attire to more revealing “westernized” clothing. Her study, ["Body Image Dissatisfaction Among Adolescent Schoolgirls in Jordan,"](#) revealed that “21.2% of participants displayed body image dissatisfaction in which physical changes

associated with puberty ... were associated with this dissatisfaction” — a particularly interesting revelation that echoes Dr. Conti’s findings in Brazil.

What about the students with a higher socioeconomic status? Dr. Mousa found that “socioeconomic status is not associated with BID [body image dissatisfaction] in the present study,” though she admits that it’s “inconsistent with some studies” while “several studies nevertheless have supported our data stating that adolescent girls of high socioeconomic levels are not at risk to display BID.”

What can private schools take away from these international studies in body image?

- Females are more likely than males to exhibit body dissatisfaction, though males do desire more muscle rather than less fat according to Dr. Conti’s studies.
- Female students post-menarche are more likely than their younger peers to exhibit body dissatisfaction.
- Students in rural areas seem to be less likely to exhibit body dissatisfaction than students in more urban areas.
- Cliques of female students at same-sex private schools are more likely to experience peer-pressure body image dissatisfaction and dieting tendencies than similar friend groups at mixed-sex schools.
- Socioeconomic status seems to play less of a role in a student’s perceived body image than mass media and social pressures.

Body image problems impact pre- and post-pubescent students from all nations and all backgrounds, meaning that no single factor can be eliminated as the root cause of body dissatisfaction and eating disorders.

That said, many schools are taking steps to make their campus cultures places of refuge for those with low body image rather than self-critique. In a future PSN, we’ll look at some of the ways private-independent schools at home and abroad are successfully combatting low body image and the resulting eating disorders in their student populations.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 8 No. 1 [*Inside the Teenage Mind*](#)

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 1 [*New Statistics on Childhood Obesity*](#)

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 4 [*A Teenager's Search for Happiness*](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 29 No. 8 [*Food Services for Day Schools: Student Wellness*](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 3 [*Addressing Bullying and Sexual Misconduct*](#)

September 2014—Vol. 13 No. 9

(32.6% open; 9.2% click through as of January 5, 2015)

School Spotlight: Valley Christian's "I Am a Warrior" Campaign

(31% of clicks)

With two beautiful campuses and a wide array of exceptional programs for scholars, athletes, and artists alike, [Valley Christian](#) boasted some impressive stats that should've made any advertising campaign easy to pull off. But marketing a school requires more than just numbers and bulleted lists of accomplishments, as the newly minted Director of Marketing Kim Ellefsen discovered. In the end, her original "I Am a Warrior" campaign both inspired the on-campus community of teachers and students, and attracted outside acclaim.

Kim is a Warrior herself, having graduated from Valley Christian. After college, she worked a decade in the private and government sectors before returning to work at Valley Christian. When the Head approached her to lead the school's first comprehensive Marketing Office, she jumped at the opportunity.

To revitalize the school's message, Kim went to work with the end goal in mind. "I tried to approach [the campaign] from the parent's perspective," Kim explained. "I wanted to show that, yes, VCS offers a wide range of opportunities, but our goal is to educate the whole person, developing well-rounded students of depth and character. I want parents to look at our materials and see their children in our students."

One aspect that needed a facelift was Valley Christian's presentation of its information and statistics. While the information was important, bullet-point lists didn't really reflect the school's "Quest for Excellence"—the school's challenge to its students to "aspire toward lives of character, service, and influence." The students are more than numbers and statistics—they accomplished spectacular feats and could tell amazing stories about their time as Valley Christian Warriors.

The inaugural piece of the "I Am a Warrior" campaign was the [President's Report](#). The booklet still offered the information once contained in bulleted lists, but it also featured stories and anecdotes from students emphasizing the breadth of their experiences at Valley Christian. The portraits show current students in the typical "uniform" of a particular label—sports gear, scholarly outfits, artistic costumes—but feature unexpected captions. A swimmer's photo might say, "I am an actress"; a musician's portrait, "I am a scientist"; a student's smiling face, "I am a Warrior."

That year's admission packet followed the same format, while tall banners featuring a variety of students' portraits with the mix of captions appeared on both campuses. Combined, the juxtaposition between picture and story in these campaign pieces achieved Kim's ultimate goal: To show that no student could be pigeonholed into a single role in the school's story, yet they were all Valley Christian Warriors.

The campaign was unlike anything the school had tried before, and it clearly resonated with local audiences and beyond. The President's Report won a gold CASE Award of Excellence, and the advertising campaign overall won the silver. The Admission Office also reported a 20% increase in submitted applications in the two years since the campaign went active, as well as a 10% jump in enrollment.

Perhaps more importantly, the Valley Christian community loved the new initiative. Kim says that teachers would come up to her, thanking her for the banners and the campaign's message. "They'd tell me that they'd hear the kids start to label themselves as one thing or the other, as Conservatory or AMSE students" Kim told ISM, referencing school-offered programs. "After seeing their pictures up on the banners, [the students] started calling themselves warriors."

As they saw how excited and motivated the student body had become, Valley Christian program leaders strengthened the campaign's depth and breadth. The hashtag "#ImAWarrior" was born for school events, for example, though Kim confessed that she doesn't use Twitter much. The Lower School campus even printed the tagline on its t-shirts for trips and special events!

Kim is modest about her achievements, attributing the campaign's success and accolades to her "incredible school" and a different perspective. She feels that anyone could repeat Valley Christian's success if they "step away from what they've always done and look at their school through a different lens" to distinguish themselves from the pack.

Statistics have their time and place, but the real difference is in your school's mission and student body. Valley Christian's "I Am a Warrior" campaign stopped focusing on itself to put the students' stories first. The results speak for themselves, showing that good marketing isn't all about you—it's about your audience and how you connect with them.

ISM will feature a new school each month to share stories of student, programmatic, and administrative success with nearly 30,000 private school administrators every month. If your school has a success story you'd like the world to hear, contact [our e-letter editor](#) today!

Additional ISM resources:

Research: [The 21st Century School: Student-Led Conferences and Planning](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 12 No. 9 [Attracting Exceptional Teachers](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 11 No. 2 [How to Get People Talking About Your School](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 32 No. 3 [Marketing Your Purpose and Outcome Statements](#)

I&P Vol. 37 No. 13 [The Student's Role in Re-recruitment](#)

I&P Vol. 31 No. 5 [Purpose and Outcome Statements: Capture the Essence of Your School](#)

“Show Me the Money”—What Impacts Students’ Future Earning Potential?

(22% of clicks)

How much money can today's students—tomorrow's work force—expect to make over their lifetimes? As it turns out, private-independent schools control several factors that may impact a student’s lifetime earning potential.

Excellent Early Childhood Education

A child’s early educational experiences ripple far into their lives. In [“How Does Your Kindergarten Classroom Affect Your Earnings? Evidence from Project STAR,”](#) Raj Chetty and his fellow researchers found that students in “higher quality classrooms in grades K-3” on average earned more money, saved more for retirement, were more likely to attend college, and lived in better neighborhoods than students assigned to other classrooms.

According to the study, class size and “better teachers” are two factors that play a role in determining classroom quality. This leads us to question: What constitutes “better teachers”?

Terrific Teachers

By “better teachers,” Project STAR researchers argue that teachers with several years’ experience were “better” on average. In fact, the study finds that a student’s earning potential increases by over \$1000 annually if his or her kindergarten teacher had more than 10 years of experience.

Another study headed by Chetty entitled [“Measuring the Impacts of Teachers II: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood”](#) expands on the first study’s concept of “better teachers.” Replacing a teacher who performs in the bottom 5% with a one of even “average” quality, Chetty and his colleagues claim, will increase a classroom’s lifetime income by roughly \$250,000. Furthermore, by putting a teacher in the *top* 5% into a struggling classroom, a child’s cumulative lifetime income [increases on average by \\$80,000](#).

Cognitive and “Soft Skills”

A November 2013 study by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research called [“The Long-Run Effects of Catholic Schooling on Wages”](#) found that graduates of private Catholic schools could expect to earn more money, more quickly, than their public school counterparts. Dr. Nikhil Jha and Cain Polidano write that the students’ higher earning potential is directly linked with their Catholic K-12 education and not necessarily with higher education, as had been previously suggested.

Indeed, the report goes on to say that no evidence was found “to suggest that these benefits are peculiar to Catholic schooling, with similar benefits estimated for graduates of independent private schools” in general. So what’s the advantage that private-independent schools offer that public schools can’t deliver.

Dr. Jha [has suggested in interviews](#) that a private school’s focus on mission causes students to learn desirable soft skills like confidence and persistence—qualities employers look for in their managers. A private school’s focus on soft-skill acquisition rather than strict emphasis on quantifiable achievements like standardized test scores, may account for the study’s finding that students from a Catholic educational background advance more quickly in their chosen careers than their public peers.

Money certainly isn’t everything in life. But, in today’s economy, an individual’s financial standing can indicate how well that person has “succeeded” with his or her life’s work. Understanding the impact teachers, class size, and a soft skill focus has on students after they leave your school will inspire and drive you to provide the very best experience for them you can.

Additional ISM resources:

Research: [Synthesis of IES Research on Early Intervention and Early Childhood Education](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 10 No. 1 [Training to Lead](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 12 No. 9 [Attracting Exceptional Teachers](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 37 No. 15 [Foreign Language in the Elementary Grades: Is It Worth It?](#)

I&P Vol. 33 No. 7 [Teacher Impact: How to Identify the Difference Makers](#)

Written by the Victors: AP History Exam Overhaul and Curriculum Responses

(20% of clicks)

Independent schools are blessed with autonomy. No outside regulatory Board can tell them what, when, or how to teach their students. But, what happens when qualifying exams run

by external companies and boards decide to adjust the information students are tested on? In cases like this, schools must either stick with their curricula, or change them to ensure high test performance and better college admission for students.

Welcome to the chaotic world of AP US History.

In winter 2013–2014, The College Board—the company responsible for the SAT exams and various “Advanced Placement” (AP) college-equivalency tests—released new guidelines for the US History AP course ([APUSH](#)). Since testing companies adjust to their test-prep recommendations and curricula annually, APUSH’s release seemed innocuous. But, the new guidelines have sparked a debate over what should be taught in history classrooms.

In what College Board claims is an effort to “[encourage a flexible approach to teaching content](#)” and both chronological and thematic approaches to the course, APUSH allegedly glosses over certain aspects of American history while emphasizing others. As one detractor [put it](#):

It excises Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, and the other founders from the nation’s story. George Washington’s historical contributions are reduced to a brief sentence fragment noting his Farewell Address. Two pages later, the Framework grants teachers the flexibility to discuss the architecture of Spanish missions, suggesting it merits more attention than the heroes of 1776.

The Republican National Committee (RNC) has emerged as one of APUSH’s biggest critics. In an [August 2014 resolution](#), the RNC claims that APUSH “presents a biased and inaccurate view of many important events in American history”—especially in regard to military heroes and important cultural influences such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Holocaust. Ultimately, the RNC believes that APUSH represents a “radically revisionist view ... that emphasizes negative aspects of our nation’s history while omitting or minimizing positive aspects.”

The fight over APUSH moved from national to local in mid-September when [Texas’s Board of Education declared](#) that the state’s history curriculum was to be taught without adopting APUSH’s suggested guidelines. While students can still take the same AP US History exam for college credit in the spring as their peers across the country, the risk remains that Texas’s history curriculum will deviate so far from APUSH guidelines that students will not pass the exam.

In Colorado, school board member Julie Williams [proposed that similar measures](#) should be taken in the Jefferson County school district. Specifically, she suggested that the Board establish a curriculum committee, the initial projects to be the new AP US History and elementary health courses. In her [initial proposal](#), the committee is responsible for ensuring that courses “promote citizenship, patriotism, essentials and benefits of the free enterprise

system, respect for authority and respect for individual rights” while eradicating “materials [that encourage or condone] civil disorder, social strife or disregard for the law.”

Even though the proposal was tabled, students were outraged at the prospect of a ‘sanitized’ history course. Their response to the eradication of important historical moments of civil disorder? Civil disobedience! Hundreds of students from at least seven high schools walked out of class and, armed with posters and energy, protested the School Board’s proposed curriculum.

The Superintendent has offered to talk with students and teachers regarding the proposed changes to clarify the chain of events, which had become somewhat muddled in the students’ explosive response. In a [statement](#), Williams insists that APUSH “rejects the history that has been taught in the country for generations” and “has an emphasis on race, gender, class, ethnicity, grievance and American-bashing while simultaneously omitting the most basic structural and philosophical elements considered essential to the understanding of American History for generations.”

While no outside agency can dictate that your school teach specific curricula to students, exams like the SAT, AP, and ACT all reflect broader trends in educational theory that have ripple effects in the classroom. Autonomy's a blessing, but even private schools will be affected by some of the changes from outside organizations.

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 13 No. 4 [The New SAT Exam: What You Need to Know](#)
ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 6 [Prep for the Test!](#)
ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 10 No. 5 [Teacher Quality and Student Performance: US vs International](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 36 No. 1 [Advanced Placement: A Critical Study](#)
I&P Vol. 31 No. 2 [Re-examine Advanced Placement in Light of Your School Mission](#)
I&P Vol. 37 No. 14 [The 21st Century School: Exam Periods](#)

October 2014—Vol. 13 No. 10

(32.6% open; 7.5% click through as of January 5, 2015)

Private School Administrator Shadows Students, Is Shocked

(47% of clicks)

Once upon a time, all teachers were students. As the years go by, teachers are further removed from personal experience, forgetting what it's like to be on the receiving end of a lecture—the fifth lecture that day.

With that in mind, Alexis Wiggins, the newly hired “Learning Coach” at an international private school, decided to shadow two students and to see what the current learning experience was in order to could mentor teachers and administrators on matters like curriculum and scheduling. The results from Wiggins’s shadowing experience, [as posted on education leader Grant Wiggins’s personal blog](#), demonstrate how teaching in a vacuum—without feedback or understanding of the students’ experience—can lead to an oppressive, rather than conducive, learning environment.

“I literally sat down the entire day.”

Wiggins’s school follows a block schedule to allow for more continuous instructional time per subject. Adding time to each class, however, means that students will be seated for long periods of time in enforced inactivity.

Wiggins notes that “We forget as teachers [that students are sitting most of the day] because we are on our feet a lot—in front of the board, pacing as we speak, circling around the room to check on student work, sitting, standing, kneeling down to chat with a student as she works through a difficult problem ... we move a lot.”

But students do not. In response, Wiggins suggests building in “hands-on” activities into every class. While it might “sacrifice some content” in order to find the time, Wiggins maintains that students absorb little through traditional “hour-long, sit-down discussions.”

“... so much of the day was spent absorbing information but not often grappling with it.”

Wiggins observed that students had little opportunity to contribute personally to class discussion. Sure, there were reasonable explanations for this: teachers talking, student presentations, board work, testing, and all the general classroom activities you’d expect at a school.

Students came away from their school day having “absorbed information but not often grappled with it,” according to Wiggins’s notes. Her host-student Cindy apparently laughed

when Wiggins asked if she “felt like ... the class missed out on the benefit of her knowledge or contributions.”

Wiggins has several suggestions to correct this problem. If she could redo her old classes, she’d offer “brief, blitzkrieg-like mini-lessons with engaging, assessment-for-learning-type activities following,” as well as keep an egg timer on her desk whenever she was in teacher-lecture mode. Once the timer went off, she’d be done—“end of story”—to allow for better student absorption of material.

“I lost count of how many times we were told to be quiet and pay attention.”

While she said it was “normal” and “understandable” for teachers to need attentive silence, Wiggins found she empathized with students who were constantly corrected. Students squirming, her post implies, is natural, the same way adults feel the need to “disconnect, break free” after long professional development sessions. So it’s not because teachers were “boring,” Wiggins surmises—rather, students had been “sitting and listening [for] most of the day already. They have had enough.”

And teachers’ impatience with their students was an open secret in the classes Wiggins attended, with “a good deal of sarcasm and snark directed at students”—something Wiggins admitted that made her reflect on her own impatience with students in classes past. Answering the same question several times is tedious, of course, but from the students’ perspective, stress and anxiety before an exam can prevent them from absorbing the answers.

As a mother, Wiggins found previously undiscovered “wells of patience and love” to help her manage her children. If she were to return to the classroom, Wiggins would rediscover that patience and redirect it toward her students. “Questions,” she wrote, “are an invitation to know a student better and create a bond with that student. We can open the door wider or shut it forever, and we may not even realize we have shut it.”

On a more tangible note, she suggested implementing a “five-minute reading period” for the students to ask questions and review instructions, during which no one is allowed to write or fill out their test, to reduce repeated questions. It’s a “simple solution” and one she felt would have “head off a lot ... of the frustration I felt with constant, repetitive questions.”

Students’ educational experiences today may be vastly different than those your teachers remember from their time in college and grade school. Try shadowing some of your students for a day—sitting through their classes, taking their tests, finishing their homework—and see if your school is achieving the educational environment both curriculum and training have promised to deliver.

Additional ISM resources:

Research: [Research Outcomes: The ISM Student Experience Study \(SES\) 2010–11](#)
Private School News Vol. 12 No. 4 [Planning Your Classrooms to Maximize Thinking Space](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 37 No. 4 [Research Outcomes: The Student Experience Study](#)
I&P Vol. 38 No. 15 [Match Points Ease Scheduling Challenges](#)
I&P Vol. 35 No. 4 [Scheduling and the Harried Teen](#)

National Novel Writing Month in the Classroom

(10% of clicks)

Instilling a passion for reading at a young age is important, especially when you're competing with television and video games. But, the love of storytelling lives on! Over 89,000 young writers in 2,000 classrooms wrote their stories and novels during last year's National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) in November— and your students could join in the fun.

The History of NaNoWriMo

NaNoWriMo isn't a national holiday or an awareness campaign the same way breast cancer awareness dominates October or history classes focus on the African-American experience in February. It started back in 1999 with a group of 21 adult writers in San Francisco, who set themselves a goal to ["complete a novel"](#) within a single month.

Few participants actually crossed the finish line with a completed manuscript in the first year, but all enjoyed the challenge of 'noveling' marathon-style. In fact, they enjoyed it enough to run the gauntlet again next year—and the year after. Over a decade later, NaNoWriMo allows hundreds of thousands of writers from all backgrounds, ages, and abilities to challenge themselves and their story-telling skills in this 30-day dash.

The Young Writers Program

As NaNoWriMo's popularity with adults grew, the organizers realized an opportunity to share the joy of storytelling with students. In 2005, the Young Writers Program (YWP) was formed. That year, the YWP started with 150 schools and 4,000 student-writers, and ended with—[as former NaNoWriMo Director Chris Baty put it](#)—“ freshly minted nine-year-old novelists, school-sponsored teen noveling lock-ins, and wonderstruck English teachers who couldn't believe that the whole thing worked so well.”

Embracing the modern young writer's affinity for online tools, NaNoWriMo [established a microsite](#) especially for YWP participants. It combines social forums and “challenges”

among participants to keep up their motivation with [practical resources](#) covering the technical and inspirational aspects of long-form writing.

For educators, [professional resources](#) like noveling lesson plans and workbooks for students in kindergarten through their senior year of high school are available for free download via Google Docs. The site also maintains virtual classrooms to organize online activities, as well as additional information about what to do with all those finished manuscripts come November 30th.

Students aren't required to complete the same 50,000-word goal as their fellow adult writers. There's a [Word-Count Goal Calculator](#) on the YWP site for students who have trouble devising what their personal word count goals should be. YWP advises that students choose a goal that is "high enough to be challenging (but not impossible) to reach."

The Student Experience

Teachers that use NaNoWriMo as an inspirational resource report great success. As middle school teacher Noriko Nakada [told National Writing Project](#), her students "have so much more confidence as writers. Hey, if they can write a novel, a research paper is nothing!"

Elementary school teacher Stephen Slaughter agrees with Nakada, telling his students during NaNoWriMo that "you will never be given an assignment this ambitious, and because you have conquered it, you know that you can conquer more. You are unstoppable."

Salome Milstead challenged her students to take on NaNoWriMo in her classroom, and found that they weren't intimidated by the prospect of writing a novel. She [told Edutopia](#):

If you can teach them to silence that inner critical voice so they can get their ideas on paper, then you can teach them to put commas in the right place, restructure it, and find the missing introductory sentence—that part is easy. The hard part is getting kids who've been discouraged, who've lost internal motivation, to write again.

This year, set the challenge before your students to see what they can accomplish! And, you don't have to try to execute the program this November if there's not enough time to prepare. While there's certainly a lot of publicity and momentum for writers who attempt the noveling marathon in the fall—hashtags **#nanowrimo** and **#amwriting** frequently trend in November—there's no reason in the world you couldn't make a similar effort in, say, January (JanNoWriMo?) or at any other time. In the end, all that matters is the challenge of writing a story in 30 days—and the feeling of accomplishment for attempting a seemingly daunting task, regardless of whether a writer finishes or not.

Additional ISM resources:

Research: [The Impact of Digital Tools on Student Writing and How Writing Is Taught in](#)

[Schools](#)

Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 8 No. 9 [Journaling Isn't Just Personal](#)

Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 10 No. 4 [A Story of Teaching Excellence](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 35 No. 6 [The 21st Century School: Students and Individualized Instruction](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 8 [21st Century Teaching: Stability and Challenge](#)

School Spotlight: St. Margaret's Lives its Mission Through edX MOOCs

(8% of clicks)

The [mission of St. Margaret's Episcopal School](#) in San Juan Capistrano, California, is to “educate the hearts and minds of young people for lives of learning, leadership, and service.” This spring, select St. Margaret's faculty have an opportunity to demonstrate all three qualities for their students as they team up with [massive open online course \(MOOC\) provider edX](#). Their new online courses will provide students around the world of all ages and backgrounds access to world-class education.

The Initial Proposal

St. Margaret's Academic Dean, Dr. Jeneen Graham, was kind enough to talk to ISM about the new program and how it all started.

The Head of School relayed a message to Dr. Graham that edX wanted to extend their offerings from the current college-level selection to high school courses. St. Margaret's had been extended an invitation—a challenge—to develop MOOC proposals for submission and consideration.

Dr. Graham laughed as she relayed her and her colleagues' initial efforts to craft their proposals. “We modeled them after our brick-and-mortar courses, since those were what we knew best. After two days, I called edX to ask if they had any examples or samples we could look at,” she said. “They told us there were none—that we were the first, so there was nothing they could give us.” (Talk about walking in uncharted territory!)

In the end, [three courses were selected](#) to become future edX MOOCs: “Introduction to Psychology,” taught by Dr. Graham with Jeremy Dailey; “Advanced Spanish Language and Culture,” taught by Marta Austin; and “The Road to Selective College Admissions,” taught by Roland Allen and Amy Warren. It was no small feat to get these three courses accepted.

Dr. Graham said that these proposals were accepted over 150 submitted by other educators—and that St. Margaret’s was only one of two high schools participating in the initiative.

Data Insights

Once accepted, edX invited Dr. Graham and the other instructors to their offices in Massachusetts to learn about teaching an MOOC—which, as it turns out, requires a different mindset altogether than leading an in-person class. The teachers were presented with 300-plus pages of insights and information gleaned from the analytics from thousands of previous students taking other edX MOOCs.

Take something as basic as how long a lecture should last. “In my current AP class,” Dr. Graham said, referencing the St. Margaret’s course on which her edX MOOC is based, “I’d lecture for 15 or 20 minutes before assigning the students to independent or group work. [The edX] data says that student [attention doesn’t] persist past four to seven minutes.”

In response, Dr. Graham has distilled the essence of her lectures into shorter videos rather than just recording a normal classroom lecture. The insights even changed how she approaches her regular courses. “It’s forcing me to think of what’s critical,” she said, adding that she now approaches all of her classes from the perspective of “What do they [the students] really need to hear?”

Leadership and Service

St. Margaret’s MOOCs don’t start until this spring. Already, Dr. Graham’s “Introduction to Psychology” course has over 2,000 students signed up. But more than the satisfaction of hosting a popular course, Dr. Graham says she’s grateful for the opportunity to model St. Margaret’s mission for her students by teaching this MOOC—particularly its components of leadership and service:

“This MOOC gives us a chance to serve other students who don’t have access [to this type of course] in their small schools and towns. We can model service [by showing] students that this is what we do—if there’s an opportunity, we fill it.

“For a lot of adults, it can be scary to try something new. As an adult educator and learner, I’m going to fall, but pick myself up and try again. As private-independent school teachers, we have the agility, the flexibility to be leaders in this [new educational technology] for others.

“According to Rob Evans, this change—any change—is basically like a death. What I’ve been doing all this time won’t work anymore. There’s a grieving process.”

But that grieving process won’t let Dr. Graham or any of her fellow teachers stop leading others into this next generation of instructional innovation. Follow their example, and don’t let fear of the unknown stop your school from trying new things to better teach your students.

ISM will feature a new school each month to share stories of student, programmatic, and administrative success with nearly 30,000 private school administrators every month. If your school has a success story you'd like the world to hear, contact [our e-letter editor](#) today!

Additional ISM resources:

Research: *Can Online Learning Communities Achieve the Goals of Traditional Professional Learning Communities? What the Literature Says*

Research: *Benchmarking Support Models for Online Learning*

Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 4 *Don't Be Afraid to Jump on the Bandwagon*

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 35 No. 3 *The 21st Century School: Curriculum and Technology*

I&P Vol. 39 No. 12 *The Rhetoric of Rigor*

November 2014—Vol. 13 No. 11

(32.2% open; 8.1% click through as of January 5, 2015)

Gift Giving at Private Schools

(41% of clicks)

With the winter holiday season quickly approaching, everyone's thinking about gift giving—and you're probably on someone's list. Both private school administrators and teachers give and receive gifts at school around this time of year, and it's wise to plan early for thoughtful, appropriate gifts—or consider whether you should receive them at all.

Private schools—as opposed to public or charter schools—present a special case when it comes to holiday gift-giving traditions, especially at lower-division schools that can be considered “feeder” schools for the local upper-division schools, as parents hope to garner better recommendations when applying to new schools. Some parents may feel the need to cement relationships and goodwill with both teachers and administrators with presents.

Giving gifts can be a tradition at your school—and one you're loathe to make waves about—but you could possibly run into allegations of bribery or special treatment for students whose families offer particularly extravagant presents. To counter this, most schools have—and should follow!—clear policies concerning gift giving, including acceptable amounts to spend on such gifts.

Review your policies and resolve to keep to them this holiday season—even if this means graciously returning expensive gifts to parents.

Gifts don't only come from families. There may be some presents exchanged within various school departments or offices. Here are some words to the wise about gifts in the “office,” as recommended by various experts.

- Gifts should typically “flow down” from higher-ups, rather than from employees to the manager or boss, says Alison Green for *U.S. News's* [On Careers blog](#). “Many people resent being expected to give a gift to someone who presumably makes significantly more money than they do,” she warns, adding that the same logic applies to group gifts for a boss, as some “may worry that not participating could affect the way they're perceived by the person who signs their paycheck.”
- Brittney Helmrich with *Business News Daily* recommends group gift exchanges. Secret Santas, “white elephants,” and gift grabs are all fun ways to involve everyone, not just a few.

- In just about every “How to Give Gifts in a Professional Setting” article you find, someone will mention how important tact is when giving gifts, then recite a horror story, like one mother who still flushes when she talks about the gift her husband gave to their son’s teachers ([Victoria’s Secret pajamas and a 12-pack of beer](#)) or the coworker who gave [recovering alcoholic a bottle of wine](#). So use common sense when buying a gift!

How are gifts exchanged at your school? Tell us in the comment section below!

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 10 No. 4 [Holiday Gifts: A Policy Question?](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 11 No. 4 [The Gift of Simplicity](#)

Private School News Vol. 8 No. 12 [Holiday Parties: Risks and Pitfalls](#)

Private School News Vol. 11 No. 7 [Celebrating the Holidays on Campus](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 38 No. 6 [Developing a Gift Acceptance Policy Manual](#)

School Spotlight: Malvern’s Dedication to Professional Development

(26% of clicks)

Professional development for all members of a private-independent school is more than just a "perk" to be given if the budget allows. Tools and techniques often change faster than we can adapt, and without specialized instruction for teachers and administrators, a school can quickly lose its edge.

At [Malvern Preparatory School](#) in Malvern, Pennsylvania, professional development for its teachers takes top priority. Head of School Christian Talbot spared a moment last month to talk with us about how the need for student-centered learning sparked a specialized training program for Malvern’s teachers—their own Summer Institute, where the instructors get instructed.

Augustinian Roots and a Student-Centered Tradition

Malvern takes pride in its history as an Augustinian Catholic school, which emphasizes St. Augustine’s educational philosophy. “St. Augustine’s writings on education are very much about journeying toward the truth, as opposed to capturing it in one fell swoop out of a book—and understanding that people make lots of mistakes,” Christian said with a wry smile, adding that the saint had been far from saintly and had led “quite a life” before making his conversion to Catholicism.

But the idea of education as a journey rather than a “once and done” event made student-centered learning a logical evolution of the school’s current program, rather than a foreign concept, as Christian told us.

“Augustine and his own life experience was [...] about learning not from someone telling him the things he needed to know, but in relationships with teachers and peers, having truth brought out of [students]—it’s very much an active learning or a ‘learning by doing’ approach.

“[And so,] the current vision is radically student-centered. It’s predicated on the idea that a learning environment in which the teacher is the center of the experience is no longer viable. I’m not sure it ever really was, but in the 21st Century, it’s clearly not a way to help kids learn effectively and authentically.”

Teaching the Teachers

To achieve that vision, Christian and the other members of his school’s Academic Leadership Team—the Assistant Head, the Upper and Middle School Heads, and the Director of 21st Century Learning—formed the Summer Institute, a two-week, intensive program for teachers, designed to represent the same teaching approach that the teachers must emulate in their own classrooms.

Each year will focus on one of the three primary components or “pillars” that the Academic Leadership Team has identified as essential for a student-centered learning environment: assessment, pedagogy, and curriculum. With the program in its third year, the 2015 Summer Institute will focus on curriculum, but the format will remain generally unchanged from its first session, as Christian explained.

“The first cycle (which deals with assessment) is really organized around the question: How do you know when a student has learned? What are the data that tell you that a student has learned? And, as a student is moving toward the goals that you’ve set for the learning, how can you, as the teacher, provide really precise and timely feedback to help that student grow?

“As curators of the experience, we bring together lots of different resources—articles, books, videos when it’s appropriate—and then we unleash the teachers on the question or the problem to be solved. [...] We put them in teams, and because they’ve already read, and processed, and discussed these resources that we’ve curated for them, as a team their goal is to collaborate one or more solutions to the problem, or one or more responses to the challenge that we’ve put to them.”

The resulting conclusions result in wide and varied solutions to the problem. Far from standardizing a universal school approach to education, Christian emphasized that every teacher has the autonomy and creative control to apply student-centered teaching techniques to his or her unique classroom, adding that “It would be not only inefficient but

foolish for the Academic Leadership Team to pretend that we know better than teachers how to design instruction and assess students!”

Resistance and Results

Christian admitted that he has a great Board of Trustees and Finance Committee, both of which jumped at the chance to make a difference to their students by focusing on what Christian calls the “greatest point of leverage a school has” —its teachers. With professional development for the teachers the top priority, getting the resources and support to pull off the Summer Institute was assured.

But its participants were slightly leery of the new program. Christian believed that there were “two forms of resistance” from teachers when approached with the new idea: psychological and logistical.

The first existed simply because the Summer Institute was an unknown quantity in a previously predictable world. “Whenever you have something that’s new and unknown, it’s very scary,” Christian said, admitting that the Academic Leadership Team experienced its own doubts and worries about the program. (After all, they’d never done this before!)

But Christian and his cohorts are fans of “failing quickly and failing forward.” They believed that it was important for themselves and their instructors to “model healthy risk-taking.” When something’s this important—as professional development was to the future of the school and its students—you do what needs doing, simply because you “can’t afford *not* to do this right now.”

As for the latter issue of logistics, Malvern’s teachers had grown accustomed to having the summer months free from school obligations. Many had summer jobs or family obligations and were loathe to give them up. The immediate solution to this issue was to make the Summer Institute voluntary for all teachers as the culture shifted to accommodate this new expectation—but advancement in the school’s career ladder was tied to participation and completion of the program.

Despite these misgivings, Christian believes that the Summer Institute has fundamentally changed how the school delivers its mission and offers education to its students, particularly concerning teamwork. Teachers have moved from an isolated, internalized structure to one that encourages cooperation among peers. He looks forward to a day when the Summer Institute will expand to include teachers from other private-independent schools.

But to those looking to replicate Malvern’s professional development at their own schools, Christian offers this advice.

"I would encourage [schools] to think about three things, in this order:

"First, what's the vision of learning that's aligned with your mission, but that's also aligned with what you believe to be the future of learning. That's going to be diverse. Some schools will put technology first, and that can be a totally legitimate way of approaching the question. Schools like Malvern will put technology second, only in support of another picture of learning. But first and foremost, you have to understand how the vision you have for learning stems from your mission.

"The second thing is to align all of your resources to that vision, and [...] the most important resource schools have is time.

"And then third is to design an incentive for teachers to want to do this. In our case, we aligned our Summer Institute with our promotion system, so there is a self-interest involved here. They must want to do this. By the same token, they understand that in order to become the teachers that we know they need to be—and that *they* know they need to be—this is also something that they want to do."

ISM will feature a new school each month to share stories of student, programmatic, and administrative success with nearly 30,000 private school administrators every month. If your school has a success story you'd like the world to hear, contact [our e-letter editor](#) today!

Additional ISM resources:

Research: [Effective Teacher Professional Development: What the Literature Says](#)

Research: [Reviewing the Evidence on How Teacher Professional Development Affects Student Achievement](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 7 [Does Your Teacher Evaluation System Include Professional Development?](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 9 [When Professional Development Is Useful for Your Teachers](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 36 No. 3 [ISM Success Predictor No. 17: Budgeting for Professional Development](#)

I&P Vol. 34 No. 13 [New Research: The Relationship Between Faculty Professional Development and Student Performance](#)

I&P Vol. 28 No. 14 [Scheduling Professional Development for Faculty and Staff](#)

I&P Vol. 34 No. 10 [Professional Development During Hard Economic Times](#)

“And to All, a Good Night”—Community Efforts by Independent Schools During the Holidays

(13% of clicks)

No matter what tradition you follow, the winter months bring a sense of cheer and wonder to all. But during a time of increased generosity and eager anticipation of gifts from loved

ones, remembering those who are less fortunate takes a special emphasis and care. So this month, we'd like to share some bright moments of true holiday spirit, courtesy of schools across the country.

Giving More Than Money

[The Nightingale-Bamford School](#) in New York City created a K-12 "[giving curriculum.](#)" It covers activities, assignments, and examples for students to learn the importance of generosity.

Then, in honor of [#GivingTuesday](#)—a day reserved to remember to give to the broader community in the middle of commercialized shopping days like Cyber Monday or Black Friday—the school donated the curriculum entirely. Now any school can use or adopt the curriculum to its classrooms, completely free of charge.

Wreaths for the Dispossessed

[St. Joseph's School](#) in North Grosvenordale, Connecticut, also donated its talents to help its community—but this time, the students took charge!

Students alongside their teachers [created wreaths](#) to be auctioned off in a community silent auction. The proceeds will support the Shalom House, a specialized shelter for women and children.

Collecting Care

Our final example of exemplary holiday spirit is [Valley Christian School](#) in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, which has gone further than a single philanthropic event this season.

Back in November, the school executed "[Operation Brotherhood,](#)" during which they collected food to provide 2,000 local families with Thanksgiving dinners. These families would otherwise be unable to celebrate the holiday. At the same time, "Operation Christmas Child" was in effect, as students were asked to donate shoeboxes filled with practical items for children in developing countries.

December's efforts will be a little bit closer to home, as they participate in the popular "Toys for Tots" program.

But near or far, large or small, private-independent schools across the country and around the world are making their communities better places to live, work, and learn this holiday season. Take a moment to share your school's work in the community with your fellow administrators! We'd love to rejoice in your successes with you.

(And, from all of us at ISM, we wish you the happiest of holidays!)

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 11 No. 3 *'Tis the Season for Service ... And Open Houses*

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 7 No. 3 *Budget Cuts Mean an Opportunity to Reach Out to Public School Students*

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 27 No. 7 *Community Service: Taking It to the Street*

I&P Vol. 28 No. 7 *Scheduling a Community Service Program*

I&P Vol. 38 No. 5 *Community Service and Service Learning: Designing a Successful Program*

Admission Officers

December 2013—Vol. 12 No. 4

(27.9% open; 7.3% click through)

Correcting Mistakes and Second Chances: Misinformation in the Application Process

(15% of clicks)

As hard as we try to perfect important school forms and paperwork, it's inevitable that mistakes occur. Acknowledging this basic fact of life can make you more understanding when you notice errors in a student's application. That said, you should make allowances for blunders made innocently while recognizing and confronting those made purposefully.

Depending on your mission, applications can be long and repetitive. Though you should work to remove superfluous redundancies, you'll often have multiple entries for the same information such as parents' names and marital status, addresses, and similar clerical data. If you notice a typo (i.e., the mother's name is spelled as "Elizabeth" on one form and "Elizebeth" on another), it's likely a transcription error rather than something nefarious and shouldn't prevent the application from moving forward.

Say the mistake is something less innocent, though. Perhaps you have a family applying for financial aid, and you have evidence leading you to believe there may be a discrepancy between their reported numbers and their actual financial situation. You know your families better than any financial aid application ever could. So, if one of your applying families drops off their children everyday in a Lexus but only reports a family income of \$90,000, there might be an issue, or at least a reason to question their reported financial information.

[FAST – Powered by ISM](#), our financial aid software, will mark or "flag" discrepancies and chosen fields based on your school's mission-based crafted formula for your Financial Aid Team to review. Once your committee has taken a look at all flagged fields, it's left to you to contact the family and, in as respectful and polite a tone as possible, convey your findings and ask for further clarification, then deny or approve their application.

Something to consider may be the reason for the "flag." If the family omitted information on their application for fear of penalty but seems to grasp the gravity of the situation after speaking with you, continued consideration may be prudent. Regardless, the family should be made aware that inaccurate adjustments on their paperwork can result in immediate disqualification of their child from consideration, whereas if they had been upfront at the start, explanation of unique situations would have been considered.

Honest errors happen all the time. The lesson to learn is that you must ask for clarification when errors are found—rather than rejecting the application altogether—before re-evaluating your new findings against your school’s priorities for its new students. If moral integrity and honesty are part of your school’s mission, your prospective student and his/her family should demonstrate their commitment to that ideal from the very start.

Additional ISM articles of interest:

ISM Updates for Business Officers Vol. 7 No. 8 [Simplifying Your Financial Aid Process](#)

ISM Updates for Admission Officers Vol. 11 No. 5 [Financial Aid Award Notifications](#)

Additional ISM articles of interest for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 31 No. 6 [Your Parent Education Plan: Predictability and Support](#)

Admitting Legacy Students

(23% of clicks)

You care about your former students, whether they go on to become chemists, priests, or teachers just like the ones who inspired them in your school. You want them to remember their days in your classrooms fondly, reflecting their accomplishments with pride to their own children. And—if you and your school have done a superb job—perhaps they will wish to enroll their son or daughter in your private-independent school.

To avoid accusations of favoritism, you should pay more—not less—attention to the established procedures and guidelines your school has created for its admission process, some guides for which you’ll find in [The Admission Funnel](#).

While it’s encouraging for alumni to wish for their own children to have the same educational experience they themselves had, admitting “legacy” students presents special challenges beyond those of ordinary applicants to your program.

For instance, consider the consequences to your grassroots marketing strategies, most of which will center around maintaining positive word-of-mouth references. If your admission policies are perceived to be less stringent when considering legacy students, the credibility of the process and your school’s reputation will be sullied, something difficult to recover from.

On the other hand, alumni can be an excellent source of funding for private-independent schools looking to expand their endowments and increase their curricula offerings; automatically dismissing alumni connections to your program can have far-reaching consequences. Giving the children of your alumni a second look may be well worth the effort. If their parents care enough about your program to make donations, their personal philosophies at home may correspond with those you look for in prospective students.

Before any other factors are considered, your primary focus should be to admit students who you believe will both benefit from your mission-specific program and will flourish in the environment you foster, both in and out of the classroom. The decision should not be solely based on whether a student's family gave enough money to build a new science wing or a relative is part of the teaching staff or Board of Trustees.

Additional ISM articles of interest:

ISM Update for Admission Officers Vol. 11 No. 2 [*How to Get People Talking About Your School*](#)

ISM Update for Admission Officers Vol. 9 No. 2 [*Reminding Parents of the Greatness of Your School*](#)

ISM Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 7 [*Keep Your Alumni in the Family*](#)

Additional ISM articles of interest for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 26 No. 3 [*The Hunt for Lost Alumni: Four Strategies to Bring Them Home*](#)

I&P Vol. 33 No. 5 [*Six Key Questions About Endowment*](#)

January 2014—Vol. 12 No. 5

(28.1% opens; 11.4% click through)

Tour Dos and Don'ts

(50% of clicks)

The winter season has definitely arrived and so has tour season! Soon, you will play host to prospective parents and their children. Keep reading to find some dos—and don'ts!—for your visitor programs to guarantee a successful season.

- **DO establish a personal connection with each family.** Have a conversation with the parents and children to learn about the family's priorities and the student's strengths. If you're planning a larger event this spring like an open house, personally speak with *all* attendees and send a customized follow-up. Even a sticky note on the form letter referencing specific details from a conversation goes a long way to striking up that vital rapport with a potential new student.
- **DON'T feel that your ability to fill seats this year lets you get away with giving visitors less than your complete attention.** Just because your school is full to bursting with a healthy wait pool this year does not mean that the same will be true down the road. Maintain your school's reputation by continuing to give 100% to inquiring families.
- **DO know the most important questions your visiting families have—and DO know the answers to them all!** You've probably been giving tours and interacting with new parents and students for years, so the answers are ingrained at this point, but not all staff or faculty will have the same level of experience. Consider writing the answers to common questions in an easily accessible resource for those who don't field these inquiries daily. ISM's [The Admission Funnel](#) includes the following areas (among others!) as qualities parents look for when preparing to send their child to a new school:
 - Your school's mission and how it's fulfilled
 - Class size
 - Your Portrait of the Graduate
 - Facilities and resources
 - Expected financial obligations
 - The composition of the student population and the school's approach to diversity (if applicable)
- **DON'T think only your Admission Office is involved in showing off your school!** When touring the school, families examine your campus with a fine-toothed comb, and it stands to

reason that the faculty could make or break the decision to apply. In addition to the answers you provided them with above, you should also make sure that the faculty have their 30 second “[elevator speech](#)” prepared about the school. Personal stories about the students they teach and their professional development goals that align with the school’s mission work wonderfully for this! Make a point of sitting down with each of the faculty to help them sculpt a tale or two to share with visiting families.

- **DO remember that the visit is a two-way street.** Just as you and your school are evaluated by the family, so are you evaluating the family as a prospective member of your academic community. While tours are *not* interviews and should be enjoyable for everyone involved, guides should be on the look out for potential red flags to report to the Admission Office for further consideration—or for unforeseen positives, too!

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 11 No. 1 [Make Your Next Open House Exciting and Effective](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 8 No. 4 [Private School Facts—What You Didn’t Want Parents to Find](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 32 No. 3 [Marketing Your Purpose and Outcome Statements](#)

I&P Vol. 26 No. 5 [Your Faculty’s Role in the Admission Process](#)

Must-Reads for the Admission Office in 2014

(33% of clicks)

New Year’s Day has come and gone, but that doesn’t mean you can’t add a resolution to your list! We’ve spoken with admission professionals across the country and our ISM consultants, and here are books Admission Officers have recommended to their peers.

[Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most](#) by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen—There are times when you need to sit down with another party—relative, coworker, or irate family—and have, well, a difficult conversation. Having a resource like *Difficult Conversations* on your bookshelf will make awkward meetings as smooth as possible.

[Overachievers: Secret Lives of Driven Kids](#) by Alexandra Robbins—*Overachievers* takes a look into the lives of real teens in prestigious public schools in the U.S., but it doesn’t take a spectacular imagination to see the applications of these students in your review pile this spring. Driven by fear of failing their school and parents, *Overachievers* examines students who push themselves beyond impossible mental and physical limits to rack up a list of

achievements that would be impressive for an adult twice their age to have. Understanding the potential mindset and background of some of your most academically-qualified candidates may help you make the best decision, for both your school and your student's.

The Price of Privilege by Madeline Levine, PhD—*Price of Privilege* is a professional psychologist's observations on the same sort of students featured in *Overachievers*, with reports, statistics, and anecdotal evidence of psychological problems in teenagers despite their wealthy antecedents. While the Admission Office is no therapist's den, one of our consultants recommended reading this book—and then reviewing it in your school's newsletter to families. It's a great read for parents and administrators alike.

Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams by Alfred Lubrano—Lubrano chronicles his own life in *Limbo* as the son of a Brooklyn bricklayer who's risen to a more "white collar" job and position, speaking of and to others in the same border space. It's a huge cultural change for those attempting to reach for the American dream of being able to attain success despite low starting points, and Lubrano sees those like himself as an "overlooked cultural phenomenon" which deserves to be highlighted. Perhaps in the same way that *Overachievers* highlighted a stereotypically higher socioeconomic problem, *Limbo* may prove to be an interesting look through the eyes of your financial aid recipients.

Our Iceberg Is Melting: Changing and Succeeding Under Any Conditions by John Kotter and Holger Rathgeber—An allegorical fable for offices like *Animal Farm* is for politics, *Our Iceberg* tells a story about a little penguin who wants to change things in order to survive (their iceberg is melting!), but, well, change is hard, and there are a lot of personalities crammed into this particular Admission Office—er, we mean "iceberg." It takes tact, teamwork, and time for implement changes, especially when tackling engrained traditions. Who knows? Maybe you'll recognize your penguin doppelganger in this easy but useful read.

Additional ISM Resources

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 7 No. 6 [*Teen Self Esteem*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 4 [*The Pressure on High School Students to Build Their Resume...Whose Best Interest Is It?*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 10 No. 5 [*Constructive Conversations, Coaching, and Mentoring*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 6 No. 7 [*How to Handle the Fire Breathing Parent \(or Guardian\)*](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 30 No. 11 [*Change and the Implementation Dip*](#)

I&P Vol. 33 No. 5 [*Parent Relations in the Pre-Enrollment Period*](#)

February 2014—Vol. 12 No. 6

(28.7% open; 8.7% click through)

Sink or Swim: Making Your Wait Pool Tolerable

(42% of clicks)

As the [economy improves](#) and families rediscover the funds to invest in their children's education, you may find that your private-independent school has more interest from prospective students than you have space to accommodate. Enter your wait pool!

The wait pool has become a powerful, vital tool for your Admission Office to create the best possible community of incoming students. Sometimes, though, it can seem intimidating for the families waiting for spaces to appear. How can you make your wait pool as painless as possible for these potential families? After all, some of those in the wait pool will attend your school one day. Here are a few points to keep in mind while sorting your applications this spring.

No Lists Here!

First of all, notice that we've called it a *wait pool*, not a *wait list*. The term "wait list" implies a hierarchy instead of a group of students who will best balance out the class as you've built it. We believe that "wait pool" better reflects the reality of the actual status—it's not a "first come, first served" situation by any means. Which brings us to...

What Does Your School Need?

After reviewing all the applications and selecting those students who best fit your school's mission, you've got an ideal class composition in mind when you send out acceptances. However, not everyone will accept their offered place. This unpredictable enrollment could tip the balance in favor of artistic students over those more academically inclined, for example, or more girls than boys. Your wait pool corrects these issues as other families decline your offers of acceptance.

This philosophy—as with all your school policies, goals, and values—should be clearly communicated to your families. The possible delayed acceptance can raise all sorts of worries ("Was our essay off-topic? Were our recommendations less than glowing? *Why was my son/daughter not good enough for an automatic acceptance?*"). These worries can be allayed, however, by being as transparent as possible with the school's use of the wait pool.

Keeping Students for the Wrong Reasons

There are many reasons why one student may have an "edge" over another during the initial round of acceptances. Some students are specialists of some sort (e.g., a special talent, unique experiences or perspective, and socioeconomic status), bringing an element of mission-driven diversity to the class not available from other applicants. Others have that

indefinable spark, an immediate connection to the school and its educational atmosphere, that makes an offer almost obligatory.

So, when assembling those applicants whom you'd like to keep around for a little while longer, consider what qualities they have that you couldn't find in others. A student with a low probability of being offered a seat should not go into the wait pool, [no matter how much the family may donate](#) to the school or how many people they know.

“Polite Rejection”

Last year, *The Daily Beast* ran an article called [“Stuck in New York City Private School Wait List Hell”](#) (what a mouthful!) that discussed parents' belief that a wait list or pool is a nice way of rejecting a student without hurting feelings.

Again, this idea stems from a lack of transparency in the process, so be sure to communicate what a place in the wait pool means to anxious families. One technique we advise in *The Admission Funnel* (which is also mentioned in the “Stuck” article) is to personalize such letters as much as possible, showing your investment of time and care in the selection of the wait pool.

One mother whose child was placed on five wait lists said that “some [schools] didn't even mention my daughter's name. Those schools just wanted us to be done with them,” adding that she'd “prefer closure” to indefinite lingering and uncertainty.

To prevent this anxiety, contact these families once a month either by phone or by mail to remind them that you haven't forgotten them and ask if they would like to stay in your wait pool. In this way, you not only maintain up-to-date information *should* an opening appear—you also maintain positive word-of-mouth, even if the student is ultimately not enrolled at your school.

Pushy Parents

No matter what you do, you will inevitably have parents who will do anything and everything to get their child a place at your private-independent school. While it's flattering that they think so highly of your school that they would go to such an extreme as hiring a [\\$350-an-hour application consultant](#) or asking [a Supreme Court justice to write a recommendation](#) without knowing the child in question, you know that excessive schmoozing won't help as much as the families think. Even if [your applicants aren't quite as extravagant](#), some [online resources advocate](#) for parents to continue contacting the school to “bolster the seriousness of their application.” Much of this excess only adds to Admission Office headaches instead of bolstering a child's chances.

These parents will insist on calling or writing to reiterate their interest, no matter what they read or what you say. Budget some time to personally reply to these inquiries as tactfully and openly as possible.

Wait pools can feel like a scary place for parents whose children's education hangs in the balance, but with some forethought and transparency, the Admission Office can mitigate much of their anxiety.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 11 No. 4 [Wait Pools: Not All About the First in Line](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 9 No. 8 [Filling Your Seats When Parents Don't Promptly Re-enroll](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 33 No. 5 [Parent Relations in the Pre-enrollment Period](#)

I&P Vol. 38 No. 4 [Waiting Pools: Base Enrollment on Class Needs and Mission](#)

Admission and Development Go Hand in Hand (28% of clicks)

Last month, we discussed how [the Admission Office can seem like another planet to Development Directors](#), but that it's possible to keep everyone working toward the same goal: a happy, healthy school pursuing its mission to the best of its ability. Everyone has a different way of approaching the same target, and the different perspectives allow for the shared goal to be achieved.

Let's consider the Development Office. At first, it may seem as though their mission is almost antithetical to yours—after all, asking for money drives people away, doesn't it?

Not really. Think about it from their perspective: Development Directors spearhead efforts that make it possible to afford improvements for your school. From facility improvements to [professional development training](#), the Development Office's efforts go beyond keeping the lights on—they help set the stage for the education you want to provide for your students.

The Development Director may be more adult-focused and zeroed in on a donor's bottom line, as opposed to the Admission Office's more student-centric recruitment model. They may even request information that you, as Admission Director, shouldn't share due to privacy restrictions. (Take special note of this [fund-raising mistake](#) as a lesson in how *not* to do things!) Ultimately, though, both offices play a role in recruiting—and re-enrolling!—mission-appropriate students.

So, how can the Development Office help the Admission Office with its mission to grow your student community?

- **Consolidate your social media accounts.** Multiple accounts for one school make sending out consistent, accurate information about news and events nearly impossible. The Development Director may have more and different sorts of “friends” or “followers” than the Admission Office alone could reach.
- **Coordinate community events.** Just as the Admission Office is student-oriented, the (typically) more adult-focused Development Office can help create deeper experiences for the family as a whole. (Plus, more people promoting your calendar can only have positive results!)
- **Communicate with alumni effectively.** Alumni relationships mean different things to different offices. The Development Office sees them as a potential source of revenue (“Maybe they’d like to have other kids have the same sort of excellent education that they had”), while the Admission Office uses the alumni to help with recruitment (“Look at what wonderful things our graduates have done!”). Both of these goals can be effectively accomplished at once through cooperative outreach in a joint, annual newsletter or other publication, rather than both offices attempting to petition the same constituency individually.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Private School News Vol. 10 No. 6 [*Keeping Communications Open and Flowing in Your School*](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 37 No. 6 [*21st Century Schools: The ISM Advancement Model*](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 14 [*Alumni Relations and the Portrait of the Graduate*](#)

March 2014—Vol. 12 No. 7

(26.1% opens; 9.1% click throughs as of March 4, 2014)

Three Social Media Sites You Don't Hear About Anymore

(16% of clicks)

Remember when a “post on your wall” meant some strange form of graffiti and everyone had an AOL chat handle? In memory of some of our favorite social Web sites of days gone by, here is a list of three defunct social media sites, why they tanked, and what your school's social marketing campaign can learn from their errors.

1. Friendster: Inconvenient Technology Problems

What it was—Friendster was a [social networking Web site](#) in the days before MySpace and Facebook. In every region of the world ([except Asia](#)), it is dead.

What happened? While the Board of Directors was an “all-star crew” with high talent and previous online successes under their collective belts, [founder Jonathan Abrams believed](#) that the Board's universal [focus on “the next Google” detracted from other, more modest goals](#) and issues, like Friendster's inability to scale its platform to a larger audience. Explosive growth turned out to be more than the site could handle, resulting in [slow loading times](#) and users defecting to the new MySpace.

Lessons learned—Don't ignore small-but-pervasive inconveniences. Problems like parents' difficulty reaching counselors instead of a voicemail or having the same questions pop up because your brochure hasn't been updated will have further-reaching consequences than temporary annoyance. Chances are, you're making it harder for your potential constituents to like you; they may decide not to deal with the hassle and go someplace else.

2. MySpace: Self-Centered and Slow to Adapt

What it was—MySpace was [a social networking Web site in the days after Friendster but before Facebook](#). Nowadays, Myspace is in decline as a general social site, being the [516th ranked Web site in the United States](#), according to Alexa Web rankings. (To compare, Facebook is the [second-ranked Web site in the entire world](#).)

What happened? Social media and content strategist [Jay Baer](#) listed several reasons for MySpace's failure in his blog post [“6 Lessons Learned From the Demise of MySpace.”](#) Two of the most important insights for private school marketers are his third “Mobile is Critical” and fourth “Think Beyond Your Website” points. The former point references MySpace's lack of a functional mobile platform for an entire year while Facebook tweaked and attracted more users on cell phones and tablet devices. The latter point Baer makes is that MySpace focused on brand awareness within itself, while Facebook began to spread beyond its home URL and be used in other Web sites throughout the Internet.

Lessons learned—Always be thinking forward. While Facebook and Twitter are the foundational parts of any social media plan right now, ignore up-and-coming social media apps at your peril.

Think beyond yourself and your campaign. Churning out press releases and newsletters and original content is wonderful, but that’s all content coming from you, about you. Consider getting your school’s name out in the broader community through online parent forums or charity events to expand your school’s exposure.

3. Digg: Hype and Abandoned Community

What it was—Digg was a [news aggregator](#), collecting news stories from across the Internet and allowing users to “dig” (vote up) or “bury” (vote down) various stories to rate the content. [Sold and all but replaced by reddit](#), another democratic news aggregator, Digg is now buried.

What happened? [Ecoconsultancy’s blog post on Digg’s demise](#) lists several reasons why the Web site failed. Two of interest to private schools are its unreasonable hype—as [Ecoconsultancy](#) says, “At some point, a company has to assume that it will need more [than it currently has] to sustain its growth”—and [its redesign mishaps](#). Users left Digg for greener, more reddit-based pastures, despite the huge number of users Digg had initially.

Lessons learned—If you talk the talk, you have to walk the walk. Advertise a wonderful new college prep program or your high diversity levels all you’d like, but when push comes to shove, potential parents want to see tangible results and commitments to these goals or they’ll look at other schools.

Just because your school has full enrollment now doesn’t mean it’ll stay that way forever. Resting on your laurels can be deadly for your program, so constantly stay on top of your advertising campaign and re-recruitment strategies.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 11 No. 7 [Your Bad Social Media Habits](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 10 No. 1 [Communicating Through Social Media](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 36 No. 5 [Conducting a Communications Audit](#)

“Welcome!” Now What?—What You Send to Accepted Students
(42% of clicks)

After days of maneuvering around stacks of unopened envelopes balanced on desks like paper Jenga towers and peering at indecipherable handwriting on recommendations and evaluations, you've done it. You have created the perfect incoming class for next school year. You are about to make some fortunate children (and their parents) incredibly happy. Now, to tell them the great news!

Enter your acceptance packet.

Sure, you could tell them via an e-mail or a generic bulk letter, but that's no way to make your future students feel welcome at your school. Read on to find some suggestions on what to send to your accepted students (and their relieved parents) from [The Admission Funnel](#) and the [Admission Director e-List](#).

The Acceptance Letter

Your letter is the most important piece of your acceptance package—that's what the family has been waiting to see for months! [The Admission Funnel](#) recommends you send two letters, the first of which goes to the student. In it, students will learn that they are “the first to know” the great news, and such a personal letter allows you to add some unique touches of your own. (This is especially important at upper school levels, as the students have a certain amount of control over the decision-making process.)

The second, more formal letter should be sent to the parent a day after the student's. Obviously, the student will already have told his or her parents the great news, but the parent-specific letter is an opportunity to give the parent important information like pertinent timelines and answers to some frequently asked questions.

The Admission Packet ***Contract and Necessary Paperwork***

After you send the acceptance letters, send the family a packet with several items including the most important your enrollment contract. This document is vital to send early, considering this is how the family is going to enroll at the school and “seal the deal.”

Send along addressed and stamped return envelopes in the packet to make signing and sending the contract as easy as possible. Information about possible payment plans, credit card authorization forms, timelines for contract returns, deposits, and special admission events would be good to add, too.

Other Important Additions

Newsletters are fantastic ways to introduce the family to the school community, as are calendars of important school dates and fun school events. Brochures about special programs at your school like summer camps or extracurricular activities can keep excitement and anticipation high for your future student. If your private school is religiously affiliated, invitations to join your synagogue or church are appropriate, too.

Add a copy of your school's handbook—or a flyer containing an overview of important rules. This small supplement will help the family understand your school's expectations from the start.

A small brochure about your school's Development Office, annual fund, and how your school's culture of philanthropy supports your mission is *vital* to starting a relationship between your Development Director and the potential family. By telling a family how their donation will help their student—and by introducing the idea of giving to the school early on—the Development Office will find it much easier to ask for the family's time, treasure, and talents for the annual fund and other fiscal projects.

Once the contract is signed and returned, more detailed forms can be added, like the emergency contact sheet, school supply lists, and required health sheets.

Make It Personal!

At every opportunity, work hard to send more than just the standard package to a student and his or her family. Highlighting special events on your calendar or your sports' teams latest victory will remind the student that you remember past conversations and care about his or her interests. A sticky note with a quick, handwritten message on a letter will impact the family more than generic printed copy.

Even better, call the family and personally offer your congratulations! Not only does it give you a chance to confirm that they received the letter and packet, but it also offers you an opportunity to address any concerns or questions at the start. Take it a step further and involve your faculty. For example, if the student showed interest in joining your orchestra, ask your conductor to contact the family and talk about the program.

While slightly more time-consuming during a time when every minute counts, personalizing your acceptance packet will make your offer stand out from others and increase the chance that the student will enroll at your school. And ultimately, that's the whole point of the Admission Office: recruiting—and enrolling!—the best, most mission-appropriate class for your school.

Convince families to choose your private-independent school above any other by adding one of **ISM's pamphlets** to your accepted student packet! These brochures are easily [customizable with your school's logo](#) and available in both English and [Spanish](#).

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 7 No. 8 [Putting Together the Perfect Welcome Packet](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 26 No. 5 [Your Faculty's Role in the Admission Process](#)

April 2014—Vol. 12 No. 8

(28.7% open; 10.7% click through as of July 15, 2014)

“Have You Decided Yet?”

(34% of clicks)

In early spring, your Admission Office bustles with news for waiting families and burning questions your staff ask among themselves as they wait for responses as your deadline approaches. How many of your currently enrolled families will re-enroll? How many of your “yes” letters will come back with a signed contract and a check? What if you don’t hit your enrollment goal? What if you’re overenrolled?

But these questions can take months to resolve. For those wishing there were a way to speed up the process, we have a few suggestions and incentives to encourage people to get back to you more quickly.

Reach Out and Ask!

If your deadline is fast approaching and you need a better idea of what your numbers are going to be for the upcoming year, why not pick up the phone and call those families still “on the fence”? It’s a small thing to do, and it reminds the family of your personal dedication to their case.

Contacting them over the phone or via e-mail also gives you a chance to clear up any misconceptions or lingering concerns. If they’re worried about finances, remind them that your financial aid program was established to assist mission-appropriate, struggling families. If they’re waiting to hear about other programs, be supportive and encouraging while reminding them of the deadline.

However, don’t become pushy or overbearing. As easy as it is for you to call them, it’s just as simple for them to say “Thanks, but no thanks.” And, they won’t hesitate to tell their friends about their negative experience.

Accessibility

Sometimes people are trying to contact you to get their materials in, but [Murphy’s Law](#) interferes. Is your voice mail or e-mail system spontaneously deleting or not delivering messages? Did the fax machine run out of paper and no one noticed? Has your intern been placing the mail on the wrong person’s desk? Double-check your current system and processes before assuming parents aren’t getting back to you.

Even if nothing is going wrong, is there a way you can make the process easier and less painful for everyone involved? You may consider going paperless with your contracts or accepting electronic payments online. This transition may change your current infrastructure and support needs, so don’t announce or propose a change without thinking it all the way through—and talking it through with your Head and Business Office. However, upgrading your office may help some of those tardies become on-timers.

Late Fees

A financial incentive may get people moving! While charging such fees can feel less-than-welcoming, the fact is, people making their decision late create more work and effort for your office and your school as a whole, so it may make financial sense to charge for this extra work.

Some schools have begun experimenting with perpetual enrollment, where parents are informed that—barring any sort of terrible catastrophe or their withdrawal—the contract will “roll over” to the next year and the deposit is due at a certain date. Of course, one pitfall to this tactic is that some families may believe that they don’t have to take any action—including paying the deposit—to have their child enrolled in the next year.

Another tactic is to include a small discount for those who register early. While you'll see a small decrease in your overall net income, being able to rest at night knowing you've reached your goal for the year while decreasing the anxiety in your office might be worth it.

While it's a frustrating time of year for your office, remember that it's probably just as stressful for the families. Keep your cool and focus on your numbers for the next year, filling your school with happy, mission-appropriate students who will be grateful for the chance to experience the education you and your school will give them.

If you're thinking about starting late fees and other incentives to spur reluctant families to “fish or cut bait,” [sign up for our Admission Officer e-List](#) to see what your colleagues are saying about this and other pertinent topics.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 9 No. 8 *Filling Your Seats When Parents Don't Promptly Re-enroll*

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 8 No. 5 *It's Re-enrollment Time. How Do You Deal With A Difficult Parent?*

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 35 No. 14 *Assessing Your School's Internal Marketing*

I&P Vol. 36 No. 5 *The Enrollment Management Cycle*

Double Trouble: Dealing With Siblings in Your Applicant Pool (44% of clicks)

Alyssa Smith was a diamond in the rough in last year's applications. You were excited to offer her acceptance, and she and her parents have been a wonderful addition to your private-independent school community. This year, you see “Smith, Michael” on one of your applications, and you open it with pleasure to find ... a young man you can't accept.

Maybe Michael's grades aren't up to par due to a learning disability your school isn't equipped to handle; maybe he had some disciplinary issues that your school can't cope with; or maybe you simply don't have room for him. It's now your job to tell the Smiths that Michael isn't the right fit for the school that is perfect for Alyssa. How do you handle this?

The Path of Least Resistance?

First of all, it's an awkward situation, but one that deserves concerted attention rather than being swept under the rug. The children of staff, alumni, and currently enrolled families are often “priority” applicants, but in no way should that guarantee them a place at your school. Sometimes, to keep the good will of the parents, you might be tempted to take the path of least resistance and accept the student, even though you may know that he or she isn't mission-appropriate.

Ultimately, though, by accepting a student you know is not a good fit for your school, you may jeopardize your long-term mission for a short-term solution that (chances are) will end poorly when your school can't produce the same good results for their son as it has for their daughter.

Keep to the Code

Knowing that occasionally you have to deny applicants like Michael, it's a good idea to establish a policy on how "priority" applicants are processed by your school. Make sure your policy is explicit, and continuously redistribute it to parents, alumni, and faculty. Reminding people of this policy right before your application due date is great timing, as is a periodic side note in newsletters or other, more casual group correspondence.

If you don't have a written, formal policy, now's the time to consider how you'd like your school to proceed next spring in similar circumstances. Don't just think about "how you've always done it"—major changes can be introduced gradually, and this policy is a chance to lay down new rules for future applicants who won't even know that it was done any other way.

Bad With the Good!

As always, honesty (to the best of your ability) is the best policy. For a rejection of a current family's child, a personal phone call or brief meeting will go a long way toward respecting the family while preserving your decision and the school's mission.

You can't always give the family specifics as to why their son was rejected while their daughter was accepted ("Michael's last teacher said in the recommendation he had a big problem respecting authority ..."), but you can remind them of your commitment to your mission—and that your school simply can't serve every student. And then your chance to be a hero to this family appears: Give them suggestions for alternative schools that may better suit their child.

It may seem counterintuitive to recommend students to your "competition," but each private school has its own mission and calling. Maybe Michael isn't as academically competitive as your school requires, but his talent in the school choir may make him a wonderful candidate for the art school down the road. Recommending an alternative encourages the student and the family at a time when they might feel hopeless, and shows that you've put special thought into their particular case.

By investing a little bit of time into checking out some other options for your rejected "connected" candidates, you can preserve your current family's good will and your good name in the greater community.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 10 No. 1 [Crafting Your School's Newsletter](#)
ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 12 No. 4 [Admitting Legacy Students](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 26 No. 5 [Your Faculty's Role in the Admission Process](#)
I&P Vol. 35 No. 3 ['Priority' Students: The Unpleasant Side of 'Demand in Excess of Supply'](#)

May 2014—Vol. 12 No. 9

(31.4% open; 9.9% click through as of July 15, 2014)

Exit Interviews: When Families Decide to Leave

(31% of clicks)

We love to talk about the things we love. It could be family and friends, the latest and greatest TV show or book, or a beloved vacation spot. Most of us tend to leave out the negative things, preferring to dwell on the positive. In general, that's a great way to live and work. But, as an Admission Director, you know that ignoring the less-than-fantastic elements of your program will (eventually) lead to people departing from your school in droves, no matter how excellent the positive aspects are.

So, be proactive! Before your school sees a massive exodus, find out why your withdrawing families are going elsewhere. This doesn't have to be an awkward, unplanned conversation—a simple survey process can provide the answers you need and solid information you can act on.

It's Not Always Cut and Dried

Sometimes, there are hidden reasons why families don't re-enroll. Finances are often cited as a reason for leaving, and moving poses commuting problems. Still, it's dangerous to assume that seemingly obvious reasons are the only ones. You're hardly in a position to change your school's tuition rates or relocate your campus, but there could be other contributing factors that you may be able to control.

For example, let's say a family withdraws due to "insufficient finances" and your exit interviewer calls to ask for clarification and if there was anything the school could've done to keep them. During the course of your conversation, you discover that that the father has just lost his job.

Did they apply for financial aid? Yes. Did they receive any awards? Yes, but not enough. If this family's answer seems similar to other families' responses, you may have a problem with your financial aid formula—perhaps in giving to too many, you don't give enough to make a real difference. (For more information on financial aid formulas, see [The Three Types of Need-Based Financial Aid](#), available for Gold Consortium members.) This answer warrants a closer look at your formula and how your school is awarding aid to families.

In this case, your school identified a serious problem that would have gone unnoticed without the exit interview—and therein lies the advantage your school will have over others who don't take the time to dig deeper into seemingly simple reasons for departure.

How to Proceed

First of all, you may consider using an unaffiliated "third party" to handle exit interviews for several reasons.

- Families are more likely to be completely candid with a third party than they could be with a school official. Whether this is out of a desire to be "off the record" or simple courtesy, you're more likely to get honest information if using a third-party interviewer.

- Running the interview through a third party can also allow for the family to feel that their privacy is respected and that their comments will be confidential.
- Third-party interviewers are trained to survey others and get the right information from them. This is their profession—why not use their expertise?

Also, call families rather than sending them paper forms or arranging in-person interviews. The parents has already invested their time and energies elsewhere, so it makes little sense to inconvenience them with clumsy paper surveys they probably won't complete or meetings they probably won't honor. While electronic surveys can be used for convenience and consistency's sake, they can lack the immediacy of a personal phone call.

As always, timing is everything. Contact families in the fall so they don't feel as if you're trying to pressure them back into the school and thus are more willing to spend a few minutes answering your questions. Of course, this means you need to get the list of contacts and questions ready now, which brings us to...

Possible Questions

Depending on your school's personality and culture, your interview may be more or less structured than others, but every survey should establish the following:

- why the family decided not to re-enroll;
- who participated in making the decision;
- what strengths and weaknesses the school had while their child was enrolled;
- why the family chose the child's new school; and
- what sort of school—public, private, charter, religious, college prep, etc.—the child attends now.

If you're not using a third party, craft a script to give to whomever does the interview to make sure there's *some* continuity between calls. Store data and reflect on it over the years, enabling you to spot and act on trends before they become problematic.

While it's always sad to see a family leave your school before their child matriculates, you should still make sure their departure isn't bitter or toxic. Handled well, exit interviews can be a great opportunity to reconnect and see the private school you're dedicated to in a new light.

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 11 [Find Out What They Think Before They Leave the School](#)
ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 11 No. 6 [Exit Interviews and Attrition Surveys](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 35 No. 8 [Enter, Stay, Leave: A New Insight](#)
I&P Vol. 38 No. 1 [Assessing Your School's Internal Marketing in Light of the Student Experience Study](#)

Perpetual Enrollment: Is It Right for Your School?

(37% of clicks)

As this year's recruitment cycle winds down and you begin to make final decisions on applicants for next year's class, it's time to consider what your Admission Office did well this cycle and how it can improve for the next. One of the areas of concern for schools—turning to listservs and forums for insight—is re-enrollment.

One way private-independent schools bypass this headache is to implement “perpetual” or “continuous” enrollment. In such an arrangement, the student is automatically re-enrolled for the next semester *if* the student has maintained sufficient standing to warrant the invitation to return (e.g., satisfactory behavior and academic performance) and the student's account is paid in full.

Is this a universal solution for every private school? Considering that every school is unique, maybe not—but it's certainly worth examining further.

On the One Hand...

The most apparent advantage of the continuous enrollment model is that, since families are automatically re-enrolled in the system, time spent tracking down and re-enrolling current students is significantly reduced. Indeed, as the Northshore Christian Academy of Everett, Washington, [told its families in a letter last January](#):

Past parent surveys have suggested that NCA consider a continuous re-enrollment program. We are streamlining our current enrollment process to reduce paperwork and make it logistically more convenient for families. NCA also alluded to the elimination of mandatory family “appointments” for the next year's scheduling, thanks to its new continuous enrollment process.

This letter also highlights what NCA's families think of the current process. Ask yourself: What do your families think of *their* current process? Do they prefer to come in and have appointments with the staff, or would they rather have this process completed automatically? In NCA's case, parents wanted this change—and the school responded accordingly.

There are other advantages to the perpetual enrollment system. When Grace Christian School in Anchorage, Alaska, [explained its move to continuous enrollment on its website](#), it emphasized how its tuition assistance deadlines were *after* income tax deadlines—paperwork frequently required for application paperwork in both regular and financial aid applications.

Continuous enrollment allowed the school to hold a student's place in his or her class, even if the student's enrollment was contingent upon financial aid.

But on the Other Hand...

In its completely automated form, perpetual enrollment could possibly lead to misunderstandings between a family and the school. As most re-enrollment programs are contingent upon a student's account being up-to-date, some families could assume that the student is enrolled for the next school year, even though they're behind on payments. However, not all schools save space for current students when they fall behind in payments.

Cascade Christian School in Pierce County, Washington, removes students whose accounts are delinquent from active status to the general wait pool. [According to the FAQ page](#), a family must make its Continuous Enrollment payment—akin to a regular re-enrollment deposit—by the due date. If not, the family is not only assessed a late fee, but the student also remains in “open” status and is placed in the wait pool to be placed in a class “as space is available.”

The transfer from traditional re-enrollment plans to a continuous one, then, requires much communication between the school and the families. Some Admission Directors have shared techniques on [our Admission Directors' e-list](#), such as having Superintendents create video messages about the switch from traditional enrollment to perpetual enrollment and including a detailed letter in families' (final) traditional re-enrollment packets.

Having an administrator do a video to parents about such a dramatic change is a great way to demonstrate that this switch isn't some sort of last-minute "change for the sake of change." It demonstrates school solidarity and a collaborative spirit between all administrative levels of your school that may be useful when countering potential backlash from the way your school has always done it. (It helps, too, if you ask your parents ahead of time if they'd like a more streamlined process, as Northshore Christian Academy did in its parent surveys.)

Perpetual or continuous enrollment is not going to be the panacea for every school, but it does have its advantages over the angst-ridden and time-consuming traditional re-enrollment process. Consider carefully whether your private school would benefit from this type of automation; perpetual enrollment may be the best solution to a hard problem for the Admission Office!

Break out of the Admission Office "silo" and attend ISM's "boot camp" for advancement professionals at this summer's [Advancement Academy](#) in San Diego, California! On the [Admission track](#), you'll learn new ways to work with your fellow advancement team members in your quest to recruit and re-recruit students every year.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Updates for Admission Officers Vol. 10 No. 4 [Enrollment Contracts: What You Need to Know](#)

ISM Monthly Updates for Admission Officers Vol. 11 No. 3 [Re-enrollment as Re-recruitment](#)

ISM Monthly Updates for Trustees Vol. 11 No. 5 [2012 ISM Re-enrollment Survey Results](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 36 No. 5 [The Enrollment Management Cycle](#)

I&P Vol. 38 No. 2 [Who is Responsible for Enrollment Management?](#)

June 2014—Vol. 12 No. 10

(29.2% open; 11.6% click through as of July 15, 2014)

Emotional “Banking”: Evaluating Unfit Applicants

(44% of clicks)

Not too long ago on [our Admission Directors e-List](#), one director shared an awful bind she found herself in with a prospective family. During the tour, there were several “red flags” that the student was not developmentally ready for her school’s program and would probably be denied if the family applied for admission. Her question for the e-List: Should she deny the student before even receiving the application, or let the family pay the fee and follow normal processes?

To answer this question, we need to introduce the idea of “emotional banking.”

Any time you’re interacting with any prospective family—whether it’s on a tour, official letters, or informal email—you’re investing in a relationship with the parents and the child. You’re essentially “banking” goodwill toward a time when you might need to make a “withdrawal,” which could be anything from asking for a substantial initial deposit to ultimately rejecting the applicant.

The goal is not to become emotionally “bankrupt” with the family in question. An emotionally “bankrupted” family will become bitter and antagonistic toward your school, creating negative word-of-mouth. However, even as you make “deposits” in a relationship you suspect will be cut short, there’s absolutely no reason why you shouldn’t be (tactfully!) upfront and honest about probable outcomes of the application procedure, especially in extreme cases.

ISM also advises the following points to keep in mind while evaluating and interacting with unfit applicants.

- **Again, be open and honest with the family.** It’s best to be transparent with everyone, but in these situations—when a process can require time-consuming materials collection and a whole lot of hope—it’s important to give families a realistic expectation of their chances. Transparency in this stage of the process demonstrates your respect for the family’s time and resources and continues to strengthen the relationship between them and your office.
- **Remind the family that the application fee is nonrefundable and pays for the evaluation of the student’s application.** When you’ve mentioned that a child has little chance of becoming an accepted student, sometimes the family will still insist on applying. Remind them of the financial investment (however small) involved in applying. They might think twice about going through the process—especially in light of the likely outcome you’ve offered.
- **Allow the family to apply.** Even if you think it’s a waste of time, you’ve already done your best to help the family make an informed decision. Take a deep breath, and then treat this family and prospective student as you would any other. Perhaps you’ll see something to change your mind, and perhaps not. Following procedures now might save you and the school a lot of heartache down the road, as well as “banking” more respect and positive thoughts with the applying family in a worst case scenario situation.
- **Understand what your school can and cannot provide to students.** Just as every student is unique, not every applicant will be suitable for your program. Some students will

require more time, attention, and resources than your school and faculty can currently provide while maintaining the same level of quality education for all students. Knowing what your school is able to accommodate (and what it can't) before evaluating applications can help you counsel families appropriately.

While denying unsuitable applicants is part of every Admission Officer's job description, it can be a difficult one indeed. To avoid "bankrupting" your relationships with your applicants, continue to be honest with the families, allow them to apply, and then—if they want help—work with them to find alternatives for the child so that every student will have the supportive education he or she deserves.

And who knows? Maybe after another year of growing up and experience, you'll find that this particular applicant will be perfect for your program. You'll be glad then that you saved up enough in that family's emotional bank account to merit a second chance!

Recruiting (and re-recruiting!) mission-appropriate students is the Admission Office's top priority; class composition affects everything from school culture to the success of capital campaigns. If you're seeing a dearth of suitable applicants, it's time to revamp your office's plan of attack. Attend this summer's [Advancement Academy](#) and sign up for the [Admission Track](#) to learn how to attract, maintain, and retain those all-important family relationships that impact every other part of your school.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 10 No. 10 [Build a Sense of Community in Your Parent Relations Effort](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 11 No. 4 [Wait Pools: Not All About the First in Line](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 33 No. 1 [The Admission Funnel: Interview Tactics](#)

I&P Vol. 25 No. 3 [Recruiting Potential Students Through Your Summer Program](#)

Summer Reading for the Admission Office: Recommended Books and Webinars

(29% of clicks)

Summer is a slow(er) time for the Admission Office, though tours are still scheduled and family meet-and-greets are still planned. The brief respite before the beginning of the next recruitment season means you can relax with a good book. Here are a few we think are worthy of taking a starred place on your summer reading list, paired with relevant ISM webinars for those who enjoy audible rather than visual learning.

Word of Mouth Marketing: How Smart Companies Get People Talking

by Andy Sernovitz

We included this book with our general list for all private-independent school professionals, but it's a must-have on our list for Admission Officers in particular. Out of all administrators, you understand how important it is to maintain the goodwill of community leaders—who are, after all, your biggest advocates to new families. While everyone can recognize the *importance* of currying and keeping such favor, it's not always simple to do so.

Sernovitz's book spends some time explaining the importance of word-of-mouth marketing, but more importantly it offers real-world examples of effective grassroots implementation.

Recommended ISM Webinar: [Managing Word of Mouth: Effective Referrals](#) with Amy P. Riley, IAP-S

The SPEED of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything

by Steven M.R. Covey

Not to be confused with the author of *7 Highly Effective Habits*, Steven M. R. Covey is the son of that celebrated self-help guide guru. This new entry to the family canon is all about trust—both within your organization and without. As the face of your school to prospective families navigating what can be a frustrating and discouraging system (applying to several schools, collecting materials, submitting supplemental forms), the rapport you establish with these families must be strong and immediate. Such a relationship must last, too, as the school seeks to deepen connections and ask for continued support through other channels. Covey can help you achieve that.

Recommended ISM Webinar: [21st Century Advancement: The Admission Office](#) with Charles D. Snowden, Jr., IAP-L

The Public School Advantage: Why Public Schools Outperform Private Schools

by Christopher & Sarah Lubieski

At first glance, this book might seem like an odd addition to a book list for private school administrators. The book's authors claim that when the statistical "advantage" of finances in student performance is removed, public schools perform better on standardized math tests than private schools. (The authors are curiously silent on private school performance on reading comprehension exams, nor do they address private school's mission-education philosophy.) As local public schools can be your biggest competition, regard *The Public School Advantage* as a "look behind enemy lines," arming you with ammunition to promote your mission-based education program to families. With all the attention it's getting from [media outlets](#) and other private school [organizations](#), prospective parents may have heard about the book and want your school's response.

Recommended ISM Webinar: [The Art and Science of Systematic Bragging: The Fundamentals of Effective Parent Relations and Education](#) with Bill Simmer, ISM Director of Association Relations/Workshop Leader

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 12 No. 5 [Must-Reads for the Admission Office in 2014](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 11 No. 1 [Do You Have a Trusting Culture?](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 38 No. 1 [Assessing Your School's Internal Marketing in Light of the Student Experience Study](#)

I&P Vol. 32 No. 9 [Why Character Education Matters: Competing in the Marketplace](#)

Division Heads

December 2013—Vol. 11 No. 4

(27.3% open; 7.1% click through)

Rally the Troops From Their Seasonal Slump!

(52% of clicks)

Winter break is a time to recharge your battery, as well as reconnect with family and friends. But, how many times do you and your faculty come back feeling down and discouraged? January hits like a dump truck and everyone's enthusiasm is as flat as week-old champagne sitting in those glasses you still haven't cleaned.

While others daydream of their immediate vacation plans, you as Division Head should make plans now to counter the seasonal malaise.

- **Move around.** It's [a common, almost cliché solution](#) for curing the winter blues—dopamine makes you happy, staying in shape keeps up a positive body image, [all those wonderful things](#)—but exercising really does [alleviate the natural lethargy caused by the weather](#). Think about [forming a walking team](#) or carpool to the local gym to encourage those in your division to get their blood pumping.
- **Plan spontaneous days off!** While the Midwest and the East Coast got hit not too long ago with a [wicked early snow storm](#), there's no guarantee that the rest of the winter will grant such reprieves. There never seems to be enough time in the school year to do everything that needs doing, but giving students and teachers alike an opportunity to get outside with a ["Sun Day" day off](#) may prove to be just the rest needed to make it through the remainder of the season. (Of course, your School Head has the final say on this, but it's worth bringing up.)
- **Hold a caffeine party.** The ubiquitous cup of coffee lives in every break room and remains the lifeblood of professionals across all fields, but caffeine comes in many forms. Caffeine assists with everything from [waking up in the morning](#) to greater focus and concentration. Many people drink coffee to get back on track, but there are other foods with caffeine to try like teas, dark chocolate, and [special brands of sunflower seeds](#). Lay out a buffet of these surprisingly caffeine-rich foods in the teachers' lounge as a fun, creative social activity during an especially stressful period, like midterms or finals week.
- **Support New Year's resolutions.** Sometimes, [the best way to lift your teachers out of a rut](#) is a challenge. Encourage them to make fun New Year's resolution to bring back that enthusiasm and optimism, which ran rampant in the first few months of the school year—and then support them in keeping their resolutions. It could relate back to their Professional

Excellence goals they set earlier in the year, which we discuss in [Comprehensive Faculty Development](#), or something to inspire and renew their creativity. Lu Ann Cahn found herself in a rut and decided to spend the next year trying one new thing every day, a professional and personal journey she chronicles in [A Year of Firsts](#). The process has allowed her to “open up my life and allow me to connect with people and talk to people that I never would have met before, and through that my life is so much richer.”

Additional ISM articles of interest

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 10 No. 7 [Characteristics of Professional Excellence Aren't Just For Hiring](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 8 No. 4 [Use Rally Points to Turn Winter Doldrums Into Morale Boosters](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 11 No. 8 [And Now For Something Completely Different...](#)

Additional ISM articles of interest for Gold Consortium members

I&P Vol. 37 No. 9 [The Characteristics of Professional Excellence II](#)

Don't Be Afraid to Jump on the Bandwagon

(13% of clicks)

The media and educational companies tout new and improved teaching strategies every year. Remember when everyone thought that MOOCs—Massive Open Online Courses—were the [solution to slashed budgets](#)? Now it seems that low completion rates and limited interaction have crippled the online course movement's momentum, with only a [4% completion rate in some college courses](#).

However, just because one new idea wasn't fully vetted or properly implemented doesn't mean that you should avoid trying novel programs or philosophies.

Take the [open classroom model](#). Originating in England back in the late 1960s, it calls for free-flowing, main common rooms with different workstations at different skill levels, allowing teachers to be facilitators and advisers to the educational process rather than lecturers. It seemed to disappear in the 1970s in favor of the traditional grade and lecture-style structure, but, lo and behold, renewed interest in the unorthodox format has sparked a revival in [certain European schools](#) and [Montessori private-independent schools](#).

As with any program, there are concerns. [Opponents claim](#) that the open classroom format decreases a teacher's authority, as well as inviting certain environmental concerns like excessive noise levels or temperature control.

Whether or not online learning or open classroom models are more beneficial than traditional approaches, the fact remains that not all bandwagons are a bad thing—it's simply in the approach and implementation.

During your tenure as Division Head, you're going to encounter new ideas or developments that may help your school. These may be radically different from what you've seen before; it may be harder in some ways than what you've done before. It may require new skills, a different agenda, and redirected focus.

But, there will be times when you should make a change. When that time comes, you won't want to buy into some fad that will come through and then wither away. Read the available research and see in what situations the model was used effectively; ask your peers if they've tried something similar and how they made the change; crunch the numbers and see if it's fiscally responsible for you to try it now.

When all is said and done, mission-specific, effective changes are worth all the hassle.

Additional ISM articles of interest

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 8 No. 3 [*Thinking Differently, Change the "Rules"*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 7 No. 8 [*Just a Cool Gadget? Some Thoughts on the iPad*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 8 No. 6 [*Sir Ken Robinson: Education is Not Fast Food*](#)

Additional ISM articles of interest for Gold Consortium members

I&P Vol. 30 No. 4 [*Managing Complex Change in Private-Independent Schools*](#)

I&P Vol. 37 No. 10 [*The ISM Student Experience Study and Its Impact on ISM X*](#)

I&P Vol. 30 No. 11 [*Change and the Implementation Dip*](#)

I&P Vol. 29 No. 1 [*Reculturing for Change: A Head's Primer*](#)

I&P Vol. 29 No. 8 [*Mission and Learning: A Primer in Mission-Oriented "Change" Problems*](#)

January 2014—Vol. 11 No. 5

(30.6% opens; 13% click throughs)

Must-Reads for Division Heads in 2014

(47% of clicks)

The school year's halfway done, but turning over a new leaf doesn't need to wait until next New Year's. Grab your wallet and prep your library card, because we've put together a list of some must-read books for your professional development resolutions for 2014.

[Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World](#) by Mark Williams and Danny Penman —Let's face it, some invisible power working in your school has decided that you are the ultimate administrative catch-all, playing all-knowing adviser to students, media-relations expert with parents, and benevolent mentor for your teachers. Well researched and centered on mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), *Mindfulness* is an alternative approach to sorting the wheat from the chaff in your life—in a manner of speaking—and finding that elusive “peace of mind” that so many desperately search for but never attain.

[Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time](#) by Susan Scott —...And in the middle of that crazy everyday life that is yours as a Division Head, you'll experience times when you have to sit another person down for an incredibly difficult conversation, be it a performance review with one of your staff or that awful moment when you have to respectfully ask a parent to back off a little bit. *Fierce Conversations* is that ace up your sleeve to help you not only achieve clarity and understanding, but also handle those strong emotions with more than a never-ending box of tissues.

[Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us](#) by Daniel Pink —Sometimes it feels like pulling teeth to inspire your team to try out something new—or even keep up the old resolutions they set earlier this year. For a quick turbo-charge to your old “carrot and the stick” inspirational scheme, read *Drive* to learn how other organizations shake up the way they discover and reach for new goals.

[Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard](#) by Chip Heath —The title is borderline cliché, but the premise is good—how do you help your people adopt new programs when they want to keep up old ones, or worse, they think that the old ones worked better? *Switch* uses real-life narratives to point out new ways to reverse old thinking by introducing small changes to achieve the large ones.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 10 No. 7 [Things to Remember as a Division](#)

Leader

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 11 No. 7 *Preparing the Ground or Risking Failure*

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 11 No. 2 *Performance Reviews: Missing the Forest for the Trees*

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 38 No. 14 *Faculty Ownership vs Buy-In*

I&P Vol. 35 No. 8 *The Headship: Are You Leading Yet?*

Snow, Snow, Go Away: Winter-Recess Policies

(17% of clicks)

Winter has settled in with a vengeance in the Northern Hemisphere, heralded by the recent [“Polar Vortex.”](#) While the temperatures have slowly risen back to seasonal averages, the question of how to handle outdoor recess in the face of extreme cold has been raised on [our Lower School Head/Division Head e-List](#). There are no [national regulations](#) beyond the common-sense meter, but when you’re bracing for wind chills that [make the world feel colder than Mars](#), you know it’s time to set some ground rules for future arctic blasts.

[Recess is critically important](#) to children’s mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Whenever possible, kids should be playing outside for recess as a break from their indoor studies, and teachers’ worries concerning [personal discomfort](#) should not determine policy.

But, there are times when the outside conditions are clearly unsuitable for outside play. Not only is [hypothermia](#) a danger to all students in extremely cold weather, but some with [asthma](#) may find their condition aggravated by the severe chill.

That safety-conscious attitude should guide cold weather policies, say our ISM Consultants, considering that the Canadian Pediatric Society advises keeping children inside once temperatures drop below -25° C (-13° F)—but keeping in mind the general seasonal expectations for your school’s location.

For example, let’s say your school is located in Ottawa, Ontario where the temperature reaches an [average high of 21.6°F \(-5.8°C\) in January](#). A similar school in Tallahassee, Florida typically experiences [a daytime high of 64°F \(18°C\)](#) during the same time.

One day, the thermometer reads 32°F (0°C) at recess in both Ottawa and Tallahassee. In Canada, students will already be used to such temperatures and will be appropriately attired for such cold—in fact, they’ll probably embrace the unseasonal warmth! Meanwhile, the students in Florida will be shivering in their light windbreakers.

Should both schools have the same winter-recess policy? Of course not! This example illustrates that it's not only the temperature and wind chill, but also the students' and teachers' preparedness for the freezing cold that should drive your school's outdoor winter-recess policy.

Teachers and students alike should also be taught the signs of [frostbite](#) and [hypothermia](#). Just because the weather seems suitable "on paper" does not mean that students should be kept outside when suffering.

Ultimately, you should implement a common-sense winter-recess policy that works for your unique situation and not merely copy another school's with the rationale that if it works for their students, it will work for yours, too. The key is consideration of your personal environmental factors and consistent application by your staff.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Risk Managers Vol. 2 No. 5 [Winter Hazards](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 34 No. 11 [Recess May Be More Than You Think](#)

February 2014—Vol. 11 No. 6

(27.5% opens; 7.4% clicks)

School Is Five Days a Week (Except When It's Not)

(47% of clicks)

There can be little doubt that most—if not all—schools east of the Mississippi River have lost required class time, thanks to a spate of winter storms and arctic vortexes determined to keep everyone at home and off the roads and playgrounds. Schools across the country are scrambling to compensate for the lost class time, but how they do it varies from place to place.

Several schools are extending their calendars to late June. In Pennsylvania, [Hazleton area public schools now close on June 20](#). Harford County schools in Maryland plan to make up the time by [tacking on extra days in summer](#), too.

In Ohio, Governor John Kasich asked state lawmakers to [increase the number of five “calamity days”](#)—used as flexible closing days for bad weather or other emergencies—to allow schools to meet the state minimum of 175 days. The Ohio House Education Committee [approved four extra days for the districts](#), though the [proposal has stalled in debates](#). (At least students get [a reprieve from mandatory state tests](#) for another week!)

Providence Creek Academy, a charter school in Delaware, has taken a different tack: On February 10, their [school day was extended for 15 minutes](#), added to the last class of the day. With 1,342.5 instructional hours required instead of a set number of days, Providence Creek Academy will be able to add an extra 20.8 hours to their schedule, helping them adjust for time lost due to the snow storms and freezing temperatures. Only the last class of the day receives the extra time, however, limiting the effectiveness of this solution.

Other schools are cancelling regularly scheduled days off to accommodate the glut of snow and ice. Officials in Oklahoma are contemplating using [days set aside](#) for teacher in-services, federal holidays, and parent-teacher conferences for more instructional time. Some schools in Alexandria, Virginia, have [sacrificed their professional workdays](#) in March and April to make up class time for students.

Still other schools are trying a little bit of everything. School Superintendent Jamie Wilson in Denton, Texas, [said that he might ask for a waiver](#) from the state rule requiring 180 instructional days per school year, but that he'd consider alternatives first. Students in Denton may have make-up days on Saturdays, and even extended class days in May.

While administrators scramble to adjust the calendar for the second half of the school year, [how much do snow days really affect student achievement?](#) The Massachusetts Department of Education asked Harvard professor Joshua Goodman to “[crunch some numbers](#)” and determine how badly student achievement was impacted by snow days, as evaluated by the state’s standardized test results. Turns out, snow days don’t affect student performance nearly as much as individual attendance. In other words, planned and coordinated closures have less impact on instruction than sporadic absences by the single student.

Meanwhile, schools experiment with e-learning strategies to keep classes on-track. Ohio school districts have the option of sending curricula to the state for approval of “[Blizzard Bag Days](#),” allowing students to work on projects from home. And as [Principal Eric Sheninger reminds us](#) in a blog post, [Digital Learning Day](#) isn’t just for show—making modern technology and communication styles a regular part of the classroom can make snow days a hiccup, not a show stopper.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Business Managers Vol. 8 No. 5 [Snow Days On Campus](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Risk Managers Vol. 2 No. 5 [Winter Hazards](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 5 [Snow, Snow, Go Away: Winter-Recess Policies](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Business Officers Vol.12 No. 6 [Snow Days are Ancient History](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 34 No. 14 [The 21st Century School: The School Calendar](#)

Prep for the Test!

(30% of clicks)

Private-independent school students are blessed in many ways. One of their advantages is the lack of state-mandated standardized tests that plague the public school sphere. Still, your students will serve their time filling in bubble sheets with #2 pencils when they take the SSAT or the ISEE for future private schooling, or even the SAT I & II and ACT tests for their college applications. (Side note: [More students have taken the ACT than the SAT](#) since 2012!)

Tests like these can weigh down students with imagined (and very real!) pressures to do well, affecting them both physically and psychologically. For example, students in New York spent part of their Common Core exam week [sobbing and staging boycotts](#) over the new testing standards due to the increased pressure of the new exams and the unexpectedly short testing period for which they had not trained. To avoid breakdowns like these, schools

and teachers must create a positive, uplifting atmosphere in the classroom for this spring's exam season.

But how to accomplish this? "[Scholarteacher](#)" [asked a similar question](#) in the online forum *A to Z Teacher Stuff*, looking for ways to motivate his third grade class during their testing period. Some of the suggestions included:

- passing out newly sharpened-pencils for each student as his or her own special test pencil;
- spraying calming scents to calm test jitters;
- relaxing the "no eating in class" rule to let them suck mints;
- dimming the lights in the room to help students relax when studying (or taking the exam!); and
- leading students through breathing exercises to help manage stressful situations.

Other teachers and schools have worked to accommodate the increased workload for students during this time of year. During its mandatory state testing time, White Station Middle School administrators [schedule breaks](#) to allow students to release some steam. They also encourage teachers to avoid giving large homework assignments or projects to ensure test-takers have enough sleep. While state testing isn't an issue for most private-independent schools, perhaps these suggestions would work well during the [AP](#) or [IB test weeks](#) this May.

Ultimately, the point of any test is to evaluate what a student understands about a specific subject, so a standardized test is more an opportunity to "[show off their smarts](#)" than a thing to dread, says second-grade teacher Bob Krech. It's an excellent reminder that tests should be something to anticipate with pleasure rather than avoid at all costs.

While each student's test-taking experience will vary widely, keeping the atmosphere light and friendly while they work to score well will serve them—and your school—in the long run.

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 9 [Teacher Anxiety Is Contagious](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 8 No. 4 [A Dreary Classroom Is Cause for a Lawsuit](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 9 No. 5 [Reduce Stress and Increase Memory](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 36 No. 1 [Advanced Placement: A Critical Study](#)

I&P Vol. 25 No. 5 [Linking Faculty Compensation to Performance](#)

March 2014—Vol. 11 No. 7

(28.7% opens; 10.9% clicks)

When Professional Development Is Useless for Your Teachers

(52% of clicks)

It's a waste of your teachers' time as well as your school's resources to provide inadequate professional development, as what happened to some unfortunate Chicago public school teachers. In [a video that's gone viral](#), a participant secretly recorded a full 63 seconds demonstrating this district's take on professional development.

The video shows the teacher-participants parroting back the goals of this particular workshop to the presenter in droning, draining tones. How is reciting back long passages considered professional development? Valerie Strauss, a writer/blogger for the *The Washington Post*, [says it's not](#), and this video is indicative of the lack of substantial, useful professional development available for teachers.

What constitutes a poor professional development effort? Avoid programs with the following characteristics.

- **Profligate utilization of industry-specific terminology.** If the presenter can't say what he or she is trying to say in plain English, it's never a good sign.
- **Lack of materials and research for participants.** If teachers are expected to follow along or agree with the presenter by virtue of his shiny slides or hypnotic voice, that's a bad sign indeed. Giving out materials in support of the theories being presented is a way to both engage participants and give them the resources they need to judge whether they agree (or disagree!) with the material being taught.
- **Teaching below the level of the audience.** While this point should be a no-brainer, it serves as a reminder to look beyond the buzzwords and see exactly what information the presenter will be reviewing with your teachers and how that information will be conveyed.

Take time to research the presenter and any materials not only to sidestep faulty professional development, but also to find the program which will benefit your specific school culture. Consider your faculty's goals and aim to schedule presenters who will enrich many of your faculty, say 50-75%.

No matter how good the presenter is, though, he or she must leave your teachers and trust that the techniques and tips shared during the professional development session will be used in class. As Division Head, this is where your role as a support and coach of your faculty will come to bear.

As ISM's [Comprehensive Faculty Development](#) says, it's not enough to expect teachers to accomplish great things on their own. Professional development will come into its own only through continued support from administrators and guides, who should have their *own* professional development sessions in learning how to become leaders and teachers of their adult teams.

In our next issue, we'll examine what makes excellent professional development beneficial for your faculty and your school.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 9 No. 7 [Remembering Your Own Renewal and Development](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 7 [Does Your Teacher Evaluation System Include Professional Development?](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 11 No. 4 [Team Professional Development Adds Value to Lessons Learned](#)

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 5 [Summer of Professional Development](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 27 No. 12 [Professional Development and Your Senior Administrative Staff](#)

I&P Vol. 32 No. 8 [The Changing Paradigm for Professional Development](#)

I&P Vol. 33 No. 4 [ISM's Standards for Professional Development and Growth](#)

I&P Vol. 33 No. 4 [ISM's Standards for Professional Growth and Renewal](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 10 [Budgeting for Professional Development](#)

Four #EdTech Blogs to Bookmark (22% of clicks)

Constant, reliable technology news about what's important and pertinent to private schools can be difficult to find, much less rely on. (That's why you subscribed to our e-Letters!) But sometimes you can find resources that, while only tangentially related, still help you keep abreast of conversations and imagine ways to take your school into the 21st Century. Take a look at these four ed-tech blogs and see if you're not impressed and informed by each.

Lisa Nielsen's The Innovative Educator

Ms. Nielsen began her career as a librarian back in the '90s, but she upgraded her job description and became a prolific education-technology writer for her own blog and publications like *The New York Times*, *Tech and Learning*, and *The Huffington Post*. [The Innovative Educator](#) blog covers everything and anything, from how to showcase teacher effectiveness through [online portfolios](#) to [effective BYOD](#) ("Bring Your Own Device") policies.

Listen to her defend [cell phone usage in the classroom](#) as a guest podcaster, and you'll understand why we think *The Innovative Educator* should be in your bookmarks.

Audrey Watters' *Hack Education*

Witty and insightful, Audrey Watters' background as a freelance writer makes this education technology blog highly readable. The head writer for *Educating Modern Learners* and contributing to other outlets like *Edutopia* and *The Atlantic*, Watters' blog [Hack Education](#) offers posts on how technology has twisted the educational landscape—read the transcript of her talk “[Student Data Is the New Oil](#)” to Columbia University students for some rather scary revelations—and some interesting meditations on [politics and education](#). While as a private-independent school you are (somewhat) free from government machinations, it's always wise to keep your ear to the ground for changes that may impact your school.

John Robinson's *The 21st Century Principal*

John Robinson is a blogger by night for [The 21st Century Principal](#) and Principal by day in North Carolina, giving his posts an “in the trenches” vibe that Watters' and Nielsen's blogs can sometimes lack. He discusses regional issues, like North Carolina's [Pearson technology implementation meltdown](#), as well as addressing broader topics like [using statistics to evaluate potential teacher performance](#) during the hiring process. Articulate, passionate, and intuitive at selecting and promoting pertinent content, *The 21st Century Principal* is a great blog for all private school administrators and principals to pin on their home tabs.

Eric Sheninger's *Digital Leadership*

This last recommendation shouldn't be a surprise for [any regular e-Letter reader](#). Eric Sheninger's blog [Digital Leadership](#) shines beyond many others by not only *talking* about integrating 21st century technology with his school's student-centric teaching model—Sheninger's blog shows his teachers actually *doing* it. From [online lessons](#) during the barrage of snow days to courses promoting global leadership through [electronic volunteer work by students](#), *Digital Leadership* reminds all educators that these dreams of incorporating technology in the classroom are far from a fantasy—they can become part of your school every day.

Additional ISM resources:

Private School news Vol. 11 No. 1 [From the Private Blogosphere](#)

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 2 [Education Blogs You Should Be Reading](#)

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 7 [Five More Top Educator Blogs](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 10 No. 3 [Performance Perspectives From the Blogosphere](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 28 No. 13 [Technology Self-Assessment and Your Strategic Plan](#)

I&P Vol. 35 No. 3 *The 21st Century School: Curriculum and Technology*

I&P Vol. 36 No. 16 *The 21st Century School: Technology and Small Children*

April 2014—Vol. 11 No. 8

(28.8% open; 10.8% click through as of July 15, 2014)

Support Your Teachers in Their Race to the Finish Line!

(29% of clicks)

There are [dozens of articles](#) on how teachers inspire and motivate students, but how can we reinvigorate the teachers? As close to the end of the school year as we are, teachers may feel overwhelmed with the high-stakes final grades and exams happening over the next two months. So, here are a few ways to keep your teachers up and at 'em through the final bell.

Small Tokens of Gratitude

Sometimes it's the little things that count, like small gestures that remind teachers of how much you appreciate their dedication to continue even when it's difficult. One principal, after her bimonthly "snapshot" visit to her teachers, makes a point of [writing a positive remark or two on a sticky note](#) and leaving it on each teacher's desk. Small notes in their faculty mailbox or e-mails in their digital one also make for a thoughtful way to show your appreciation for their continued dedication.

Reminders of Why They Teach

One teacher wrote a blog post about how a student stole his favorite pen to get a rise out of him. He was tempted to become angry and despondent over the incident, but he was [reminded of why he enjoyed teaching](#) when he heard positive stories during the week from parents and students alike. In fact, he keeps a folder for just such days, when things don't go as planned. Why not ask your families about special experiences they've had with your teachers and share them with the faculty at large?

Professional Support

At the end of the day, your teachers want to know that you have their backs and support them. This could be anything from large commitments of time and resources like (excellent and pertinent) professional development to smaller gestures. Principal Larry Fliegelman likes [to ask his faculty](#) what they need and expect from him. He finds that fulfilling these and similar requests is a good example of what you and other Division Heads can do to support your faculty.

- **Practical support**, such as following up with equipment requests like shelves and teaching carts; providing extra prep time; or finding a "pullout space" for small groups or individual instruction
- **Technology requests**, such as professional development geared toward learning new software and apps, the ability to download new programs from the school servers, and laptops
- **Teacher support** for their personal continuing education efforts, with the Principal/Division Head acting as the "point" person advocating for the teachers to the administration
- **Feedback and availability**, such as frequent, informal visits and openness to answering small questions that shouldn't require scheduled meeting time
- **Communication**, such as the continuation of their "Memo Monday" program during which the Principal keeps the faculty up-to-date with news in the school and local community, and face-to-face communication time as well as electronic

Of course, one of the best ways to support your teachers is with a rejuvenated evaluation system. Have a conversation with your faculty, and see what goals and dreams they have that you can help them achieve. By doing so, you support not only your faculty, but your school's mission and success, too.

Summertime is the perfect time to review your policies and processes, so pick up [Comprehensive Faculty Development](#) for a comprehensive walkthrough of faculty professional development and retention strategies. Or, you can attend our [Summer Institute](#) and the "[Comprehensive Faculty Development: From Recruitment to Evaluation to Retention](#)" workshop for greater personalized direction and peer support!

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 4 [Rally the Troops From Their Seasonal Slump!](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 1 [Teachers: The Lifeblood of Your School's Success](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 7 [Does Your Teacher Evaluation System Include Professional Development?](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 33 No. 9 [The Allocation of Time and Your Faculty's Professional Growth](#)

I&P Vol. 30 No. 8 [From Entrenched Faculty to Committed Teachers](#)

The Right Tool for the Right Job: Three Times to Call Instead of Emailing

(59% of clicks)

The days when people used their cellphones to call their friends and co-workers are quickly fading. These days, a quick text or email is regarded as a replacement for good ol' fashioned conversations. For busy Division Heads, email may seem like it was invented specifically for your hectic lives, enabling the quick dissemination of information and instructions to the whole school. But email isn't always the right communication tool to use, and it certainly shouldn't be your only contact method. We have three instances when you should avoid using e-mail and go for the phone instead.

1. When you risk being misunderstood

For messages requiring a delicate touch or discussing sensitive matters, try an in-person meeting rather than an email. [Email lacks social cues](#) like tone of voice and facial expression; inspires instantaneous responses leading to careless, easily-avoided mistakes; and can result in a lack of "personal rapport," making relationships more easily broken when conflict arises. These qualities make email a poor substitute for verbal communication.

This risk of misunderstanding can extend to the establishment and maintenance of new relationships, particularly in bulk emails. If you must send a mass email, try following up with a phone call or quick addendum that personally addresses the recipient in some way.

This lack of personal attention, by the way, does not necessarily extend to newsletters and similar mailings. These documents are naturally impersonal, as they are written to a whole audience rather than a particular individual.

2. When you need a quick response

Getting responses to an emailed query or text message can be like pulling teeth—slow and painful for everyone involved. A *New York Times* article says that requesting people to do something or take an extra step via email can [begin a procrastination spiral](#) and result in delayed (or completely absent) replies. Asking for an RSVP when the person can't attend, simple human error, and the ubiquitous spam folder can all contribute to low response rates, too. Picking up the phone and talking to your colleague or parent may produce a faster answer—and subsequent action.

3. When you're discussing personal rather than professional issues

Sure, you may check your school email account more often than your personal one during the day, but do you really want your family's business stored in your school's server? You're creating a paper trail every time you send an email—remember the Internet maxim "[Online is Forever](#)".

You wouldn't use a hammer to pound in a screw, and a screwdriver makes a poor hammer for a nail. Likewise, email is an important communication tool, but it's not appropriate for every case or circumstance. Some families may prefer speaking over the phone or in person to reading an email, and others will want email rather than the inconvenience of an immediate conversation. Get to know your school community's preferences, and remember: There's a time and place for every method of communication.

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 10 No. 6 [Keeping Communications Open and Flowing in Your School](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Risk Managers Vol. 4 No. 6 [Communicating Emergencies](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Trustees Vol. 10 No. 1 [Email Wrangling](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 27 No. 4 [Cyber News: The Transition to Paperless Parent Communication](#)

I&P Vol. 35 No. 3 [The Growing Importance of Technology in Parent Communications](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 5 [Conducting a Communications Audit](#)

May 2014—Vol. 11 No. 9

(27.0% open; 7.7% click through as of July 15, 2014)

When Professional Development Is Useful for Your Teachers

(46% of clicks)

In a [past Division Head e-Letter](#), we shared examples of faculty professional development that didn't make the most of in-service days. (In fact, it was borderline offensive!) Today, we'd like to take a moment to highlight some qualities of excellent professional development that comprise an enlightening experience for your faculty—and ultimately, your students.

The presenters know what *your* school and classrooms are like.

One teacher in Waynesboro, Virginia, [recounts her professional development experience](#) with well-meaning but out-of-touch “experts”:

I would sit listening to these experts who were brought in. They were very knowledgeable about the topic, but didn't really know anything about our schools or our students. So it wasn't really relevant or useful. And I would walk out of the session wondering, "Did I really just sit through that?"

So what does that mean for private-independent teachers? Well, for starters, it means professional development speakers must know the difference between teaching in a private school classroom and in a public classroom. Missions, philosophies, and requirements all differ, and speakers can have trouble translating insights and topics from one setting to another. Just because one presenter has had a lot of success training public school faculty doesn't (necessarily) mean his or her lessons will be relevant to your teachers.

The workshops allow time for discussion and planning.

Educator blog *Mildly Melancholy* [offers a list](#) of anecdotal requirements for good professional development. The fourth item is “Giving time for discussion and planning” because “teachers want that time to figure out how to use the information in their teaching ... Remember, it needs to be RELEVANT.”

Ultimately, if all the presenter does is offer theory and good ideas but offers no concrete plans—or time to develop them—during the presentation, this session will be useless. Presenters should be willing to assist teachers with the first stages of implementation and overcome presented obstacles or problems to ensure maximum utility.

This assistance can take a variety of forms, depending on the workshop's format. In a live webinar, for example, the presenter should plan to take questions and answer them either during the presentation or in a designated Q&A session afterward. During an in-person workshop, this assistance could be one-on-one planning sessions with the presenter or opportunities for a school's team to brainstorm and develop a plan with feedback from the expert.

Professional Development Should Be Career-Long, Site-Based, and Collegial

Finally, ISM believes that quality professional development is “career-long, site-based, and collegial,” meaning:

“Career-long”—whatever professional development you choose to provide, it’s not a one-off, stand-alone program or class or concept. Professional development should be conducted with the understanding that faculty and staff alike work to improve their skills for their entire tenure with your school.

This term also implies that professional development isn’t consigned to a week or two at a conference every year. Teachers should observe, learn, and implement techniques and ideas every day of the year, not just when school’s in session. As educators, you understand that learning occurs everywhere; that philosophy should permeate your professional development program.

“Site-based”—emphasizes the locality of a teacher’s or administrator’s continuing education, in that there is no specific place where professional development occurs. It happens everywhere—in the classroom, in the hallways, on the playground, in staff meetings, even online.

A site-based professional development program also focuses on training and theory that is an intensely personal, mission-based process. Not every piece in a presentation or program will apply to your school, and that’s okay. Knowing what’s important and what’s not is a necessary part of your participation during a professional development session.

“Collegial”—implies that professional development contributes to a collective knowledge within the school that all can share. You don’t need an “expert” called in for every little situation or detail—other administrators or teachers might have solutions based on their experience.

Leaning on your educational teammates in this collegial learning environment requires a culture of passion for the school’s mission and openness between colleagues. What one learns, all should be able to ask and know. Formally, this could mean senior teachers paired as mentors with newcomers and presentations by those returning from intensive workshops. Informally, this could be what your teachers discuss in the breakroom.

More than anything, an effective professional development program relies on the support of administrators committed to providing the necessary resources and relationships for the faculty to achieve their personal development goals. Such an investment in time, money, and resources in your teachers’ professional development will prove your dedication to their improvement—and to your students, whom you all serve.

If you’d like to have an empowering professional development opportunity designed specifically for private-independent school administrators like you, attend ISM’s [Comprehensive Faculty Development: From Recruitment to Evaluation to Retention workshop](#), featured at our [Summer Institute](#) in Stowe, Vermont. Learn from expert ISM Consultants about training your teachers year-round, and plan to make the 2014-15 school year the best ever!

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 7 [When Professional Development Is Useless for Your Teachers](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 9 No. 7 [Remembering Your Own Renewal and Development](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 7 [Does Your Teacher Evaluation System Include Professional Development?](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 11 No. 4 [Team Professional Development Adds](#)

[Value to Lessons Learned](#)

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 5 [Summer of Professional Development](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 27 No. 12 [Professional Development and Your Senior Administrative Staff](#)

I&P Vol. 32 No. 8 [The Changing Paradigm for Professional Development](#)

I&P Vol. 33 No. 4 [ISM's Standards for Professional Development and Growth](#)

I&P Vol. 33 No. 4 [ISM's Standards for Professional Growth and Renewal](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 10 [Budgeting for Professional Development](#)

Dear National Teacher Day: A Letter to First Year Teachers

(20% of clicks)

National Teacher Day was May 6, and we couldn't think of a better way to celebrate all of our teachers than to share a video made by [Edutopia](#) and [SoulPancake](#) featuring veteran teachers [writing letters to themselves on their first day of school as a new teacher](#). (The transcript's below, if you care to read instead of listen.)

Dear First Year Me,

Höla! Hey kid. Do you remember when Dad said that the first six months of anything is the hardest? Well, that is completely true here.

Everything is going to be okay. Things may seem tough right now, and at times you may feel like you want to give up, but please don't. Just know that you will make a great teacher.

You are probably wondering, "Why in the world did I ever get into this profession?" Just take a deep breath. I know that everything feels overwhelming—terrifying, even—but you're going to make it through this.

Those kids in front of you...They want to learn. They *need* to know. Try every crazy thing you think of, [because] in the end, those are the things they'll remember.

Your students need you there in front of the class. They truly appreciate all that you do for them, even if they don't show it all of the time.

You'll have trouble the first day of school with a student throwing a book at you. (It'll miss.) But don't worry. That student will come back five years later, introduce you to his new family, and thank you for having his back all the time—even after that first day.

When a kid says your class is boring, don't take it personally. It happens to everyone. Holding your kids accountable is the greatest act of love you can give them. Teaching is never an exact science, and it's okay to struggle to find the right answers.

This is one of the most important lessons to learn as a teacher: You will fail. You will make mistakes. And, you will embarrass yourself. When you do, accept it with grace and humility. And don't be afraid to ask for or admit you need help.

You will also learn that you will never stop learning to become the teacher you wanted to be on Day One. I want you to know that what you expected to happen on the first day of school won't happen until maybe the third, fourth, or even eighteenth year of your teaching.

Lives and futures depend on you. That's scary *and* exhilarating. And you will know that this is *exactly* where you need to be. No matter what you might think, you are doing a good job. Through it all—the good and the bad—just trust yourself. It's gonna be okay, and seven years later, you're still going to love coming to work every day.

So keep up the good work, seek help from those around you, and just know the work of a teacher is of the greatest importance.

[Signed,]

Your Future Self

Edutopia [asked viewers what they would say](#) to their younger, naïve, hopeful selves, and several complied. Some even [wrote](#) or [recorded](#) their own letters, sharing their memories and lessons for others to learn from and grow.

Do you have any words of wisdom to share to other educators? Share your letters to your younger self below, in honor of all teachers—new and experienced.

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 9 [Teacher Anxiety Is Contagious](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 4 [Rally the Troops From Their Seasonal Slump!](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 6 [Prep for the Test!](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

Research: [New Teacher Induction Programs](#)

I&P Vol. 37 No. 13 [Teacher Induction That Supports and Inspires](#)

June 2014—Vol. 11 No. 10

(29.7% open; 11.0% click through as of July 15, 2014)

Summer Reading for Division Heads: Recommended Books and Webinars

(49% of clicks)

There's heat in the air, humidity that refuses to lift, and an itch in your feet to walk on green grass rather than plush carpet. That's right, summer's here! While the classrooms are empty, there's no need for learning to stop. So spend some time this summer catching up on your recommended reading and that professional development webinar you've been meaning to watch.

[The Smartest Kids in the World: And How They Got That Way](#)

by *Amanda Ripley*

On its surface, the basic structure of the book doesn't seem all that exciting. However, *The Smartest Kids in the World* becomes a fascinating case study of global teaching pedagogy. Ripley puts her investigative reporting skills to use when she follows three students during their year in a study abroad program. What's unique about these high-performing American students is that each spends his or her year in countries categorized as "high performing" according to international standardized testing. Using a combination of the students' narratives coupled with research and data from Ripley's observations on the various educational systems and how they help (and hurt) their students, *The Smartest Kids in the World* becomes a fascinating glimpse into how a school's mission influences and molds the young people of the world.

Recommended ISM Webinar: [*Student-Centered Teaching and Leading: What Does It Look Like?*](#) with Barbara Beachley

[World Class Learners: Educating Creative and Entrepreneurial Students](#)

by *Yong Zhao*

Entrepreneurs are lauded as the way to save the [economies of Europe](#), the [U.S.](#), and even [Australia](#) through immigrants and "economic disruption." And so, if entrepreneurs are so important to the stability of the world, it stands to reason that today's students should be prepared accordingly. (Or, at least, possess that quality of adaptability in a rapidly changing environment for which successful entrepreneurs are renowned.) If you'd like your educational focus to shift from test scores to more creative thinking, pick up *World Class Learners*.

Recommended ISM Webinar: [*The Changing Role of the 21st Century Division Head*](#) with Bill Simmer

[Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us](#)

by *Seth Godin*

"A tribe," begins Godin, "is a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea"—and this tribe needs a leader in the same way that a

leader needs a tribe.) In *Tribes*, Godin describes this symbiotic relationship between the head of a group and the group itself, how to unite the group through mutual desires—in the case of private schools, a desire to educate and connect—and the necessity of a leader to, well, *lead*.

Recommended ISM Webinar: [Establishing the Roots: The Power of Effective New Teacher Induction Programs](#) with Bill Simmer

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 12 No. 10 [Summer Reading for the Admission Office: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 12 No. 10 [Summer Reading for the Development Office: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 5 [Must-Reads for Division Heads in 2014](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 35 No. 3 [The 21st Century School: Curriculum and Technology](#)

I&P Vol. 34 No. 13 [The 21st Century School: Teaching Time](#)

I&P Vol. 39 No. 6 [Leadership Findings: A Review](#)

Stories to Inspire: Three Creative Teacher Induction Strategies

(34% of clicks)

Last month, we talked to School Heads about [the importance of adopting a year-long induction process](#) for new teachers. Let's allow that momentum to carry us onward and take a look at what other private-independent schools have done to inspire next year's meetings and induction programs.

Teacher Scavenger Hunts

Student scavenger hunts are an entertaining and dynamic way to help newcomers explore their new school, but why should students have all the fun? Scavenger hunts during back-to-school in-service days not only introduce new teachers to their colleagues, but also acclimate them to their school, too. This activity can be adapted for both individual and team formats, but make sure teams are evenly mixed with both fresh and veteran teachers if you decide to make it a group activity.

At South Park Elementary School, Principal Dave Sherman's [scavenger hunt during his "back to school" faculty meeting](#) took only 45 minutes. Teachers formed teams as they deciphered school-specific clues like "Find the hottest thing in the school" (the art class's kiln) or "Prove that 'you can't say you can't play,'" a phrase taken from their school's mission.

Sherman says that "there was a lot of terrific debate, discussion, and good natured arguing. Everyone seemed to have a lot of fun: they discovered new areas of the school; they worked with some new people; and they saw first-hand the engaging power of critical thinking."

Creative Workshops

You can only host so many "inspirational speakers" for your teachers before topics begin to blur. This year, invite a speaker who can teach a skill supporting teamwork, leadership, or even healthy living.

That's what [Stoneleigh-Burham School did last year for its professional development day](#) at the end of winter break. One of the afternoon workshops consisted of learning to draw [zentangles](#). These doodle-covered squares are remarkable individually, but—when assembled—create beautiful ink murals. (The parallels to teamwork are beautiful, too.) Some teachers posted pictures of their work on Facebook with titles like “Best Faculty In-Service Day Ever.”

One Spanish teacher remarked on the quiet of the room while everyone carefully crafted their creations. She even found a connection between the simple, meditative activity and their school's goals: “We [the school administrators and teachers] had been talking about the need for ‘quiet’ in the lives of our girls. So this [workshop] really set a great tone.”

Sometimes, it's the less-obvious, tangential connections to a school's mission and work that create the most beautiful and beneficial progress.

Praise the Little Things

You don't always have to have one large event or meeting to make your teachers—whatever their experience level—feel appreciated. Make a point of demonstrating your appreciation for their efforts, big or small, privately or publicly.

Middle School Head Ken Rogers thanks his teachers publicly by way of his [“Kudos” system](#) at The Wellington School during faculty meetings. He leaves a stack of note cards next to an envelope in his office for teachers to offer “kudos” to their peers when they observe something great, whether it's a specific event (like helping with an Open House) or more general (like having a great attitude with recalcitrant students).

Rogers will read these cards out loud during faculty meetings and pick one at random to receive a small plastic bus as the “award” to display in the winner's classroom for the next month. They call the bus the “Rosa award” because it “displays on the bus behaviors,” Rogers explained. Thanking teachers for jobs well done is so important, “Kudos” are written at the top of the meeting agenda during faculty meetings as the first thing to do!

Whether you choose to adopt a similar system or develop your own, remembering to thank and support your teachers should be first on your school's list for teacher induction and support activities.

Additional ISM Resources:

ISM Research: [New Teacher Induction Programs](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 12 No. 9 [“Introducing...New Teachers!”](#)

ISM Monthly Updates for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 9 [Dear National Teacher Day: A Letter to First Year Teachers](#)

Additional ISM Resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 27 No. 13 [Teacher Induction That Supports and Inspires](#)

I&P Vol. 35 No. 16 [New Faculty and Your School's Purpose and Outcome Statements](#)

Development Directors

December 2013—Vol. 12 No. 4

(25.3% open; 7.3% click through)

“How Can I Give When I’m Already Paying Tuition?”

(39% of clicks)

Your phone rings, and it’s an outraged parent on the other line, demanding to know why they’ve received a request to make a gift to the Annual Fund. “I just paid the tuition bill! How could you ask me to give even more? Money’s so tight right now!”

As Development Director, you’ve fielded questions like this before. Ideally, expectations between the Development Office and the parents were set at the start—“We strive for 100% parent participation in our Annual Fund”—but that’s not always the case.

At that point, asking parents to give even more time and funds to your school can feel like trying to walk through a field of land mines, but it’s all in *how* you ask and *what* you’re asking for.

The nice thing regarding parents as potential donors is that you’ve already convinced them that your school’s unique approach to education is worth investing in—their children are attending! Your job as the Development Director is to sell them on a specific program or enhancement that does two things:

1. Aligns with your school’s mission, which the parents already support; and
2. Gives their children something they would not otherwise have.

Let’s say part of your school’s mission is to provide students hands-on training with modern technology so they’re adequately prepared for the constantly evolving “real world” workplace and global community. Parents enroll their children so they can get that preparation, but additional investment may be necessary to guarantee the teachers have the necessary equipment and training to meet that mission-specific goal.

Such specificity and transparent connection to your school’s mission will be the key to winning extra gifts from your parents. Related stories from current or past families who have made donations to your projects will bring your campaign home for your prospective donors. Keep in mind, though, that not all stories are created equal: feature a story that directly relates to your current funding goal.

In the above example, it would be more appropriate to ask a family who funded a small portion of a crucial software upgrade to speak to their peers to encourage more donations for a similar goal, than an alum who donated a larger quantity earmarked for the new art wing. Both gifts were important and both would probably be willing to speak on your behalf. But, in this case, the closeness of the family to the current program and the connection to the funding goal would work to your advantage.

Asking parents to donate to a large, anonymous project or not setting the expectations early on in your relationship can lead to angry calls that are unpleasant for everyone involved, but by stewarding your resources and “asks,” you can cultivate a rewarding partnership with everyone involved.

Additional ISM articles of interest

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 7 No. 7 [You Want Me to Ask for Money???](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 8 No. 2 [Bonding With New Parents](#)

Additional ISM articles of interest for Gold Consortium members

I&P Vol. 30 No. 4 [A Comprehensive Development Model](#)

I&P Vol. 27 No. 4 [Charitable Giving in a New Environment](#)

Holiday Tips for the Development Office

(35% of clicks)

Happy New Year!

Okay, it's a little early to say that, but it would serve you well to start thinking about December 31st now. Conventional wisdom and research show that [most charitable giving occurs during the last week of the year](#), with the most donations occurring on the last two days. (Of course, the tax deadline incentive helps with that philanthropic phenomenon.)

We've discussed the advantages of gearing up for this influx in previous e-letters, but some things are worth re-iterating.

- **Decide now whether to keep your Development Office open for New Year's.** We encourage the Development Office to stay active during the last two weeks of December to be able to advise and accept gifts from donors. Your staff can handle all the questions about taxes and requirements better than any Web page or voicemail message. Speaking of which...

- **Use your Web site wisely.** [Donations through Web sites](#) are increasing, with [22% of annual giving](#) at most non-profits taking place on Dec. 30 & 31. During the busy holidays, donors may wish to use your online giving system rather than fuss with a visit or call. If your school's digital donation system is outdated now is the time to prep it for increased traffic. Check that the whole process is simple and clearly directed toward your school's donor population.
- **Advertise your availability!** If your office is open through New Year's, let people know. If you're accepting donations online, tell everyone. Transparency with process decreases the chances that a potential donor will get fed up with your system and donate their dollars elsewhere. (Your social media platforms are great for this type of notification!)
- **In person or online, follow up.** Donors are more apt to fall through the cracks during times of high volume giving. Be ready to personally thank all contributors, great or small, beyond the impersonal thank you screen or disembodied voice on the phone on New Year's.

It's difficult to stay focused during the holidays with family obligations potentially overshadowing professional ones. For the Development Office, relaxation will come a little later, and once it does, you can rest on some hard-won laurels.

Additional ISM articles of interest

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 10 No. 4 [They Want to Give...Will You Be There to Receive?](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 3 [December 31 is Approaching...Your Donors Are Ready. Are You?](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 8 No. 9 [End-of-Year Phonathons: Do You Call Everyone?](#)

Additional ISM articles of interest for Gold Consortium members

I&P Vol. 31 No. 1 [Receiving Non-Cash Gifts: Fair Market Value Appraisals](#)

I&P Vol. 37 No. 3 [The Fair Labor Standards Act: Getting Overtime Right](#)

January 2014—Vol. 12 No. 5

(27.2% open; 9% click through)

Must-Reads for Development Directors in 2014

(28% of clicks)

The winter holidays have come and gone, but there's no reason we can't continue celebrating the new year with a renewed commitment to personal development! More so than many offices in a private-independent school, the Development Office must maintain a presence in the community and in the other divisions of the school. With that balance in mind, we have collected a few books for your consideration and perusal.

Art of Persuasion: Winning Without Intimidation by Bob Burg—When asking people to give of their time, talent, and treasures for your school, you will encounter resistance. Overcoming that resistance through kindness is an invaluable skill in the Development Office, and Burg provides clear, common-sense ways to do so in real world scenarios.

Building Donor Loyalty: The Fundraiser's Guide to Increasing Lifetime Value by Adrian Sargeant & Elaine Jay—It's simple to ask someone for a one-time contribution, but asking every year can seem like an imposition. For those looking to increase donor retention and improve constituent relations, *Building Donor Loyalty* gives research-backed tips for winning that second and third and fourth donation.

Major Donors: Finding Big Gifts in Your Database and Online by Ted Hart, James Greenfield, Pamela Gignac, and Christopher Carner —Published in 2006, we start this recommendation with a caveat: If you're looking for a text on the latest and greatest social media trends to raise money, go elsewhere. If you're looking for alternative ways to use your online and database resources without breaking the bank, *Major Donors* is for you.

Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook: How to Tell Your Story in a Noisy Social World by Gary Vaynerchuk —And if you *are* looking for help with your social media campaigns, *Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook* should go on your nightstand tonight. "But why in the world should we be on social media?" you may ask. Here's your answer: The Development Office should focus on building relationships with potential and current donors, and social media provides the perfect opportunity for creating and maintaining that conversation. *Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook* teaches you content-driven marketing that's customized for the platform you're using, be it Facebook, Twitter, or Pinterest.

The Ask: How to Ask for Support for Your Nonprofit Cause, Creative Project, or Business Venture by Laura Fredricks —After you spend time and energy developing an exciting new relationship with your donor, in the end, it all comes down to how you ask for

that crucial donation, whether it's 10 dollars a month or a million to kick off your capital campaign. *The Ask* will help you seal the deal.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 10 No. 1 [Reading Essentials for the Development Director](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 8 No. 3 [The Problem: Missing Alumni. The Solution: Log on to Facebook!](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 8 No. 6 [Tips to Promote Online Giving to Your School](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 4 [Online Giving: A Tool to Maximize the Relationship](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 35 No. 6 [Influencing Upward: Skills for the Development Director](#)

Development Is From Mars, and Admission Is From Venus (36% of clicks)

Why do people work for private-independent schools? They want to support their schools' missions, of course, which could deal with everything from religion to academic abilities to unique educational experiences, but one thing is certain: We guarantee that no one works at your school merely "for the money."

At the same time, money is one of those harsh realities facing any private school. While your tuition should cover all operating costs, any enhancements to your program like technological updates or new facilities rely on charitable giving. It may sound mercenary, but you will need money to pay for all your mission-appropriate upgrades, and [tuition can't cover everything](#).

That's where you as the Development Director and all your staff come to the rescue, but your office can't do it alone. You need the cooperation and support of your entire school. We've talked about collaborative recruitment as part of your school's overall advancement plan, coordinating all marketing efforts to ensure consistency of sharing your school's mission. Sometimes, though, it can feel as though other offices are operating on another planet.

Take the Admission Office. The counselors, tour guides, and advisers in this office serve as the gatekeepers to the institution, essentially "driving the bus" on school composition. Admission is student-centered and low-key, focused on finding mission-appropriate families. The admission staff tend to be exceptional listeners who sincerely care about their

applicants, concerned more about whether the students will succeed in the academic community rather than if the family can pay all or more than the “sticker price” of the school.

In fact, Admission Officers rarely feel comfortable discussing money, especially in the last five years since the recession. Some in the Admission Office flatly refuse to do so, claiming that it’s “not their job” to talk about the philanthropic culture of the school. They worry they’ll lose families if they mention expenses at all, and filling seats is tremendously difficult. Instead, they may downplay tuition and fees, reminding families about financial aid programs as ways to sell the school.

But avoiding the school’s financial expectations of families will create a toxic environment for everyone involved. Imagine a time when a family visited and later agreed to attend your school, with not a word spoken about the culture of giving in which they’re expected to participate. Imagine their dismay when the first annual fund donation request arrived in the mailbox, especially if they received financial aid. It’s not the Development Office they called first, though—the Admission Office fielded that conversation. This sort of miscommunication breeds antipathy because the parent feels as though the school was falsely advertised in a bait-and-switch scenario. (How many times have we heard about the “hidden fees” of phone or cable plans? This is *exactly* the same sentiment.)

In a way, the Admission Office staff in this scenario *did* misrepresent their school if they failed to make this additional obligation known to their applicants. If the expectation of donating to the school above and beyond their “required” financial commitments is what makes or breaks the decision for the family, this may be one applicant your school *can* afford to lose to replace with one who would be willing to invest more in their child’s future.

This situation can be avoided if the Admission and Development Offices communicate the goals of their respective duties to each other as part of a collaborative recruitment effort, rather than “someone else’s job.” It’s *everyone’s* job to make your school’s mission and commitment to education clear to future families by explaining how current objectives and goals are achieved through fund-raising efforts. Here are some ideas you could suggest for integrating development goals into the admission process.

- When a family visits your school, spend a moment explaining how last year’s campaign improved your school by purchasing new technology or providing professional development for faculty.
- Arrange for a representative from the Development Office to speak at an Admission event like open house or a new parents’ luncheon.
- Add an extra page to your Web site detailing educational expenses and how the extra funding partially provided by involved parents bridges the gap between the bills and money raised by tuition.

Don't take these suggestions as exhaustive. Rather, use this list as a starting point for your conversation with the Admission Office to ensure that everyone is on the same page for new student recruitment. We hold an [Advancement Academy](#) every year to facilitate communication between the Admission, Marketing/Communications, and Development Offices to avoid situations just like the ones we described here. Consider attending if you, too, want everyone working as a team next recruitment season.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 7 No. 7 [You Want Me to Ask for Money???](#)

ISM Monthly Private School News Vol. 10 No. 6 [Keeping Communications Open and Flowing in Your School](#)

Additional ISM Resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 30 No. 4 [A Comprehensive Development Model](#)

I&P Vol. 28 No. 15 [Interdependence That Brings Financial Independence](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 12 [Strengthen the Ties Between the Development Director and the School](#)

I&P Vol. 39 No. 2 [Full Disclosure of Non-Tuition Expectations During Admission](#)

February 2014—Vol. 12 No. 6

(26.9% open; 5% click through)

“Going Once! Going Twice!” Awesome Auction Ideas

(51% of clicks)

For private-independent schools, big or small, an auction can be one of the most exciting (and profitable!) ways to raise large sums at a single time. Our [e-List for Advancement Professionals](#) recently fielded an inquiry on the top auction items people have bought. We thought it'd be great to share some original ideas for items to go up on the block and some tricks and tips to remember when running your own.

Tips to Start Your Auction Off Right

Before you begin requesting items and services to put up for bidding, there are a few things to keep in mind to make sure your auction is a success. First, consider a list of items that are historically less-than-successful at an auction. LA private school blog [Beyond The Brochure](#) posted an anecdotal list of hard-to-sell items, and the largest group of items by far was anything that restricts use, such as clothing in specific sizes or services with an immediate expiration date. Offering goods and opportunities that appeal to a broad swath of your potential audience will up the ante come Auction Night.

[Beyond The Brochure](#) also notes the importance of a theme and marketing of your auction, a sentiment echoed by [The New York Times](#) in an article about the atmosphere and content of school auctions. From a retro '80s-style dance party to a Caribbean beach-themed event—complete with calypso music from a steel band!—the auction is a social event for parents as much as a fund-raising event for the school. A school in Arizona shared their auction-ambiance idea with the e-List: A farm-to-table dinner created by a five-star chef, served outside on the Quad lawn. Superb!

Speaking of setting the mood, [The Washington Post](#) ran an article a few years back about local schools' auctions and the choice to have a professional auctioneer host the event rather than have a parent or Trustee volunteer. While professionals add some extra up-front costs like travel and a hotel room, there's a reason they're professionals. Invest in an auctioneer, and you may see a big return come auction night.

Creative Items and Big Sellers at the Auction Block

No matter how much effort you put into the prep and execution of your school's auction, in the end, it's all about what's up for grabs. From opulent to original, we've got a list of some excellent ideas from our [Advancement Professionals e-List](#) to consider at your school's auction this spring. Keep your parent population in mind when requisitioning these items—you know better than anyone what people will spend big money to purchase.

- **“Head of School” for the Day!**—One of the private-independent schools on our e-List suggested this as an inexpensive but interesting big-ticket item from their last auction. The winning student is given the “responsibility” of running the school for the day. Generally, it becomes more of a “shadow day” for the student involved to spend some quality time with the School Head.
- **Sleepover With Faculty**—A few of your teachers volunteer to host a sleepover party for 20 elementary-age students at the school on a Saturday night, complete with games, movies, and pizza. The e-List member who suggested this said that it’s so popular, it generates a waiting list.
- **Trips at Home and Abroad**—Several schools and articles agree: Vacations are great sellers. From trips to exotic locales to community members with time shares who are willing to donate their space for a weekend, trips can inspire wonderfully large bids.
- **Specialty Services**—Auctions often offer potentially embarrassing items or services for people to bid on, like teeth whitening or tax preparation. These are big-ticket items, certainly, and ones people would be willing to bid for, but you might see less return if you make them raise their hands publicly. If your auction list contains many sensitive services, consider running a silent auction.
- **Items Handmade by Students**—Sometimes it really is the thought that counts, and that’s especially true when it’s your child who made the item. Quilts finished by five-year-olds have [sold for almost \\$3,000](#). One school’s best-selling item was a set of matched silk ties, dyed by fourth graders.
- **Prime Parking Spaces**—How much would your parents (or faculty!) be willing to pay for those premium spaces in front of the office doors? Instead of “first-come, first-served” or lottery distribution, consider putting these spaces up for bid at the auction—they could rake in thousands annually.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 7 [It’s Auction Time!](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 4 [Ask the Development Expert](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 10 No. 4 [Big Tickets for Your Annual Auction](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 27 No. 8 [Ethical Issues for the Development Office](#)

I&P Vol. 25 No. 2 [Corporate Sponsorships and Endorsements: At What ‘Cost’ to Your Independence?](#)

Working With Parent Associations

(17% of clicks)

In our last e-Letter, we talked about how development and admission should work together to accomplish the same goal of building and growing your private-independent school. Today, we'll take a look at working with your Parent Association.

Your Parent Association's mission statement should, in some form or fashion, address the fact that its goal is to support the school's mission in whatever way requested by administrators. Occasionally, that mission will be best supported by—you guessed it—fund raisers. That's where you, the Development Director, come into the picture.

But your involvement in the Parent Association shouldn't come up only two or three times a year. Your relationship should be cultivated months before these money-raising events. You'll find some suggestions below for building your relationship with the Parent Association all year round.

- **Have a member from the Development Office or the Advancement Team serve on the Parent Association as an official representative.** Not only will this keep your office apprised of plans brewing in the association, but this will also give the Parent Association an opportunity to have ideas vetted by someone from the administration. This representative could also bring certain school needs to the table as discussed by the Development Office, ensuring the parent association stays on track with its mission to help the school.
- **Conversely, involve Parent Association officers at development or advancement events whenever appropriate.** Some of your best advocates are dedicated parents of current students, so making them feel welcomed and included at outreach events will only serve to enhance your message's impact.
- **Include development- and advancement-oriented items on the Parent Association's "Volunteer Opportunities" list.** This list may be shared via a weekly e-mail or monthly newsletter, but chances to volunteer are usually advertised to the community through the Parent Association. Including your events and opportunities on this list raises both awareness of your programs and a cadre of volunteers.
- **Coordinate "asks" so that the Development Office and Parent Association are not asking for donations from the same people at the same time.** No one likes to feel harassed, and if both entities ask the same person for money within the same campaign, it can potentially damage an otherwise-excellent relationship. This may mean creating a common calendar to be shared by the Development Office and the Parent Association to ensure timing is never "off."

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 11 No. 8 [Reflecting on Parent Associations](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 7 No. 6 [The Annual Fund Chair](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 10 No. 1 [Crafting Your School's Newsletter](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 27 No. 4 [Cyber News: The Transition to Paperless Parent Communication](#)

I&P Vol. 30 No. 4 [A Comprehensive Development Model](#)

March 2014—Vol. 12 No. 7

(24.4% open; 4.7% click through)

Your “Ask” Calendar

(33% of clicks)

Sometimes it can feel as though fund raising never stops. As soon as one campaign is over, another begins. Once the Parent Association raises enough money to send students to band camp, they begin another for basketball uniforms—and doesn't the biology lab need new beakers?

All of these requests can drown your families in a tidal wave of requests for money, leaving them exhausted by the time the annual fund comes around. An easy way to fix this is an “ask” calendar.

As [we noted last month](#), different organizations at your school may be raising money at different times for different reasons—all of them asking the same constituents for money.

Some asks are required requests for money, such as tuition and technology fees. Other “asks” are for additions to the curriculum, like field trip expenses or sports team equipment.

Still other asks stem from a perceived need in the community. These requests focus on donations to local charities or stem from disasters like foreign earthquakes or a student's house tragically burning down.

Finally, the Development Office has formal asks. These are campaigns like your annual fund and special capital projects. But, after all the other asks in a school year, families will feel worn out. They've already paid the other obligations and feel that they've fulfilled their philanthropic duties for the year.

An ask calendar can help eradicate duplicate requests for donations and ease the burden on families bombarded by philanthropic opportunities all year round. In developing this calendar, you as the Development Director should make a list of all the fund-raising solicitations everyone at your school annually makes. From the smallest bake sale to the orchestrated auction, list the number of asks for your school and date them.

You might be surprised how many fund-raising events your school supports. One school catalogued their asks and found that if a family had a student in each division, they could be asked for money a total of 127 times in a single school year!

Now that you have collected all the asks, it's time to organize them into categories. If they're required, why not roll these fees into the tuition? Instead of one ask of tuition and nineteen asks in other assorted fees, one lump sum will facilitate both easier collection of these dues, as well as transparency with parents as to the real cost of their child attending school for the semester.

As for the other asks, determine which are important and which are redundant or have a low rate of success—easily found by comparing how much money was raised versus the goal of the fund raiser. In some cases, the money may have gone to a competing fund raiser—an easily solvable problem with the new calendar.

Once you have a clear picture of the current fund-raising calendar, it's time to have a meeting with the Chairs of all the different committees and associations responsible for raising money during the year and hash out a singular plan everyone can accept. Sometimes, as in the case of the Parent Association, you may find that limiting a group's fund raising to one or two large events instead of smaller, continuous efforts will be more effective.

Everyone wants to see the school adequately funded. By gathering all the asks onto a single, coordinated calendar within the governance of the Development Office, you can both bolster current fund-raising efforts and direct-giving efforts to those which would be most beneficial to the school.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 7 No. 5 [*The Development Committee Calendar*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 11 No. 8 [*Reflecting on Parent Associations*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 12 No. 6 [*Working With Parent Associations*](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 37 No. 12 [*The True Amount of the "Perceived Cost" of Attending Your School*](#)

I&P Vol. 26 No. 16 [*"Back Up" Your Management Team With Task Calendars*](#)

I&P Vol. 37 No. 8 [*Strategic Financial Planning and Your School's Budget Companion Documents*](#)

How Donor Incentive Programs Backfire

(23% of clicks)

Tiered memberships. Financial incentives. Substantial rewards. These dangle like carrots tied to the proverbial stick, encouraging potential donors to reach for their wallets to make gifts to your private-independent school. But, are donor incentive programs really the way to drive donations?

Public radio stations and community theaters often use tiered giving systems. They offer substantial perks to participants to fund their annual programming, such as a CD of the month club, show tickets, t-shirts, bags, etc. These “gifts”—offered after the donation has been made—work to keep donors engaged after the fact.

But studies have shown that [incentive programs may lead to a “crowding out”](#) of a donor’s intrinsic motivations to give (i.e., donors now give for a gift or prize, rather than through a belief in a school’s mission and purpose). While the short-term benefits are seductive, the long-term repercussions of such a program discourage tiered reward programs.

Part of the problem with a tiered incentive system is that the implied hierarchy of rewards places the emphasis on large gifts instead of acknowledging the impact on gifts of all sizes. Those with limited ability to give may feel discouraged or discounted by not “reaching” the next tier.

And that leads to one of the biggest problems for private schools developing a tiered giving system—the absence of personal attention toward each and every donor. No matter the giving level, donors should feel as though their gifts made a difference for the students and mission of the school.

Donors should view the school as one of their top philanthropic destinations because they believe so strongly in the school’s mission—not because this charity’s “gift” will be better than another’s. If your school suffers from a lack of donors, this dearth is most likely the direct result of a lack of personal connection to the school.

[One survey of donors in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom](#) found that “having passion about an organization’s mission” was among the top three reasons donors give to their charities of choice. Sponsoring a “friend or client” for a special event were also huge factors for one-time gifts in all three countries. (Giving for “increased perks” was never mentioned as a reason for donating to a particular charity.)

What does this say about your private school’s fund-raising efforts? Developing a personal relationship with potential donors—both large and small—is the primary way to attract gifts. You want to recruit donors through personal messages about how your school has impacted

the lives of its families and faculty. Have faculty and other parents thank these donors individually instead of “on behalf of the Board.” These small touches tell donors their gifts were appreciated and useful.

And if you want to encourage donors to give again, be transparent in how you use of these gifts. Everyone wants to know that his or her money accomplished something substantial for the school—and that the funds went to what the school said it would. Answering the question, “How did my donation make a difference for the students?” will go a long way toward re-recruiting these donors.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 12 No. 1 [*What Motivates Donors to Give?*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 2 [*Now More Than Ever—Tell Donors What Their Gifts Will Achieve*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 10 No. 8 [*Let Your Students Tell the Story to Inspire Donors*](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 32 No. 10 [*Seven Gift Planning Tips for a Small Development Office*](#)

I&P Vol. 30 No. 4 [*A Comprehensive Development Model*](#)

I&P Vol. 34 No. 14 [*Anchor Your Case for Support to Your Purpose and Outcome Statements*](#)

April 2014—Vol. 12 No. 8

(24.9% open; 5.1% click through as of July 15, 2014)

The Anatomy of a (Great!) Thank-You Letter

(66% of clicks)

Sometimes, it's the simplest words that have the biggest impact, and remembering to say "thank you" can be the easiest way to preserve the relationship you've worked so hard to establish with your donor. But what makes a great thank-you letter? What can encourage donors to feel good about the gifts they've already made—and inspire them to give again?

Timely Delivery

To start, plan to have the letter signed, sealed, and delivered within two weeks of receipt of the gift. The donor is certainly still thinking about the gift and wondering if it was received and appreciated. Letting a lot of time lapse between the gift and the thank-you tells your donor that the letter—and the donor—was an afterthought, which is the last message you want to send.

Personalization

This step is an important one: Address the letter to the donor directly, with the correct salutation. Nothing screams "form letter" like "Dear Sir/Madam" or even "Dear Friend of Aegis Academy." Whenever possible, customize your salutation and, for goodness sake, double-check the spelling of the donor's name and title! There's nothing worse than sending "Ms. Ashley Smith" a letter, only to learn that "Ashley" is a man.

Personalization also requires a handwritten signature, preferably from the School Head or you, the Development Director. If the donor has established a special relationship with a particular staff or faculty member who was instrumental in securing the gift, his or her signature may mean even more to the recipient.

If at all possible, customize the content of the letter as well. Writing a fully unique letter for every donor may be impossible due to time constraints and concerns about consistency. Just the same, spend a few sentences talking about this specific donor—his or her connection to the school, for example, or the nature of the gift—to make a significant impact on the relationship.

Kivi Miller on Nonprofit Marketing Guide.com [recommends getting specific](#) about how the money will be used. Even if the gift is for the annual fund, which is used for many different projects, try to list some particular ways for which the money is most likely to be used.

Through personalization, you show that this donor is not a number or a box to be checked off; this donor matters to your school in a personal and meaningful way.

Don't Ask for Anything More!

One of the biggest mistakes you could make in a donor thank-you letter is to ask the donor to take some sort of action—*any* action—according to development guru Penelope Burk's *Donor-Centered Fundraising*. This letter is a note thanking them for the gift they've already made. There will be time in the future to ask them to give again or differently, for them to take a survey of their experience, or to invite them to share their experiences with others.

This letter is all about the donor, the gift, and what his or her generosity means to the school. It is *not* a time to be asking for more money, or handwringing whether you'll meet your goals for the year, or wanting information or contacts. The thank-you letter thanks your donor, and *only* that. Write a timely, meaningful thank-you to your donors, and you'll reap the benefits down the line with increased loyalty and greater gifts.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 12 No. 3 [Donor Recognition: Appealing and Gratifying to the Donor](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 9 [The Donor Bill of Rights](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 3 [The Head's Role in Landing—and Keeping—Major Donors](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 5 [All Kinds of Thank You's](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 32 No. 10 [Seven Gift Planning Tips for a Small Development Office](#)

I&P Vol. 31 No. 16 [The Development Quartet: The Core Leadership Team of the Comprehensive Development Model](#)

I&P Vol. 35 No. 6 [Influencing Upward: Skills for the Development Director](#)

Thanking Batkid: How to Acknowledge Anonymous Donors

(18% of clicks)

Have you heard about Miles, the Batkid of San Francisco? Back in November, the Make-A-Wish Foundation made this five-year-old cancer survivor's dream come true by turning the [whole city into a Gotham-themed playground for a day](#), complete with [supervillains condemned by the U.S. Department of Justice](#) and [damsels in distress](#). Turns out this act touched more lives than just our heroes'. Someone [rented a billboard](#) to thank Batkid for his feats of daring-do during his day fighting crime—and [no one knows](#) who funded it! It's a complete mystery, one that not even Batman himself could solve.

By keeping his or her identity masked, this anonymous donor's indirect contribution to the Make-A-Wish foundation puts the focus on their mission—to give children hope, strength, and joy by granting wishes, extravagant or modest—rather than garnering attention for him- or herself.

Your school's anonymous donors may wish their contributions could be similarly focused on your mission and students, rather than themselves. The question then becomes, how do you properly acknowledge such generosity and selflessness?

Thank-You Letters!

A simple thank-you letter can go a long way to making any donor—anonymous or not—feel appreciated. According to Penelope Burk's [Donor-Centered Fundraising](#), an excellent thank-you letter makes specific reference to the intended use of the funds, and projects a "can-do" attitude (rather than an "I don't know if we're going to make our goals!" vibe). If the funds were earmarked for a scholarship, the thank-you letter will mean even more if the receiving student could write about how the gift has impacted his or her educational journey.

Clarify What It Means to Be "Anonymous"

For anonymous donors, the thank-you letter is a great way to inform them what it means to be an anonymous benefactor of your school. Does "anonymous" mean they get no mention on the annual report, that only the Board of Trustees and School Head know? Will their names be withheld from your press releases? Do they get "credit" for the gift in the database, or will it be recorded separately from their other gifts? Clarifying their positions will be a relief to the donors and encourage them to give again, thanks to your transparency.

Personal Phone Call

For a high-level administrator like the School Head to take the time out of his or her day to sign a letter says a lot about your school and its commitment to philanthropic supporters. But for the School Head *to personally call donors* and thank them for their gifts? That's a whole new level of gratitude. If the donor has expressed a wish to remain anonymous from *everyone*, including other administrators, have his or her contact at the school call instead. The personal touch here is everything.

Keep Them Up-to-Date on Fund Progress

If the donor asked that the funds be used in a particular manner, sending periodic updates about that specific project or goal is perfectly appropriate, as well as a timely way to keep thanking this donor for his or her contribution. All school donors should receive updates on the overall progress of the annual fund, of course, but with anonymous donors, special attention from the Development Office will help maintain a relationship that could otherwise fizzle out.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 12 No. 3 [*Donor Recognition: Appealing and Gratifying to the Donor*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 9 [*The Donor Bill of Rights*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 3 [*The Head's Role in Landing—and Keeping—Major Donors*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 5 [*All Kinds of Thank You's*](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 32 No. 10 [*Seven Gift Planning Tips for a Small Development Office*](#)

I&P Vol. 31 No. 16 [*The Development Quartet: The Core Leadership Team of the Comprehensive Development Model*](#)

I&P Vol. 35 No. 6 [*Influencing Upward: Skills for the Development Director*](#)

May 2014—Vol. 12 No. 9

(22.5% open; 4.6% click through as of July 15, 2014)

#GradSelfies: Pictures Tell the Stories of Your Graduates to the Community

(22% of clicks)

End-of-year graduations are the perfect time for self-portraits (“selfies”) and other photo opportunities with classmates and faculty members. Besides, your school’s photographer can’t be everywhere at once, and so student- and family-provided pictures can capture some amazing moments for promotional use.

Why not capitalize on the celebratory picture-snapping and start a “hashtag party” so that others can share in their happiness? Ask families to upload photographs to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest—all their preferred social media sites—from graduation and other senior-specific events using the school-approved hashtag so that everyone can see what they’re up to.

Why a Hashtag Party?

The major benefit of hosting a hashtag party is the organic nature of the content. It’s not your office telling the community—parents, alumni, and donors alike—how fantastic your school is; the *students themselves* share their great accomplishments with everyone.

Plus, when really spectacular photos appear in your social media feed, your Community Manager can reach out to the students and ask for more details, adding some quotes and stories to your annual fund and other fundraising appeals.

For example, let’s say somebody snaps a great shot of a ring of girls all smiling at the camera, but one looks like she’s been crying. Intrigued, your Community Manager messages the student who posted the photo and discovers that the girl just found out she qualified for a prestigious science scholarship—thanks to the new lab equipment facilitating research-based instruction she had while attending your school.

The improvements to the science curriculum that were foundational to this student’s success were made possible by the annual fund, and so you’ve just found a way to personalize a broad, seemingly anonymous donation.

Points to Consider

Of course, hashtag parties aren’t for the faint of heart. *Hashtags.org* [put together a list](#) of how to manage a “Twitter party.” Consider the following before embarking on this potent form of community engagement.

- **What social media sites will you be using for the campaign?** This year, the Hotchkiss School will host [candid graduation shots on its Flickr account](#), but you may not want to limit yourself to just one site. Think about what social platforms your school uses already and the strengths and weaknesses of each as you plan for your graduation campaign.
- **What will the hashtag be for this year’s event?** While clever hashtags catch on quickly with participants, you could be your own worst enemy. *Hashtags.org* points out classic

blunders like the CD release announcement “#susanalbumparty” as hashtags you should avoid. One secondary university last year [used “#UNH14” as its hashtag](#)—uniting separate Instagram, Facebook, Foursquare, and Twitter campaigns into a unique, easily searchable hashtag party.

On the other hand, you can do what [Crespi Carmelite High School did](#) and repurpose multiple hashtags. One Instagram caption last year read “I love you dad! Thank you for everything #fatheron#graduation#**crespi #2013**,” while a tweet said, “It happened all too fast. Going to miss my class **#celtpride**” (emphasis added).

- **Is there a particular part of your school’s development efforts you’d like to highlight**, like scholarship recipients or the use of new facilities? Consider how you want to use the campaign’s results post-graduation.
- **What sort of promotional work will you do before the event to ensure maximum participation?** Will you tell your alumni and donors about the hashtag party beforehand? How will you do so? Sometimes promotion through traditional channels like the school’s newsletter or bulletin board flyers will draw visitors to your digital media outlets.
- **What about offering a contest?** You offer a small prize or recognition to top-quality contributors to spur interest and participation.
- **Will your school’s Community Manager be on hand to eliminate off-topic or destructive comments or pictures?** When embarking on a live social media campaign, have someone do damage control in real-time. Otherwise, by the time someone gets to it, you may have a situation that’s snowballed out of control.

The end of the school year can bring so many fantastic opportunities for the Development Office to share the advantages an education at your school can give to its students. Collect stories and pictures of your graduates now, so you can share them with your donors later!

Break out of your office’s “silo” to learn how development contributes to your school’s advancement at ISM’s “boot camp” for advancement professionals and attend ISM’s [Advancement Academy](#) this summer in sunny San Diego, California! Our specialized [Development Track](#) will help you understand and implement a “culture of philanthropy” in your school with its strategic fundraising through the annual fund, capital campaigns, or transformational gifts.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 10 No. 7 [A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 12 No. 5 [Development Is From Mars, and Admission Is From Venus](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 9 No. 4 [For Teachers on Twitter: Hashtags to Follow the Conversation](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 12 No. 9 [Twitter Etiquette](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 32 No. 3 [Marketing Your Purpose and Outcome Statements](#)

I&P Vol. 33 No. 5 [The Fallacy of Thinking Outside the Box](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 14 [Alumni Relations and the Portrait of the Graduate](#)

Frequently Asked Questions About the Annual Fund—And How to Answer Them!

(50% of clicks)

As more parents come from the Millennial or Generation Y age groups, donors are (typically!) [leery of giving to a nebulous “cause.”](#) They prefer to know exactly how their donations are being used by the institution. Thus, convincing people to donate to your school’s annual fund can be tricky, as the annual fund is often a “catch all” fund raiser that finances many different programs at the school.

Here, then, are some common questions asked by families about the annual fund, and how you can best answer them to encourage large donations.

What Does the Annual Fund Pay For?

The answer to this question varies from school to school. Some use the annual fund as a way to “fill the gap” between the cost of providing top-quality education and the amount of hard income gained from fees and tuition. (ISM theory discourages this practice, as your school should have a solid financial plan that allows your school’s operational budget to be funded by “hard” income. Thus, the annual fund becomes the solution for all the “extras” that makes your school not just good, but exceptional.)

But there’s a second, unspoken question in the first: Why should a donor give for “extra” items if the school would stay solvent on tuition alone? When you answer the first, be ready to present a list of all the things your school managed to do last year, as funded by annual giving. Technology improvements, facility upgrades, and special speakers all add to students’ educational experiences—and are possible through donors like them.

But Isn’t That What Tuition and Fees Are For?

Not necessarily, but families don’t realize that immediately! Explain to parents and donors that tuition pays for operating expenses for the school. Salaries, supplies, and facility maintenance all come from this budget—they’re what keep the school functional in the first place!

A breakdown of the school’s budget and expenditures, divided into “necessary” expenses and “optional” or “value-added” ones, may help parents realize that both tuition *and* donations make your school one of the best education options.

Who Contributes to the Annual Fund?

Why, everyone! But that’s not what the family wants to know.

When a family asks this question, they want to hear who else thinks the annual fund is worth donating to. This is when it’s really important to have Trustee and faculty/staff donations close to 100% participation levels. A high participation rate in the school community at large helps justify the investment for the questioning family.

Everyone should feel passionate enough about the school’s mission that they’re willing to donate—even if it’s just a small amount. In this case, it’s truly the thought that counts.

Prestigious donors outside the school could be mentioned to families, too. But, if they’ve given anonymously, be sure to respect their wishes and just say that “friends of the school” have given X dollars to the annual fund.

How Much Do I Have to Contribute?

No family should be alienated if unable to contribute large sums of money to the annual fund, nor should their children be shamed—even indirectly!—if the family cannot contribute at all.

One [angry parent told *Philanthropy*](#) that her son's private school only allowed children whose families had donated to the annual fund to “dress down” for a day, then proceeded to take class photos to send to parents and post on social media where it “was clear who had worn a uniform and [not] given and who [had] earned a dress-down day.”

As *Philanthropy* said in its response to the mother, while rewarding students for the annual fund efforts can be beneficial, creating an “anti-award” atmosphere can be detrimental in the long run.

While 100% participation is a desired goal, only the individual family knows if even a small amount would strain their finances. Parents will be more likely to donate in the future if they feel respected now.

The end of the school year provides us with a time of reflection and a time to prepare for the fall's new start of the next year's annual fund campaign. Prepare your school's answers to these common questions now to make sure your annual fund starts off on the right track later!

Want to start your Annual Fund Campaign on the right foot next fall, but not sure where to start? Attend ISM's workshop ["Your Annual Fund From A to Z"](#) in Stowe, Vermont, as part of the [Summer Institute](#)! You'll get expert instruction on how to form, implement, and finish a strong year-long campaign for your school's annual fund.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 8 No. 7 [Ask the Development Director: "What is the difference between the annual fund and annual giving?"](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Trustees Vol. 12 No. 4 [Four Critical Ways the Board Supports the Annual Fund](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 34 No. 15 [Anchor Your Case for Support to Your Purpose and Outcome Statements](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 14 [Alumni Relations and the Portrait of the Graduate](#)

I&P Vol. 39 No. 2 [Full Disclosure of Non-Tuition Expectations During Admission](#)

June 2014—Vol. 12 No. 10

(24.9% open; 4.5% click through)

Summer Reading for the Development Office: Recommended Books and Webinars

(26% of clicks)

With your end of the year push to reach your funding goals and the mountains of thank-you notes waiting to be signed, sealed, and delivered, a chance to escape from the stress might feel impossible. Still, there's no reason you can't steal away from the hectic office on occasion with a good book—especially when it'll help you improve your school's development efforts. We've coupled each book with a webinar from our e-Learning archive, so when you make it back to your desk, you can spend an hour or two learning something new.

Donor-Centered Fundraising

by Penelope Burk

This is a staple of any Development Director's library, and we'd be remiss if we failed to include it at the start of our list. Burk takes you through the entire fundraising lifecycle—from planning a capital campaign to attracting the right donors to maintaining relationships—from a donor-centric perspective. Backed by research and real-world examples and applications of core concepts, *Donor-Centered Fundraising* puts your school's student-centered mission at the core of your development program.

Recommended Webinar: [21st Century Schools: ISM's Advancement Model](#) with Dr. Paula A. Schwartz, IAP-L

Innovations in Annual Giving: Ten Departures That Worked CASE

by Robert Burdinski

While Burdinski mostly draws from higher education for his 10 case studies, the parallels between their annual giving programs and those of private-independent schools are obvious. From revamping phonathons (Kansas State University) and encouraging first-time donors (Reed College) to managing volunteers (Phillips Exeter Academy) and donor-retention strategies (University of Michigan), *Innovations in Annual Giving* has practical examples to support new fundraising ideas and plans.

Recommended Webinar: [How to Create Great Annual Fund Appeals](#) with Dr. Paula A. Schwartz, IAP-L

Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action

by Simon Sinek

Turns out that people who get things done—leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., Steve Jobs, and the Wright Brothers—have a commonality that enables them to push through barriers preventing others from accomplishing the same thing. It's how a leader answers the question, "Why?" While the book itself can get a bit repetitive in its use of examples, the

fundamental idea behind the text can be revolutionary to someone like yourself, whose job it is to convince people to do something life-changing and wonderful on a daily basis.

Recommended Webinar: [Who Champions Your Annual Fund?](#) with Dr. Paula A. Schwartz, IAP-L

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Updates for Development Directors Vol. 12 No. 5 [Must-Reads for Development Directors in 2014](#)

ISM Monthly Updates for Development Directors Vol. 8 No. 9 [Helpful Hints for New or Novice Development Directors](#)

ISM Monthly Updates for Human Resources Vol. 11 No. 3 [Lighthouse Leadership](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 29 No. 8 [Mission and Leadership: A Primer in Mission-Oriented 'Change' Programs](#)

I&P Vol. 27 No. 8 [Ethical Issues for the Development Office](#)

Seven Video Thank-Yous From Private School Development Offices

(56% of clicks)

Saying thank you is one of the simplest ways to show your appreciation when a donor gives to your school—and one of the best ways to encourage repeated generosity. Most schools opt to do so in a letter, note, or phone call. This year, why not buck tradition and make a thank-you video?

To get you started, we've collected some of the best private-independent school video thank-yous from around the web. Ranging from technically masterful and scripted to the spontaneous and genuine, all epitomize the sincere and heartfelt appreciation your own end-of-year thanks should embody.

1. The Baylor School

This [thank-you video](#) by the Baylor School to annual fund donors is a creative treat. Many administrators and students lip-sync to Sly & The Family Stone's "Thank You." This video—and [others](#) created by this school's creative Development Office—prove that you don't need to have a fancy script or state-of-the-art equipment to create fun, meaningful video thank-yous to your donors!

2. Mansfield Christian School

Mansfield Christian School met their 2013 annual fund goal and released this video thank-you to donors who helped make this achievement possible. What's nice about this video is that it makes a point of listing all the things the money raised goes toward: paying down mortgages, educational resources, and tuition assistance. Plus, it restates the mission of the school, reminding donors why they gave in the first place.

3. All Saints Episcopal Day School

All Saints Episcopal Day School created a digital slide featuring all the different projects funded by their annual fund. It's a visual representation of what those dollars managed to

achieve for the students, which every donor loves to see. (The choice of music was very apt, too!)

4. Episcopal School of Dallas

Episcopal School of Dallas created an interesting word-cloud introduction that led into different students and groups individually thanking the donors for their generosity. From administrators to younger children to the Mandarin club—we *think* they're saying "thank you"!—it certainly encapsulates the enormity of the annual fund: It's a program that touches all parts of the school rather than a single grade or classroom.

5. St. Michael's School

St. Michael's School takes elements from both All Saints Episcopal Day School and the Episcopal School of Dallas. This presentation includes snippets of video and clips demonstrating the tangible results provided by the annual fund with students and faculty offering their thanks to donors. John Williams's "Superman" theme in the background certainly sends St. Michael's School's final message loud and clear: "You're Our Superheroes!"

6. St. Thomas' Episcopal School

St. Thomas's Episcopal School decided to take its thanks around the globe by having students and faculty say thanks in a variety of languages—including Romanian, French, and Vietnamese. A classic technique with a global citizen flair, an adaptation of this video might be good for a capital campaign with a focus on international education or study abroad programs.

7. St. Thomas' Episcopal School (Again!)

We know, we know—we already have St. Thomas on our list! But its "Before and After" video was so good, we had to include it. By showing how the school was before the donors' generosity and how those gifts impacted the school afterward, it creates a powerful testament to the transformative influence of such gifts, as well as encouraging more donations with its discussion of "on-deck" projects. (Plus, the simple slide-show format is one even a novice videographer can master!)

We hope that after viewing these electronic thank-yous, you feel inspired to do something similar at your own school. It doesn't take a lot of money or expertise to create something simple—just a smartphone with video capture, your school, and a little imagination.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 12 No. 3 [*Donor Recognition: Appealing and Gratifying to the Donor*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 9 [*The Donor Bill of Rights*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 3 [*The Head's Role in Landing—and Keeping—Major Donors*](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 9 No. 5 [*All Kinds of Thank You's*](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 32 No. 10 [*Seven Gift Planning Tips for a Small Development Office*](#)

I&P Vol. 31 No. 16 [*The Development Quartet: The Core Leadership Team of the Comprehensive Development Model*](#)

I&P Vol. 35 No. 6 [*Influencing Upward: Skills for the Development Director*](#)

School Heads

February 2014—Vol. 12 No. 6

(31.9% open; 9% click through)

Mac vs Microsoft: Don't "Scroogle" Your Advertising Strategy (44% of clicks)

Advertising goes beyond a branded color scheme and happy pictures. All pieces of your school's marketing should be a part of a single cohesive vision, and as the School Head, part of your responsibility is to steer that overall strategy.

Let's take a close look at two advertising campaigns for computers and associated programs that have run in the last few years by two different companies. Each told a similar story with its advertising, but one succeeded while another failed. Though not school examples, there are lessons we can take away for your own marketing campaign.

Round One: "Get a Mac"

A few years ago, Apple ran an ad campaign called "[Get a Mac](#)," commonly known for its introduction, "Hi, I'm a Mac—and I'm a PC!" Some [criticized the campaign](#) as too harsh, but generally the witty, entertaining commercials positioned the Mac laptops as modern, versatile versions of the business-oriented PC (personal computer). The campaign was successful, resulting in a [39% overall increase in sales](#) for the fiscal year the ads went public. In fact, it was so popular, the campaign's premise spawned [a number of parodies](#).

Round Two: "Scroogled"

Several years later, Microsoft launched "[Scroogled](#)," an advertising campaign to inform consumers about the potential privacy breaches of Google's search engine and e-mail services. The [latest video](#) features Rick from the "Pawn Stars" television show explaining why the [Chromebook](#) is a poor imitation of a real—read "Microsoft"—laptop because its applications (or "apps") run only on an Internet connection.

It's a Knockout!

Has the Scroogled campaign been effective in converting Google users to Microsoft's Bing engine and their Outlook e-mail service? [No](#). In fact, consumers are rather dismissive of Microsoft's mudslinging, calling for new Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella to end the "[desperate and whiny](#)" campaign altogether.

For a rough and ready statistical analysis, compare the percentage of viewers who liked Microsoft's "[Pawn Star](#)" [commercial](#) on YouTube (214 out of 1354, or 15.8%) to those who liked the Apple "[Buy a Mac](#)" [compilation](#) on the same site (6451 out of 7373, or 87.5%) as of

the third week of February 2014. The Scroogled campaign has failed, both from a practical and popular standpoint, though some would say any press is good press.

Highlight Reel

So what can private-independent School Heads learn from these two advertising campaigns to apply to their own marketing efforts?

Concentrate on *your* school's strengths and mission.

While Apple did make the “disadvantages” of owning a PC clear in their commercials, the relationship between “Mac” and “PC” was more congenial than angry. The ads displayed a friendly rivalry, with each machine having its advantages and disadvantages (e.g., PCs are better with business-oriented pursuits; Macs are good for social and electronic media applications). The “Scroogled” campaign spent more of its time bashing Google’s information-collection policies rather than discussing the advantages of its own programs and hardware. Focus on your mission and why students should attend your private-independent school instead of why they should *not* go to a rival school.

Positive energy goes further than scare tactics.

Again, Apple’s “Get a Mac” campaign was entertaining and relatively light. “Scroogled” tried to frighten customers into switching (“Google steals your information! IT READS YOUR E-MAIL!”), but that tactic failed miserably. Families want to feel good about applying and donating to your school, not why they should avoid a competitor.

Scripted or sponsored promotions of your program (can) do more harm than good.

Check out this [“Wall Street Journal” commercial from the “Get a Mac” campaign](#). In this, Apple highlights a positive (and unsponsored) review of their product in a respected news source. Now, remember the [“Pawn Star” commercial](#) we mentioned earlier, the one with the pawn shop owners evaluating the Chromebook? Microsoft was counting on these reality tv stars’ reputations for understanding value to sell the “Chromebook is fake” premise.

Instead, Microsoft’s use of “Pawn Star” came across as gimmicky, scripted, and [using the wrong sort of experts](#) if they’re trying to sell a computer. So, when gathering third-party testimonies and anecdotes for your next advertising campaign, remember to consider the source and think about highlighting naturally occurring reviews before soliciting new ones.

Your advertising campaign should highlight what makes your private school and its mission the best possible place for parents to send their children. As School Head, *your* mission is to prevent your school’s campaign from getting “Scroogled.” But, if your school stays true to its roots and avoids bashing the competition, your marketing will give a one-two punch and deliver results.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 8 No. 4 [Your Secret Weapon for Re-recruitment: Your Faculty](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 35 No. 16 [The Head's Five Major Priorities](#)

I&P Vol. 35 No.14 [Assessing Your School's Internal Marketing](#)

Electives: What Should You Offer?

(32% of clicks)

Two weeks ago, ISM's [Deans e-List](#) buzzed with some questions on elective requirements and offerings. As you learn more about the talents of your students and faculty to prepare programs for the next academic year, now is the perfect time to consider adding dynamic new electives.

Beyond broadening academic options and providing specific instruction occasionally lacking in broader survey courses, new electives can greatly increase your private-independent school's public visibility and marketability to future families—especially when you consider that some schools have [decreased their elective offerings](#) since the economic downturn. Electives can also make content fresh and [renew student engagement](#), allowing you to fulfill your school's academic mission beyond your core curriculum.

At the same time, expanding your elective courses requires more thought than seeing one school offering yoga and wanting your own in-house guru. New electives should be mission-appropriate, fall within the capabilities of your school's resources, and not conflict with primary course configurations in the next academic year.

Mission Appropriateness

It's easy to envy other private-independent schools' elective course offerings. Who wouldn't enjoy special classes like those of Midland School's [Experiential Learning](#) program. Previous courses included ["Water: California's Liquid Gold,"](#) a class focused on water shortages in the arid Western United States, and ["Foal Training,"](#) an eight-week elective during which students trained colts and foals from local ranches.

But, Midland School is located in a rural, relatively undeveloped area; its [mission](#) is to "[teach] the value of ... self-reliance, simplicity, responsibility to community and the environment, and love for the outdoors." How appropriate for your school would similar programs be? If your school's mission focuses on training its students to tackle 21st century

career opportunities, an elective course in introductory computer programming may be more suitable.

Resource Availability

Midland School also used what was available to create unique and attractive elective courses. In the middle of ranch country, it forged partnerships with the locals to create courses that had immediate impact on participants.

When electives are planned this way, new ones don't necessarily require all-new faculty or facilities. An urban school with a vibrant art program might introduce its students to "[Artistic Vandalism](#)" as they observe the graffiti that surrounds them. Does your school already support a music program? [Sing at the local senior living center](#) and turn it into a volunteer experience to deepen your students' appreciation for the joy their work can bring to others.

Remember that offering a dramatically different elective outside your repertoire may require significant enhancements, like specialized meeting spaces (e.g., labs or stages) and new teachers with unique areas of expertise. Those sorts of upgrades will require financial support and driven dedication from your entire educational community, so begin your financial planning now for "dream" electives down the road.

Scheduling Availability

New electives will bring more heartache than joy if you fail to plan—and so plan to fail! Ensure that you set aside adequate meeting time specifically to address additional electives and how they may impact your schedule next fall. Not only will there be increased need for available meeting space, but also demands on teacher-mentors. If you plan to start a class on first aid and CPR training but there's only one certified instructor on staff, that will place demanding new priorities on your scheduler. If necessary, consider dropping older, less mission-appropriate electives to free up resources and faculty to adequately support new courses.

The Vice President and Dean of Admission and Financial Aid at St. Lawrence University, Jeff Rickey, says that [electives are important](#) as part of a holistic college admission process as they "hint about the student's interests and may validate other parts of the student's application." At the same time, Admission Officers consider electives *after* examining the rigor and grades of purely academic courses. This insight shows us that, while important, electives should not come at the cost of foundational subjects like science, language arts, and foreign languages.

Electives are a chance for private-independent schools and their students to customize their education to pursue mission-appropriate interests beyond the boundaries of a traditional core curriculum. With a thoughtful plan accounting for relevancy, resources, and scheduling concerns, your school can take its elective offerings to the next level.

For help crafting a schedule that teachers, students, and parents alike will benefit from, attend our **Scheduling Without Conflict** workshop in Stowe, Vermont, on June 22-28, 2014!

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 9 *Vertical Time Gives Students In-Depth Experience*

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 10 No. 3 *Speaking of Scheduling...*

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 4 *The Pressure on High School Students to Build Their Resume...Whose Best Interest Is It?*

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 34 No. 10 *Price, Product, Process: Competing Within Your Market Platform*

I&P Vol. 30 No. 1 *The Symptoms of a Toxic Schedule—And the Remedy*

I&P Vol. 33 No. 4 *Beyond Advanced Placement: Mission and Educational Excellence*

March 2014—Vol. 12 No. 7

(31.9% open; 13.1% click through as of July 15, 2014)

“Detoxing” Faculty Negativity

(56% of clicks)

Contract renewal season is here once again! For many of your faculty, it's a formality. Their classes are vibrant and exciting; their students are engaged and growing; their teaching methods blossom under your school's dedication to their professional development. You look forward to working with them for years to come. Some teachers, however, have not met your standards for retention. Keep reading for some common attributes and attitudes of toxic faculty and ways to mitigate the damage to your school and students.

The Gossiping Teacher

At first, this teacher may not seem to be a problem. He or she is beloved by students and parents alike, and seems to get along well with coworkers. But, sooner or later, he or she begins to discuss items better left unshared with parents, such as “unfair” compensation packages or the new, seemingly-unskilled Division Head.

Teacher gossip undermines the foundational sense of harmony and community your school strives to nurture for its students and faculty alike. Toxic teachers can cause rifts to open and sides to form on important issues, often developing opinions from incomplete information. Drawing teachers aside individually to calmly discuss their propensity for indiscretion may be all the correction that's required—they might not have realized they were doing it! Further incidents may require formal warnings and disciplinary actions.

The Lazy Teacher

Once upon a time, this teacher was filled with optimism, buoyed by the thought of teaching students in accordance with a mission he or she believed in. Years later, the teacher has grown disheartened. He or she no longer revamps lesson plans to make classes timely and engaging; does not contribute new ideas to fellow teachers; and skates through the year with the least effort possible, counting down the years to retirement.

The lazy teacher has checked out, in a manner of speaking, but all hope is not lost. There are many reasons why people start to “slip.” It could be a personal issue, a problem with your school's evaluation system, or he or she may feel overwhelmed and exhausted at the thought of trying something new. Try pairing teachers like these with more energetic mentors to inspire some fresh takes on their old plans. Creating formal professional goals and checking on his or her progress may spur the “lazy” teacher to new momentum.

The Disenfranchised Teacher

A step beyond mere laziness, disenfranchised teachers feel disillusioned with your school's educational or bureaucratic process. These faculty members may feel as though much has been promised—a revitalized curriculum, more or better facilities, fairer professional evaluations—but little has been delivered. They may feel abandoned by their administration, left adrift to struggle with no relief in sight. In their frustration, they take the saying “misery loves company” to a whole new level, leaving afflicted students and faculty in their wake.

These faculty members are clearly problematic. Through your evaluation process, you'll want to examine if their personal mission still pairs with yours. Before immediately dismissing the concerns of such faculty, it may serve them—and your school as a whole—to do some reflection on the current state of affairs. If you have several such teachers among your faculty, it may be time to review your goals and goal-setting processes. We can't stress enough how vital it is to have an updated evaluation system that propels professional development and helps enrich both your school and its staff.

You should quickly release any teacher who cannot fulfill your school's mission, especially if that teacher proves to be a danger to the students for whom he or she is responsible. There should be no room on your staff for lazy, divisive, or angry people. The well-being of your students—educational, psychological, and physical—is your top priority, and these teachers could damage all three.

By fairly evaluating and supporting all your teachers, you will create a stronger school culture that will help insulate itself against toxic teachers and negative attitudes.

For help devising and implementing a fair faculty evaluation and retention practice, check out ISM's [Comprehensive Faculty Development](#) from our [Bookstore](#). Designed to be an all-in-one guide for the private-independent school administrator, *CFD* follows the life cycle of a teacher at your school, from hiring and induction to professional development and retention strategies.

For hands-on direction for your school, come join ISM's expert Consultants in Stowe, Vermont, or Salt Lake City, Utah, for the latest faculty management theory at our [Summer Institute](#) in the [Teaching for Excellence II](#) and [Comprehensive Faculty Development](#) workshops.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 8 No. 2 [The Recipe to Prevent Teachers From Becoming Toxic](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 7 No. 9 [Make Your Faculty Evaluation Meaningful](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 11 No. 6 [Rebuilding Working Relationships](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 37 No. 2 [Aegis Academy Faculty Evaluation Sample](#)

I&P Vol. 37 No. 1 [Systematically Attracting, Developing, Rewarding, and Retaining Faculty: A Mission-Based Model for 21st Century Schools](#)

I&P Vol. 33 No. 10 [Characteristics of Professional Excellence: Faculty Interviews](#)

Office “Hacks” for School Heads

(31% of clicks)

“Life hacks”—or innovations to make your life easier in unexpected and original ways—are inventions of the Information Age. If you’d like some modern tips and tricks to reorganize your cluttered workspace and improve your office efficiency, read on.

- **Paint fingernail polish on your keys.** Starting off our list, this particular ‘hack is a reinvention with an Information Age twist. For those of us with many keys—all of which look the same in early morning light—[painting your keys](#) with nail polish is a quick and cheap way to tell which one’s your office key and which unlocks the theater prop room. You could also look into “[key covers](#)”—little plastic caps that come in all different colors and designs to fit your sense of style.
- **Label binder clips to sort paperwork.** Folders are all well and good, but sometimes you’re in too much of a rush to deal with them. [Label binder clips](#) so you can tell at a glance which forms have been completed and which ones still need signatures.
- **Use extra binder clips to tame cables and cords.** Clipped to your desk, you can use the [silver “handles” to thread the cables](#) of your desktop electronics to keep the different cords under control. Twist ties from grocery store bread bags or zip ties work well for this, too.
- **Open supplies in heavy plastic wrappings with a manual can-opener.** Instead of wrestling with your scissors to open the plastic packaging of a new flash drive, dedicate a [cheap manual can opener to cut open packages](#) like these, saving you time *and* shredded fingers. Check out [this video](#) if you’d like to see how to do it for yourself.
- **Include non-English letters and characters in your computer passwords.** To increase your security, go beyond the traditional alphabet and special characters [to add tildes, umlauts, and other accent marks](#)! A little notebook containing your passwords—especially for programs you don’t use often—will save you time resetting your access information every time to go to log on. (Be careful—store this notebook in a secure location!)

- **Install a magazine rack as a corner shelf for extra room.** With a drill and some screws, you'll have a creative ["catch all shelf"](#) utilizing space you never realized you had. This method won't work with a plastic magazine holder—besides, the wooden ones look more professional. Want more ideas? Search ["bookcase"](#) or ["office space ideas"](#) on Pinterest.
- **"Touch everything only once."** This hack involves a new philosophy more than a gadget or DIY project. Coming from a former personal assistant, she explains that you should [touch every piece of paperwork only once](#) so that "nothing gets put on a to-do pile that never gets to-done." This suggestion may be the most difficult on this list for a busy School Head like yourself to pull off, but it'll save you headaches in the long run.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Trustees Vol. 10 No. 1 [E-mail Wrangling](#)

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 3 [De-stressing in the Office](#)

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 2 [Keeping Your Work Space Organized](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 26 No. 7 [Define and Prioritize the Head's Major Tasks](#)

April 2014—Vol. 12 No. 8

(28.6% open; 8.4% click through as of July 15, 2014)

The Tale of a Tooth: A Principal Plays Tooth Fairy

(17% of clicks)

Sometimes it's the smallest things you can do that make the biggest impact on your students, and this is certainly true for a young lady at James Hill Elementary School [as reported by the Huffington Post](#). Having lost her tooth during recess, third-grader Avery Patchett was upset that the tooth fairy wouldn't see her baby tooth.

Instead of dismissing her worries as childish, Principal Chris Wejr reassured her that he would contact the tooth fairy personally to explain the situation and sent her home the following letter, printed on school letterhead:

"Dear Tooth Fairy,

It has been a while since you received a letter from me so I hope you are well.

Avery lost her tooth on Wednesday, April 9, 2014 at our school. She placed it in her tooth necklace but went outside and tripped on the steps and lost the tooth.

She is very upset so I told her that I had written a letter to you before and you accepted this in place of the tooth. If you could please accept this letter under her pillow and leave her a gift for her lost tooth, we would really appreciate it.

Thank you for all your help with this.

Happy flying!

Regards, Mr. C. Wejr (on behalf of Avery)"

Avery's mom, Debbie Patchett, remarked on how the "kind and compassionate gesture" turned a potentially sad moment into "a wonderful memory." The Principal himself explained the letter by saying that "what is small to us may be huge to a child, so it's important to stay in the moment and give children the care they need. We need to model kindness and show them they matter."

What was the pay off of Principal Wejr's efforts? \$5 of tooth fairy money left under Avery's pillow that night.

All of us lead busy and hectic lives, and that of a School Head is more chaotic than most. Still, by taking the time out of our daily routine to do something kind—no matter how small or seemingly insignificant—we can make a difference in the life of another person.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 11 No. 4 [Kids' Random Acts of Kindness](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 30 No. 2 [Student Culture Profile](#)

Everything but the Kitchen Sink: Five Common Job Posting Mistakes

(42% of clicks) ***Please note that ISM Career Corner is now defunct.***

Writing an online job posting for an open position can be a real struggle. There's a delicate balance to strike between honeyed words to attract suitable candidates and brutal honesty about the work your school needs done. Here, then, are some common mistakes private-independent schools make when submitting job advertisements for [ISM's Career Corner](#).

1. Using templates

If you've never written a job posting before or you think your current phrasing needs an update, using online templates can seem like a simple, quick fix to a potentially complicated and time-consuming problem of writing the whole post by hand. General templates for intricate, highly personalized written items like resumes, cover letters, and—yes—job postings are a bad idea and can get you into trouble in a hurry.

At the root of the issue is your school's unique approach to education. No two private schools are alike, so they shouldn't be looking for candidates in the same way. Templates encourage generic, cookie-cutter descriptions and fill-in-the-blank style writing, none of which is tempting to prospective applicants.

And what happens if the template's language is counter to your school's mission or philosophy, and you forget to adjust it before submitting it online? For example, notices of nondiscrimination if not vetted by the Board and school's legal counsel can get a school into hot water.

One ex-Principal in Seattle has filed a [wrongful-dismissal suit](#) against his former Catholic school over just such an issue. He says that the school had antidiscrimination phrasing in the handbook and online during the hiring process that forbid discrimination based on his sexual orientation. Later, the Principal was fired for marrying his same-sex partner, which goes against Catholic teaching.

It remains to be seen how the court will settle this case, but it reminds us all that care must be taken with what the school says in job postings and other documents. Templates are an easy way to tumble into this particular minefield.

Recommendation:

Write your own job postings and don't rely on a template you find on the Internet, from a listserv, or even loaned from a friend at a neighboring school. Sure, they can be a starting point for your own posting, but should not be used exactly as-is. A good outline for a job posting can be:

- a brief sentence summary of the job and the school at the start;
- a paragraph explaining the job and general requirements;
- a bulleted list containing three to five required qualifications (and a small list of "preferred" qualifications, if necessary);
- a summarized mission statement of the school (see Point 2); and

- instructions on "next steps" for interested applicants (see Point 4).

2. Rambling mission statements and job requirements

With no real page or character restrictions imposed by online job boards, school-employers can go hog-wild with the blank canvas. Freed from print limitations, those writing job ads may throw every scrap of mission statement, school achievements, and every dream qualification into their ads, the thought being more is better!"

This mind-set means that the core of your school's mission and the important requirements for your desired applicant are buried beneath tons of trimmable content. Your ad needs to be a lean, targeted statement about what kind of person you need and what kind of a place an applicant can expect to find.

Job seekers [spend only 76 seconds on average](#) looking at a posting to see if they fit the qualifications. That's not nearly enough time to digest your school's entire history from conception, let alone the job requirements. You'll be deluged by unqualified applicants or—worse—receive far fewer resumes overall, which could lead to a rushed and hasty hiring decision.

Recommendation:

Reduce your mission statement to a sentence or two of about 30 words that gets to the core of your school's philosophy and culture (see [Ideas & Perspectives Vol. 38 No. 6](#), available for Gold Consortium members) with a link to the appropriate Web page if they'd like to know more. Trim your job requirements to four or five "necessary" qualifications you need from an applicant, rather than posting your dream list of "nice to have" skills in its entirety.

3. Omission of physical contact information and other details

The converse of the "everything but the kitchen sink" problem, a Spartan job posting focusing on the bare essentials of the job requirement can leave out important information. A poor applicant could be a perfect match to this type of posting, but live on the other side of the country or be unaware of potential philosophical conflicts.

Recommendation:

Put important school information near the end of the post, including its location and contact information for a point person in case technical or general questions arise.

4. Missing or unclear instructions

So you've crafted a beautiful job ad designed to entice available, qualified prospects to apply. It's perfect, except you've forgotten one thing: what candidates should do next. It seems obvious, but you'd be surprised at the number of ads that appear without instructions on how and where to apply.

Should they send emails to the School Head, Business Manager, HR Director, or some other person? Do you require cover letters? What materials should be included in their submissions? What should they leave out? Should the documents arrive as PDFs or Word documents? If you're using a search firm, how do they contact the appropriate party? All schools run their searches differently, so assuming interested candidates will use "common sense" for the next step can be dangerous.

Recommendation:

Take a sentence or two to clearly explain the next steps of the process, including what materials you want included, how submissions should be formatted, and who will receive them. If you direct them to a specific page or website, include that link. If you use a search

firm to help find candidates and are using their portal, include that link and make sure the language between the two postings are consistent (e.g., stating a bachelor's degree as a requirement on one site and leaving it out on another).

5. Not paying attention to job board rules and recommendations

Our last point is simple and, well, to the point: Read the rules! All job boards have specific rules to be followed and forms to be completed, as well as recommendations for post lengths and other pointers. Some host employer profiles that add support to a posting, while others have regulations on how long postings can remain active. By playing by the rules of a particular online board, you may find better responses to your job posting than you may otherwise receive.

Also consider the websites you use for each search. Do more administrators use this site, or are there more calls for teachers? Is this site specifically targeted toward private-independent school use, or is it more general? If you're not getting enough or the right sort of applicants, you may have a great job post placed on the wrong site.

Recommendation:

Read through a job board's rules and recommendations while composing your post. Also look at other postings in the board and see how (and what sort) of positions other schools advertise on this board.

Finding qualified, enthusiastic people to apply to your online job postings can feel like an uphill battle. Remembering to write clearly about the job's requirements, your school's mission, and what the next steps are can put you well on the way to a successful search!

If you're beginning a search for your private-independent school, [ISM's Career Corner](#) can provide a targeted, easy-to-use platform for job postings from School Heads to faculty. [Visit our website](#) for more details on how to format and submit a job posting for the Career Corner.

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 10 No. 2 [Five Questions to Ask Yourself When Advertising Open Positions](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 8 No. 5 [Ask Michael: Open Administrative Roles and Faculty Applicants](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Trustees Vol. 11 No. 3 [Who Best 'Fits' the Role of the Interim Head?](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 38 No. 6 [Solutions for Your Wandering Mission Statement](#)

I&P Vol. 27 No. 5 [Financial Questions the Search Committee Should Ask Head Candidates](#)

I&P Vol. 36 No. 13 [Ease the Transition for the Incoming Head](#)

May 2014—Vol. 12 No. 9

(31.1% open; 6.2% click through as of July 15, 2014)

Attracting Exceptional Teachers

(27% of clicks)

As we inch closer to graduation, we start to think about what graduates will do as young adults entering the “real world.” If a recent study by [centrist think tank Third Way](#) is right, few of our highest achievers consider teaching as a personal career goal.

[In a paper released last month](#), Third Way announced that only 17% of high-achieving undergraduates—that is, [those with a GPA of 3.3 or higher](#)—would be “very interested” in becoming a K-12 teacher. Such a low interest rate may be due to the education profession’s “major image problem,” as Third Way put it. Half (50%) of respondents consider teaching to be “less prestigious” than other jobs. Worse, education was listed as *the number one profession for “average” people*, rather than high-achievers like themselves.

While a number of factors have contributed to the decline of teaching’s prestige in the professional realm, Third Way argues that the conversation to repair the educational system has been misdirected:

Although the last decade of reforms made strides in ushering in a new era of teacher *accountability*, these have done comparatively little to improve teacher *professionalization*. All too often, the conversation centered primarily on getting rid of the bad teachers, further perpetuating a negative image of the profession.

While the public education sector has its own problems to work through—state-mandated testing, government interference, unions, and the like—Third Way’s report presents private schools with a unique opportunity to take a look at their own faculty paradigms. Is your program focused on the negative or the positive? Is your attention on ridding your school of troublesome teachers or on hiring (and retaining!) inspirational, top-talent faculty?

If your philosophy follows the latter—teaching and retention versus degrading and firing—then you’re in for a tough road. You can’t afford to hire mediocrity, even if it’s the “best of the average” available, as the Millennials seem to think in the Third Way study. But how do you attract the *crème de la crème* of talent to a profession they see as average instead of exceptional?

Our research publication *Ideas and Perspectives* has [discussed this issue before](#), and Third Way’s five methods of disrupting the traditional professional development models echo *I&P*’s findings. Two of Third Way’s proposed adjustments should resonate with private-independent school administrators: Setting high bars for teacher performance/certification and increased compensation standards.

(A note on compensation: While Third Way’s study specifically mentions increased pay to attract teachers, there are other ways to provide fair compensation to teachers beyond shelling out more money. Try alternative compensation methods like greater professional development opportunities or better health care options and see if those don’t make a difference.)

Compensation and setting professional goals must not occur in isolation. Both are only part of a broader "battle plan" for hiring and keeping great teachers. If your school becomes known for attracting and retaining exceptional talent, consider this folk truism: "Birds of a feather flock together." When you have great people on staff, others may follow.

To learn more about what it takes to hire, train, evaluate, and retain exceptional teachers, enroll in ISM's [Comprehensive Faculty Development: From Recruitment to Evaluation to Retention](#) workshop at our [Summer Institute](#) in Stowe, Vermont! Led by veteran ISM Consultant Terry Moore, *CFD* will teach you the theory behind revolutionary teacher-training techniques, as well as give you a battle plan to execute when you return home.

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 13 No. 1 [Stereotypes of Generation Y and—Ooh, Shiny!](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 6 No. 8 [The New Generation of Teachers and Personnel](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Business Managers Vol. 12 No. 1 [Employee Benefits You Might Not Think of as Benefits](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 12 No. 8 [Everything but the Kitchen Sink: Five Common Job Posting Mistakes](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 36 No. 14 [Generation Differences: The New Management Paradigm](#)

I&P Vol. 33 No. 7 [Compensation, Broadbanding, and Teacher Impact](#)

I&P Vol. 37 No. 1 [Systematically Attracting, Developing, Rewarding, and Retaining Faculty: A Mission-Based Model for 21st Century Schools](#)

I&P Vol. 34 No. 15 [Why the Worst \(and Best\) Teachers Matter](#)

I&P Vol. 33 No. 3 [Faculty Recruitment: Teacher Quality vs. Quantity](#)

“Introducing...New Teachers!”

(42% of clicks)

With the spring hiring frenzy in your rearview mirror, it's time to start thinking about introductions and orientations for your newest employees! New teachers should feel welcome not just in faculty lounges, but in the larger school community, too.

Welcome to the Team!

As School Head, ensure your private-independent school's induction process is yearlong. Of course, you can begin with a new teachers' orientation—a meeting, team-building exercises, or other “traditional” integration event—but induction goes further than this initial event.

Such an extended induction process for new hires helps teach your school's mission, educational philosophy, and overall professional culture to all new teachers. They can be guided by “mentors,” senior teachers who understand the challenges faced in classrooms and can provide practical examples of “living out” professional goals and dreams.

For example, your school might be working to integrate more technology into the classroom. A mentoring history teacher could demonstrate how he/she has done this in his/her classroom, showing how government classes followed political campaigns via Twitter

hashtags and watched full debates on YouTube to discuss the importance of context when viewing 30-second sound bytes on newscasts.

Remember, *induction does not end with orientation or the assignment of a mentor teacher*. As School Head, keeping open lines of communication with all your staff and faculty is vital, but it's especially important for new teachers. Make time for periodic, informal check-ins to see how new teachers are holding up and communicate frequently with your Division Head about transitions.

So that's as far as you could help in the school itself, but how can you help new teachers introduce themselves to students and parents?

Welcome to the Community!

Why not make a video to introduce the new teachers to your full community? Posted to YouTube and other social media sites, you can give incoming teachers a chance to share their thoughts and philosophies with families, making the first day of classes less scary for everyone involved. Check out this video by Highland Park in which teachers and staff talk about Highland's orientation program to family and friends.

If you'd rather try something a little bit less time-intensive, publish bios of new teachers—including pictures!—in the community newsletter. Maybe you could have these blurbs featured on a special “new teacher” page of your website, [like Grace School](#) did for its primary, lower, middle, and specialty teachers.

And, if your community is especially welcoming and generous, you could organize some sort of small class gift for the new teacher from the incoming students, to be presented on the first day of school. Mrs. Gibson must've had a lovely first day of school, after students and parents put together their [ideas for a welcome gift for this teacher on a shared Pinterest board](#).

So take some time this month to brainstorm how you can make your newest hires feel welcomed and ready to meet their educational challenges this fall!

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 13 No. 2 [Why Teachers Quit](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Human Resources Vol. 9 No. 9 [Are You a Reluctant \(or Unwilling\) Mentor?](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 12 No. 2 [Conversation as Evaluation](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

Research: [New Teacher Induction Programs](#)

I&P Vol. 37 No. 13 [Teacher Induction That Supports and Inspires](#)

I&P Vol. No. 35 No. 16 [New Faculty and Your School's Purpose and Outcome Statements](#)

June 2014—Vol. 12 No. 10

(30.2% opens; 10.6% clicked through as of July 15, 2014)

Summer Reading for School Heads: Recommended Books and Webinars

(69% of clicks)

A School Head's job is never done—even if students and teachers have abandoned their classrooms to frolic in the summer sun. Still, there's surely some time to revitalize old strategies and develop new ones! So kick back, relax, and read one of these books we've collected specifically for School Heads. And—once you're done—download one of our prerecorded Webinars for some professional development in the comfort of your office.

[Why Don't Students Like School: A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How the Mind Works and What It Means for the Classroom](#)

by *Daniel T. Willingham, PhD*

As a cognitive scientist, Willingham understands the importance of research implications—and how to apply those findings to practical uses. In *Why Don't Students Like School*, he explores the biological and cognitive reasons for effective teaching strategies. If you're looking for a straight forward, clear, supported perspective on your current strategies both and out of in the classroom—as well as different perspectives on popular educational theories like teaching for “multiple intelligences”—*Why Don't Students Like School* is your answer.

Recommended ISM Webinar: [Student-Centered Teaching and Leading: What Does It Look Like?](#) with Barbara Beachley

[Donor-Centered Leadership](#)

by *Penelope Burk*

Let's talk about faculty and staff turnover for a second. It's clearly not a good thing—high turnover rates cost the school morale and money—but how can you stop it? By being a leader others trust and are willing to follow, that's how. In *Donor-Centered Leadership*, development guru Penelope Burk describes ways to stem the tide of staff attrition while retaining the people you need to keep your school happy, healthy, and thriving.

Recommended ISM Webinar: [Develop Your Faculty \(From Hiring to Retirement\)](#) with Michael Brisciana, SPHR

[Requisite Organization: A Total System for Effective Managerial Organization and Managerial Leadership for the 21st Century](#)

by *Elliot Jaques*

With publicized protests like “Occupy Wall Street” determined to vilify the government, the wealthy, and “The Man,” it can be all too easy to rail against the bureaucracy and blame it for all our problems. But, as Jacques points out, a ranking system or hierarchy has been established since the dawn of civilization and are prevalent in every group from top

corporations to your private school. If they're the root of all evil, why do they still exist in the 21st century? Jacques argues it's because hierarchies work—they're a natural organization preventing groups from dissolving into anarchical chaos, and can be leveraged to achieve efficiency, employee satisfaction, and institutional (read: mission) goals. Learn how to put your hierarchy to good use after reading *Requisite Organization*.

Recommended ISM Webinar: [The 10 Rules of a Successful Meeting](#) with Simon M. Jaynes, IAP-L

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 12 No. 10 [Summer Reading for the Admission Office: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 12 No. 10 [Summer Reading for the Development Office: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 5 [Must-Reads for Division Heads in 2014](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 31 No. 7 [Faculty Autonomy and Collegiality: A Leadership/Management Challenge](#)

I&P Vol. 34 No. 4 [Another Way of Looking at Retention](#)

Prescription Drug Abuse Is (Still) a Problem in Private Schools

(8% of clicks)

Two years ago, we published an article on prescription drug abuse in private schools. We reported that medicine prescribed to treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was being misused by high-performing students—not to get high, but rather to focus on schoolwork and manage their heavy workloads.

Now it's 2014, and prescription drugs are still reported as a major problem for our best and brightest students.

Students with ADHD have difficulty concentrating on specific tasks for any length of time, and stimulants like Ritalin or Adderall help patients improve their focus by calming them. That said, what calms down ADHD patients will “hype up” ordinary students. When students feel pressured to the point where they feel they can no longer cope with schoolwork, some turn to [stimulants like prescription ADHD drugs as study aids](#).

ADHD medication is labeled by the U.S. government as [Schedule II controlled substance](#), which indicates a “medicine that is very habit-forming or very likely to be abused.” Indeed, [Adderall is an amphetamine](#), a chemical also found in illegal drugs like MDMA (ecstasy) and methamphetamine. According to an official [“highlights of prescribing information”](#) for consumers of Adderall XR, side effects can include:

- insomnia;
- nervousness;
- weight loss;
- “serious cardiovascular events” like strokes and myocardial infarction (heart attacks);

- seizures; and
- “psychiatric adverse events,” with warnings that “psychotic or manic symptoms” can occur in patients with “no prior history” and to “monitor” patients “for aggressive behavior.”

ADHD medications are not the only drugs abused by private school teens. Jeff Wolfsberg, international expert in adolescent health and drug education, says that the rate of marijuana and alcohol abuse in private schools is [“on par”](#) with that of public schools. Other research by Professor Suniya Luthar of Columbia University suggests that some high-performing private-school students [“self-medicate” their clinical depression, anxiety, and eating disorders aggravated by “achievement pressure.”](#)

The [CRC Health Group](#) has put together an infographic about prescription drug abuse with some common-sense reminders you can share with parents on your social media accounts or embed on your own website.

Additionally, be aware of student stress level and emotional well-being. Increased academic pressure can cause students to “crack” and compensate decreased personal ability with artificial enhancers such as prescription ADHD medications. Train teachers to identify students suffering from common psychological issues like depression and anxiety. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) [recommends](#) the following noninvasive strategies for teachers to help depressed students cope with their academic responsibilities—without turning to prescription drug abuse.

- Give frequent feedback on student performance, including academic, social, and behavioral.
- Teach students to set goals and self-monitor, including ways to organize, plan, and execute regularly scheduled school tasks (recurring homework, club responsibilities, etc.).
- Encourage students to interact with others.
- If necessary, establish strong communication with families of especially troubled students to inform parents of fluctuations in students’ academic, social, and emotional behavior.

While evaluating your school policies this summer, take a second look at those on the prevention and treatment of prescription drug abuse within your student body. When this fall rolls around, you might be very glad that you did.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 10 No. 10 [Kids Pushing Too Hard? Prescription Stimulants Abuse in Private Schools](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 12 No. 5 [Marijuana: A Legal Drug on Campus](#)

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 1 [Scaring the Trouble Out of Troubled Teens](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 29 No. 6 [Random Drug Testing Policies for Students](#)

I&P Vol. 38 No. 14 [The Benefits of Schedule Design Change](#)

Business Officers

April 2014—Vol. 12 No. 8

(29.1% open; 6.5% click through as of July 16, 2014)

Policy Planning for Social Media Meltdowns

(18% of clicks)

As more and more members of your private-independent school take their marketing and recruitment efforts into the digital world, there's an increased risk for your school to fall prey to bad tweets or posts. We've covered numerous social media stories over the years, as well as shared a social media policy template. Today, let's take a look at some recent social media mistakes in the Twitterverse and see how your school's current social media policy should take these potential disasters into account.

Know Who Uses the School's Account and How

Comedian Stephen Colbert found himself at the center of a [#CancelColbert hashtag party](#) when a racist tweet aired from his television show's official Twitter account.

The tweet riffed [off of a skit](#) done on "The Colbert Report" that poked fun at the Washington Redskins owner Dan Snyder, who recently announced the founding of [an organization to help Native Americans](#). The organization was created to alleviate fan backlash from the football team's potentially insensitive name.

Colbert's initial [response](#) was to deny responsibility for the tweet. His show's official Twitter account [@ColbertReport](#) was not run by him or anyone else on The Colbert Report's staff. The account was run by the parent channel, Comedy Central.

Later, in a grand display of apology, Colbert dramatically and publicly [deleted the @ColbertReport account](#), proclaiming that the only Twitter account to be officially from him would be his personal one, [@StephenAtHome](#), of which he has complete control.

The lessons:

1.) The brevity of social media messages means that the potential for posts to be taken out of context and potentially insulting is increased. As Colbert himself says sarcastically, "Who would've thought [that] a means of communication limited to 140 characters would ever create misunderstandings?"

Keeping this in mind, your school's social media policy should address what kinds of messages your school wants to promote, being aware that attempts to be witty or humorous could backfire. (That's not to say you shouldn't be entertaining on your social media networks, but you should be careful about potentially sensitive subjects.)

2.) Think twice about outsourcing your school's social media marketing efforts to third parties who may not completely understand your school's mission, or even give access to any administrator who asks to contribute. Your school's social media efforts are the face of the school in a very public way with a potentially far-reaching audience. You need to be able

to regulate what gets said about your school from its own pages, and the more people who have access to the account, the more opportunity there is for mistakes to be made.

Knowing that, your school's policy should dictate exactly who has access to official social media accounts. No matter who gets the keys to the kingdom, the list of authorized personnel should be written down in the official school policy to mitigate potential social media disasters.

Know How to Use the Site!

Have you heard about U.S. Airways's inappropriate tweet to disgruntled customers? Flyers took to Twitter to complain about delayed flights. A miscellaneous U.S. Airways employee [responded with a TwitPic](#) that within 22 minutes sparked a huge response from users and resulted in multiple apologies from the airline. (U.S. Airways's social media manager has certainly "[seen better days.](#)")

The airline's claims the gaffe was an "honest mistake," as the spokeswoman [explains](#): "It was in an attempt to flag the tweet as inappropriate...unfortunately, the image was inadvertently included" in a response to the annoyed customers' tweets.

The lesson:

It is [human to err](#), so it's likely that sooner or later, someone will post something they shouldn't. Ways to mitigate the potential for widespread damage include:

- Ensuring those with access to the school's official social media accounts know how to use the site completely, including making posts, flagging inappropriate material; and
- Responding quickly to public complaints or questions, even if that means directing them to the school's general website or FAQ page.

With some basic precautions, your school can tweet in peace, knowing that a social media firestorm can be—for the most part—averted.

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 2 [Managing Your School's Social Media](#)

Private School News Vol. 9 No. 5 [Social Media: Weighing the Risks](#)

Private School News Vol. 12 No. 9 [Forget Diamonds—Social Media Mistakes Are Forever](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 35 No. 1 [Faculty and Staff Use of Social Media: Sample Policy](#)

May 2014—Vol. 12 No. 9

(27.7% open; 6.9% click through as of July 16, 2014)

Saving Money at the Office Printer

(19% of clicks)

Strange, but possible, especially when you consider that the average U.S. office worker accounts for [two pounds of paper](#) and paperboard products every day. That's the average *employee* in any industry—can you imagine how much more your faculty and other administrators print to keep up with a school full of students? Letters to parents, worksheets, and memos can add up, so check out some of these tips to save on printing in your school.

- **Print double-sided rather than single.** An especially good tip when you're printing packets, double-sided or "duplex" printing is a tried-and-true method to cut your printing expenses by 50%. Quick reminder if your printer doesn't have an automatic double-sided setting: Print the odd pages first, put the paper in face-up in the feeder tray, and then print the even ones.
- **Shrink your font size and decrease your margins.** If everyone's eyes can handle smaller font and more text on a page, it's an easy way to cut back on the number of pages people print. (Interestingly, [some research](#) points to fifth graders performing better on reading comprehension when reading smaller font sizes.)
- **Use Garamond font.** It's not your standard Times New Roman and it's a little less full than other typical fonts like Arial or Helvetica, but its thinner strokes mean less ink used in printing. In fact, [14-year-old Suvir Mirchandani](#) found that his school district could reduce its printer ink consumption by 24% and save as much as \$21,000 a year.
- **Watch what pages get printed.** If you only want the Internet article but not the two hundred comments attached, take a few extra seconds to tell the computer *exactly* how many pages you want printed instead of "printing all." It's amazing how often two pages would do rather than that extra page with the URL and banner ads at the bottom. Adobe Acrobat PDF readers have a feature that won't print blank pages—especially useful if you just want the information and not a "book" format.
- **Black and white versus color.** Have you ever looked at how much your ink costs? According to Consumer Reports, [good quality ink costs more \(per ounce\) than Chanel No. 5 perfume](#)—and colored ink costs more than black. With that in mind, how often do you need to print in color? Could you print on colored paper instead? Changing your printing defaults to "grayscale" instead of color can save a lot of money.

Besides the environmental benefits of using less paper, being conscious of your school's printer habits can save your school green of another kind. What policies has your school adopted to reduce general day-to-day expenses? Share with other readers in the comment section below.

Additional ISM resources:

Private School News Vol. 8 No. 5 [Letting Go of Your Office PC](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Business Officers Vol. 11 No. 1 [Green Corner: Back-To-School Green Tips](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 37 No. 8 [Strategic Financial Planning and Your School's Budget: Companion](#)

Let's Talk About Ticks

(19% of clicks)

With lengthening daylight and warmer temperatures, kids are eager to play outside on playgrounds and in organized sports on broad, grassy fields. But what if those fields hide creatures that could harm your students? What if they're harboring tiny, blood-sucking parasites?

Welcome to May, everyone—it's tick season.

Ticks are not dangerous in and of themselves. The little arachnids are as aggravating as mosquitos: they both suck a little blood from the host, fall off, lay eggs, and continue their respective life cycles. No, the real concern lies in the diseases a tick can carry—while it's taking a few drops of blood, it may also infect the host with a crippling illness like Lyme disease.

According to [WebMD](#), a child may be suffering from Lyme disease if he/she has the following symptoms:

- **erythma migrans**, a rash occurring in 70%–80% of cases that can form a bull's-eye ring around the site of the tick's bite;
- **flu-like symptoms**, including headaches, fever, and fatigue;
- **arthritis**;
- **neurological issues**, including migraines, poor coordination, memory loss, and difficulty concentrating; and
- occasionally **heart problems** and **eye inflammation**.

Lyme disease cases seem to be on the rise. Minnesota's Department of Health says that there was a [57% jump in Lyme disease cases](#) from 2012 to 2013 (from 912 cases to 1,431 cases). Overall, the United States racked up [over 22,000 confirmed cases of Lyme disease in 2012](#) as reported by the Center for Disease Control (CDC)—with another 8,000 incidents marked as “probable” cases from potential false-positive test results on top of that. Furthermore, experts believe this winter's heavy snows have better insulated ticks from the cold, [increasing this summer's tick population](#).

How do you best protect your students from ticks?

First, check to see if your school's campus is situated in a high-risk zone. The CDC says that 95% of all Lyme disease cases in 2012 were [reported from 13 states](#), mostly confined to the Northeast and upper Midwest sections of the country. The threat is most serious in these locations, but your school could still be at risk in other parts of the U.S.

According to the University of Rhode Island's *TickEncounter Resource Center*, [ticks prefer wooded areas](#)—places with leaves and shade. By keeping your borders trimmed and removing piles of dead leaves, you reduce the risk of harboring ticks in your places of outdoor play and study.

It stands to reason, then, that the closely trimmed grass of athletic fields, playgrounds, and lawns [should not require massive treatments](#) to prevent ticks. Only where play areas border tall grass or wooded areas should further action be taken to mitigate the risk of tick exposure. There are chemical insecticides available—like permethrin, cyfluthrin, and carbaryl, [recommended by the University of Minnesota](#)—that can help your campus reduce risks.

Or, you may prefer to use a “greener” alternative around children, like [food-grade diatomaceous earth \(DE\)](#). If you spread DE on the borders of your outdoor play spaces, the fine powder will cut through the ticks' exoskeletons and kill both the adults and larvae. (This technique also works on fleas and other “hard shell” pests.)

Despite your best efforts, someone will occasionally return from a day spent outside carrying a tiny eight-legged passenger. Make sure that everyone does a thorough check of their bodies when changing clothes at the end of the day and—if a tick is found—that it is removed promptly and completely. It usually takes [at least 24 hours for a tick to transfer the Lyme disease vector](#) to a host after the initial bite, according to the CDC.

Identification of different tick species is helpful, too. [Deer ticks](#) are tiny—think smaller than a pin head—but they're the main vector for most human cases of Lyme disease. [Wood ticks](#) (also known as American dog ticks) are also miniscule and mottled in color; these are responsible for [Rocky Mountain spotted fever](#) and some cases of tick paralysis. If you're in Europe, watch out for the [castor bean tick](#) with comparatively long legs—it can give hosts [Helvetica spotted fever](#) and other diseases, too.

Regardless of the tick type, all parasites should be promptly removed once discovered. Check out the video below for a step-by-step guide in removing these potentially dangerous parasites, and have a fantastic summer season!

Whether you're new to facilities management or want to learn new ways to keep your school's campus picture-perfect for tours and safe for all, consider attending ISM's workshop [The Well-Kept Campus: Strategies for the Facilities Manager](#) in Stowe, Vermont. As part of our [Summer Institute](#), you'll participate in practical discussions and leave with battle plans for both day-to-day and long-term facility management goals.

Additional ISM resources:

Research: [IPM Standards for Schools Tactics and Resources for Reducing Pest and Pesticide Risks in Schools and Other Sensitive Environments](#)
Private School News Vol. 8 No. 7 [Pesticides on Your Floors?](#)
ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 9 No. 6 [Bedbug "Epidemic" Means Schools Have to Be Ready](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 36 No. 13 [Green Strategies for Pest Control](#)
I&P Vol. 38 No. 4 [Your School's Summer Program and Risk Management](#)
I&P Vol. 26 No. 12 [Stability Markers: A Checklist for the Comprehensive Long Range Property/Facilities Plan](#)

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(28.1% open; 6.9% click through as of July 16, 2014)

Summer Reading for Business Managers: Recommended Books and Webinars

(35% of clicks)

Summer can be a peaceful time at school—while everyone's out of the building, you're able to complete loud facility upgrades and examine policies in peace. But, that's no reason not to take a few moments and rejuvenate your mind with a great book! So keep reading (see what we did there?) for some recommended books and webinars to help you discover and implement great strategies this next school year.

[The Language of School Design: Design Patterns for 21st Century Schools \(3rd Edition\)](#)

by *Prakash Nair & Randall Fielding*

If your school is looking to renovate old buildings or break ground on new ones, crack open Nair and Fielding's *The Language of School Design* for innovative ideas on how a building's structural features and flow can affect educational processes. The benefit of this book on modern school buildings is twofold: it's a reviewer-professed "beach read," so it's not filled with complicated engineering jargon that can stymie similar books, and its concepts can be adapted to both new structures and evaluating current ones.

[Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything](#)

by *Stephen D. Levitt & Stephen Dubner*

Have you ever wondered what teachers and wrestlers have in common? Right, we thought not, but economist Levitt has. By using random, seemingly unrelated stories and interesting anecdotes, Levitt uses these questions to explain economics in a way that's fascinating while touching on broader themes like the origins of human morality or justice. If you're looking for a book that makes you change the way you view the world, *Freakonomics* is for you.

[David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants](#)

by *Malcolm Gladwell*

It's a common story: The disadvantaged small challenger faces down the mightier, stronger power—and wins. The story of David and Goliath inspires us to face our own "giants" and impossible odds, but what if there was more to the story? What if the obstacles themselves were what empowered—rather than obstructed—the later success? In this book, Gladwell redirects the paradigm of the underdog to show us how to turn barriers into bridges. Of particular interest is the section on how a school's quality affects its students, but every story in the book packs its own punch to show how what doesn't kill you can truly make you stronger.

Recommended ISM Webinars:

[The Many Hats of the Business Officer](#) with Martin Kelly

[The 10 Rules of a Successful Meeting](#) with Simon M. Jaynes, IAP-L

[Managing Your Summer Program Risk](#) with Martin Kelly

[Reducing Your Technology Risk](#) with Martin Kelly

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Monthly Update for Admission Officers Vol. 12 No. 10 [Summer Reading for Business Managers: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Development Directors Vol. 12 No. 10 [Summer Reading for Development Directors: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

ISM Monthly Update for School Heads Vol. 12 No. 10 [Summer Reading for School Heads: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Division Heads Vol. 11 No. 19 [Summer Reading for Division Heads: Recommended Books and Webinars](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Business Officers Vol. 11 No. 6 [Architecture to Inspire, Attract, and Promote Wellness](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Business Officers Vol. 12 No. 3 [Promoting Your Classrooms', Teachers', and School's Excellence](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 33 No. 10 [Cost Effective, Sustainable Building Solutions](#)

I&P Vol. 38 No. 4 [Your School's Summer Program and Risk Management](#)

Breathe Easy With(out) Mold: How Other Schools Handled Mold Infestations

(17% of clicks)

As the de facto Facilities Manager, you're likely very familiar with your school's minor facility inconveniences. The girls' bathroom lights always seem to flicker as if in a horror movie; the projectors show the blue screen of death anytime the chemistry teacher wants to show a video demonstration; and the school garden attracts unseemly quantities of Japanese beetles. There are bigger problems on your plate, so you typically wait to "get around to it later."

Well, there's one concern that if left untreated will become a big headache—fast. And that, dear readers, is mold.

Black mold can be a huge problem within buildings with poor air circulation. The bad ventilation can lead to a build up of moisture in walls and corners, creating the damp places where mold spores can land and colonize. Besides being unsightly, mold infestations can cause serious health problems for students, faculty, and staff alike.

Riverside Elementary School is one example in how [bad mold infestations dramatically impact health](#). Fifteen years of ignoring the damp spots and mold problem led to mold-related health problems for at least 30% of attending students.

One eight year-old mentioned in the article had an allergic reaction so bad, he needed two surgeries, two CAT scans, and over 20 antibiotics and antihistamines—not to mention more than 70 allergy injections—during his two years at Riverside.

One administrator was forced into early retirement due to the vertigo caused by inhaling the mold spores. Talk about risk management!

Finally, after teacher-led expeditions into the ceilings to spot areas covered with mold, school administrators decided to spend a summer eradicating the mold infestation. Whole walls

were ripped out and replaced, costing the school thousands of dollars in delayed maintenance costs.

Riverside isn't the only school that's had problems with mold, either.

- Another elementary school in Allentown, Pennsylvania, discovered it had [mold growing in the carpets of sixteen classrooms](#), requiring an outside contractor to rip up, treat, and replace the afflicted areas before school resumed in the fall.
- Two schools in Virginia delayed repairs to faulty air conditioning systems, resulting in [threatened closure from the health department due to the resulting mold problem](#). The mold grew so quickly, one administrator recounts stories of opening closed classrooms to find the room covered in the stuff. The lowest received to correct the problem was \$4.34 million, leaving it in an unplanned financial bind due to delayed maintenance.
- Sutton High School experienced mold in classrooms [after delayed construction left building space exposed to the elements](#). The unsafe environment caused the school year to be delayed by a week as they found clean spaces for classes to resume.

Taking all of these horror stories into account, it's a good idea to spend some time this summer inspecting your school's facilities for any traces of mold—and correcting the issue as soon as possible. Consider it your "risk management summer program." The first thing to do is to be able to identify different types of mold for proper clean up and risk evaluation.

The mold you least want to see is black mold, or *Stachybotrys chartarum*. [According to the WebMD](#), black mold grows only on wood, paper, and cotton, meaning that your school's facilities—if damp—are the perfect growing ground. Mold of any sort can trigger severe allergic reactions and upper respiratory problems.

However, Dr. John Martyny told WebMD that many people suffering from mold complications are not diagnosed properly: "People have these symptoms, but they don't realize they have a moisture and mold problem ... If you get rid of the allergens—the mold—people get better, and they get better pretty fast."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Indoor Environments Division [offers the following tips](#) to ensure your buildings are free of mold—and stay that way.

- Fix leaky plumbing and leaks in the building envelope as soon as possible.
- Watch for condensation and wet spots. Fix source(s) of moisture problem(s) as soon as possible.
- Prevent moisture due to condensation by increasing surface temperature or reducing the moisture level in air (humidity). To increase surface temperature, insulate or increase air circulation. To reduce the moisture level in air, repair leaks, increase ventilation (if outside air is cold and dry), or dehumidify (if outdoor air is warm and humid).
- Keep heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) drip pans clean, flowing properly, and unobstructed.
- Vent moisture-generating appliances, such as dryers, to the outside where possible.
- Maintain low indoor humidity, below 60% relative humidity (RH), ideally 30-50%, if possible.
- Perform regular building/HVAC inspections and maintenance as scheduled.
- Clean and dry wet or damp spots within 48 hours.

- Don't let foundations stay wet. Provide drainage and slope the ground away from the foundation.

Maintenance and prevention is important, but sometimes you've already got a mold problem. Times like these, it's eradication that's first and foremost on your mind. Take [Iolani School](#), a private-independent school in tropical (and humid) Honolulu, Hawaii. The building suffered from a recurring mold problem. Iolani's director of finance, Glenn Ghing, said that "the buildings were designed [with sealed windows and a high percentage of recirculating air] for reasons of energy conservation. But as IAQ [Indoor Air Quality] experts now know, such designs can cause indoor air quality problems if remedial measures are not taken."

So what did Iolani School do? Ultraviolet lights to physically "cook" the mold around the building's air-handling system. While the lights will be replaced annually, they consider that a smaller price to pay than the \$8,000 previously spent on coil cleanings.

The physical health and safety of all who teach and learn at your school is your top priority, as is balancing and maintaining your school's fiscal health. Identifying and correcting concerns before they become just another horror story like the ones we've shared is one of the ways you can do so. Mold isn't an inconvenience; it's a serious issue that you must address while the building's clear of people this summer.

Additional ISM resources:

ISM Research: [Mold in My School: What Do I Do?](#)

ISM Monthly Update for Risk Managers Vol. 2 No. 1 [Mold Risks](#)

Additional ISM resources for Gold Consortium members:

I&P Vol. 38 No. 16 [Facilities: When You Run Out of Money](#)

I&P Vol. 29 No. 2 [Facilities and Faculty Retention](#)

I&P Vol. 28 No. 14 [A Maintenance Plan Extends the Useful Life of Facilities](#)