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Parent Programming Audit

Assessing Your Schools Existing Parent Offerings
to Identify Gaps and Future Opportunities

Independent School Executive Forum

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How to Use this Workbook

The Parent Programming Audit provides a step-by-step guide to catalogue and assess your school's existing parent programming. This audit should be spearheaded by one individual (Director of Parent Programming, Assistant/Associate Head of School, etc., who serves as the "Implementation Leader") but will require collaboration from across campus. By completing this audit, you can evaluate current offerings for existing gaps and potential opportunities to more effectively partner with parents. It serves as a key first step in implementing an intentional, comprehensive approach to meeting today's parents evolving needs.

Parent Programming Audit Overview

Why Parent Programming is Key to Working with Today's Independent School Parents

Over the last 20 years, independent school parents' demands have evolved. Given the complexities of child-rearing in today's world, along with parents' increase in anxiety, transactional attitudes, and diminished trust in institutions, today's parents desire a level of insight, access, and knowledge about independent school's approach to educating and supporting their children. What's more, these intensive parents seek guidance and expertise when it comes to the development of their children, which they expect independent schools to provide.

Independent schools' current ad-hoc approach to parent programming leaves parents to draw their own conclusions about how your school is addressing the many issues that affect their children in our constantly-changing world. It also leaves them susceptible to vocal, disgruntled parents to influence their views about whether the school is effectively handling things. Further, it misses out on the opportunity to form strong communities among today's parents, who are increasingly isolated from peer networks as they spend more time focused on their children.

To ensure that schools are meeting the demands and fulfilling the desires of today's parents, it is important to take stock of what your current programming looks like and determine whether it is serving parent needs. In doing so, you will be able to identify gaps and expand your offerings where necessary to maximize parent engagement and satisfaction. We designed this audit is to help you begin this process based on insights surfaced in our research, and which are outlined below.

Three Key Elements of Comprehensive Parent Programming

Education Offerings

Build trust and reduce anxiety by demonstrating school expertise

To counter parents' anxiety and distrust in institutions, independent schools need to design comprehensive education programming to demonstrate their depth of expertise, address parents' questions and concerns, and strengthens their relationship with your school.

Community Building

Combat transactional attitudes by establishing parent communities

Independent schools are exceptionally well-positioned to satisfy the unmet need for community and connection among today's parents. Schools can add value and form lasting relationships by forging strong parent-school bonds.

Feedback Opportunities

Provide parents avenues to have their voice heard

To surface issues that may best be addressed through proactive intervention or additional parent programming, schools must regularly solicit parent feedback. This can take place through surveys, town halls, or Q+A sessions.

Additional Areas of Value

Independent schools offer robust programming for prospective parents through their enrollment offices, as well as extensive fundraising events through their advancement offices. Schools should consider how these offerings could be repurposed to support the above elements for current parents.

Parent Programming Audit Overview Cont.

How Do I Assess My Programming Effectiveness?

In addition to taking stock of existing offerings, it is important for schools to assess the impact of current programming. Ideally, this would be measured through predetermined metrics and standardized parent feedback. In the absence of such data, consider the following factors when assessing each programs' level of impact (high, medium, or low):

▶ *What feedback have we gathered from the event (exit surveys, feedback forms, unsolicited emails)? How do parents respond to the programming?*

▶ *What percentage of the "target" parents (i.e. division, demographic) typically attend?*

▶ *What is the goal of the event? Does it fall within one of three key elements outlined?*

Who Should Be Involved in the Audit?

Involve individuals on campus who are regularly engaged with parent communities and can speak to the details of current programming. This could include directors of parent engagement, members of the PTA, division directors, deans, directors of enrollment, and directors of advancement, among others.

Why Now?

Over the course of the pandemic, parents have looked to independent schools as a source of stability in a time of uncertainty. As we evolve through the pandemic, now is the perfect time to reengage parents. What's more, acting now will enable schools to combat an increasing number of unproductive partnerships with today's parents by proactively meeting their needs and exceeding their expectations.

Audit Key

▶ **Event/Programming:** What is the title of the event/programming offered?

▶ **Content Topic:** What topic(s) are covered during the event/programming?

▶ **Audience:** Is this event/programming offered to current parents, prospective parents, and/or alumni parents?

▶ **Frequency:** How often does this event/programming take place? When?

▶ **Participation:** How many parents typically attend this event/programming?

▶ **Impact:** What is the level of impact of this event (high, medium, low)?

Instructions

The first step in optimizing your parent programming is to conduct a thorough audit of existing offerings at your school. Follow the four steps outlined below to complete this audit.

Step 1

Compile Outreach List

Assemble a list of all individuals, departments and offices that offer parent programming

Consider all potential stakeholders—common individuals and departments include counseling, college counseling, DEI directors, academic departments, division directors, enrollment and advancement.

Step 2

Collect Information

Work with the individuals from step 1 to collect information about existing parent programming

Use the worksheet provided on the next page to gather essential information on all existing offerings. Be sure to complete one worksheet per event or event series.

Step 3

Create Centralized Record of Offerings

Using pages 6-11, gather the data into a centralized repository to conduct an overall assessment

Compile all feedback using the template provided, then complete the overall assessment form.

Step 4

Assess Current Offerings

Evaluate for gaps, overlap, and effectiveness of existing parent programming

Use the overall assessment template to identify initial areas of strength and weakness in your current offerings.

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Parent Programming Data Collection Worksheet

Thank you for providing the following information on the existing parent programming offered by your department or office. Please complete **one worksheet per event or activity**. When identifying existing offerings hosted by your department or office, please include parent education programming (e.g., outside experts, info sessions), parent community building events (e.g., book clubs, dinners), and parent feedback opportunities (e.g., town halls, Q&A sessions).

Name of Event/Program:

What content/topics are covered during this programming?

Department/Office:

Check all that apply. This event is open to:

☐ Prospective Parents ☐ Current Parents ☐ Alumni Parents

Attendance:

▸ How **many parents attend** this program or event on average (or range)?

Timing and Frequency:

▸ How **many times a year** does this programming take place?

▸ What **time of year** does this programming take place?
If it is already scheduled for the coming year, please provide the date(s).

This event's impact (based on exit surveys, feedback, etc.) is:

☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low

Additional Details or Notes (e.g. virtual vs in person):

Parent Programming Audit

Input the information collected in the Parent Programming Data Collection Worksheets below into the three essential areas of parent programming: parent education offerings, parent community building, and parent feedback opportunities. This will allow you to more easily identify gaps.

Parent Education Offerings

Child Development
Examples: Seminars on Adolescent Mental Health, Learning and Developmental Milestones

	Programming	Content Topic	Audience	Frequency	Participation	Impact
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

School-Specific Programming
Examples: Curricula, Academic Supports, Athletics, College Application Experience

	Programming	Content Topic	Audience	Frequency	Participation	Impact
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

Parent Programming Audit Cont.

Parent Education Offerings

Hot Topics
Examples: Social Media and Technology, Sexuality and Gender Identity, Substance Abuse

	Programming	Content Topic	Audience	Frequency	Participation	Impact
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

Other
Include any events that do not fall in the above three categories here

	Programming	Content Topic	Audience	Frequency	Participation	Impact
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

Parent Programming Audit Cont.

Parent Community Building

Signature Parent Events
Examples: Dinner of Great Conversations, Summer Edutainment Series, New Parent Socials

	Programming	Content Topic	Audience	Frequency	Participation	Impact
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

Parenting-Focused Events and Forums
Examples: Parent Mindfulness Group, Parenting Focused Book Clubs

	Programming	Content Topic	Audience	Frequency	Participation	Impact
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

Parent Programming Audit Cont.

Parent Feedback Opportunities

Virtual and In-Person					
Examples: Quarterly Parent Feedback Survey, Monthly Town Hall Meetings					
Programming	**Content Topic**	**Audience**	**Frequency**	**Participation**	**Impact**
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

Use the following page to record any additional events or activities offered by your **advancement** or **enrollment** departments, which could be altered for current parents.

Parent Programming Audit Cont.

Advancement and Enrollment

Advancement Events
Include any events that could be repurposed or replicated (e.g. community building, parent education).

	Programming	Content Topic	Audience	Frequency	Participation	Impact
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

Enrollment Events
Include any events that could be repurposed or replicated (e.g. community building, parent education).

	Programming	Content Topic	Audience	Frequency	Participation	Impact
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

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Parent Programming Audit: Overall Assessment

Using the information collected on pages 6-10, fill out the final assessment below about your existing offerings. Put a check next to content you currently offer. When determining how you would rank yourself in each category, consider the quantity and scope of your existing offerings, as well as the attendance and popularity. Then, connect with an EAB expert to discuss next steps in identifying gaps in your current offerings and leveraging existing offerings more effectively.

Parent Education Offerings

- [ ] *Child Development Programming*
- [ ] *School Specific Programming*
- [ ] *Hot Topic Programming*

Select one of the following. In this area, we:

Have room for improvement	Provide solid offerings	Excel at providing value

Why did you select this ranking?

Parent Community Building

- [ ] *Signature Parent Events*
- [ ] *Parenting Focused Events and Forums*

Select one of the following. In this area, we:

Have room for improvement	Provide solid offerings	Excel at providing value

Why did you select this ranking?

Parent Programming Audit: Overall Assessment

Parent Feedback Opportunities

☐ *Virtual Opportunities for Feedback*

☐ *In-Person Opportunities for Feedback*

Select one of the following. In this area, we:

Have room for improvement	Provide solid offerings	Excel at providing value

Why did you select this ranking?