



Parent Education Curriculum Guide

Designing Best-In-Class Parent Programming to
Build Trust in Your Institution

Independent School Executive Forum

Introduction

“There’s a desperate need from parents for parent education...And **they want information about how to educate and raise their children**, whereas before they would say, ‘Oh well, the school is going to take care of everything. That's why I send my kids to there and pay tuition.’ **But now they want to send their kids here and they themselves also want to be educated.**”

Head of School, K-12 Co-Ed, Midwest

The change among independent school parents described by the head of school above is a result of several socio-economic factors that have altered how Gen Xers and Millennials approach parenting. This new dominant style of parenting is referred to as "intensive parenting".

What is Driving Parents Desire for Education?



Intensive parents seek expertise when it comes to the development of their children, from doctors to psychologists to coaches to tutors. For parents today, the stakes are high, and the pressure to set their child up for success keeps them constantly seeking more guidance.



Growing anxiety and distrust among today's parents cause them to look for a level of insight, access, and knowledge about the school's approach to educating their children. This information is critical for them to trust and feel secure in their commitment to the institution.

How Are Independent Schools Meeting this Need?

Most independent schools offer ad-hoc programming that includes occasional events detailing school-specific programming (e.g., what to expect from health and wellness programs for students) and external speakers who come to campus on a sporadic basis to present on their area of expertise (e.g., peer pressure, substance abuse). But today’s parents want *more*.

Independent schools need to utilize parent education programming to meet this need and build trust among their parent communities. The goal of this resource is to provide guidance around the four key elements of a comprehensive parent education program and to teach school leaders how they can offer best-in-class parent education programming at their institutions.

Introduction (Cont.)

Four Key Elements of Comprehensive Parent Education

Our research identified four key elements for effective parent education programming, which we will use to structure this guide. These elements work together to create a clear approach to parent education that will serve to build trust and strengthen your school's relationship with your parent community. The four elements are:

1



Clear Philosophy

- Demonstrate good judgement and expertise to reinforce knowledge, credibility
- Deliberately utilize parent education to establish the school's philosophy on difficult issues or-get ahead of controversy

2



Varied Content, Representation

- Showcase wide-ranging expertise and knowledge across school departments, constituents
- Showcase breadth of expertise through representation from different administrators, staff and faculty

3



Regular Cadence of Offerings

- Provide offerings on a regular basis to show a commitment to consistency that parents can count on
- Establish your school as a reliable source of guidance and expertise

4



Branded Program

- Convey intentionality and continuity with a branded program just for parents
- Ensure that parent programming looks and feels like its own distinct, offering

The content of this guide will ensure that independent schools take steps to incorporate these elements in ways that will not only meet the needs of today's parents but also fulfill their desires.

Clear Philosophy

When it comes to building trust, research shows that there are three critical elements:



Parent education serves as a channel for schools to demonstrate the middle lever: good judgment and expertise. For example, education events that showcase the school's breadth and depth of knowledge related to academics and child development help to reinforce the school's expertise in these areas.

But for independent schools, there is another essential element to creating effective parent programming that builds trust: framing parent education through a clear school philosophy. While many schools broadcast their philosophy on their webpages and work to ensure prospective families buy into the school's values and beliefs when they first enroll their children, schools must continue to emphasize their philosophy through parent education events that continually build trust in their brand of schooling. In doing so, independent schools can strengthen parents' confidence in their way of addressing issues that arise over the course of their child's education. In doing so, parent anxiety and institutional mistrust can be mitigated to develop stronger, lasting partnerships.

Benefits of Clear Philosophy for Hot Topic Issues

Having a clear philosophy is particularly important when it comes to addressing flashpoints and developmental milestones that can be a source of stress and anxiety for parents. Common hot topic issues include curriculum, technology and civil discourse.

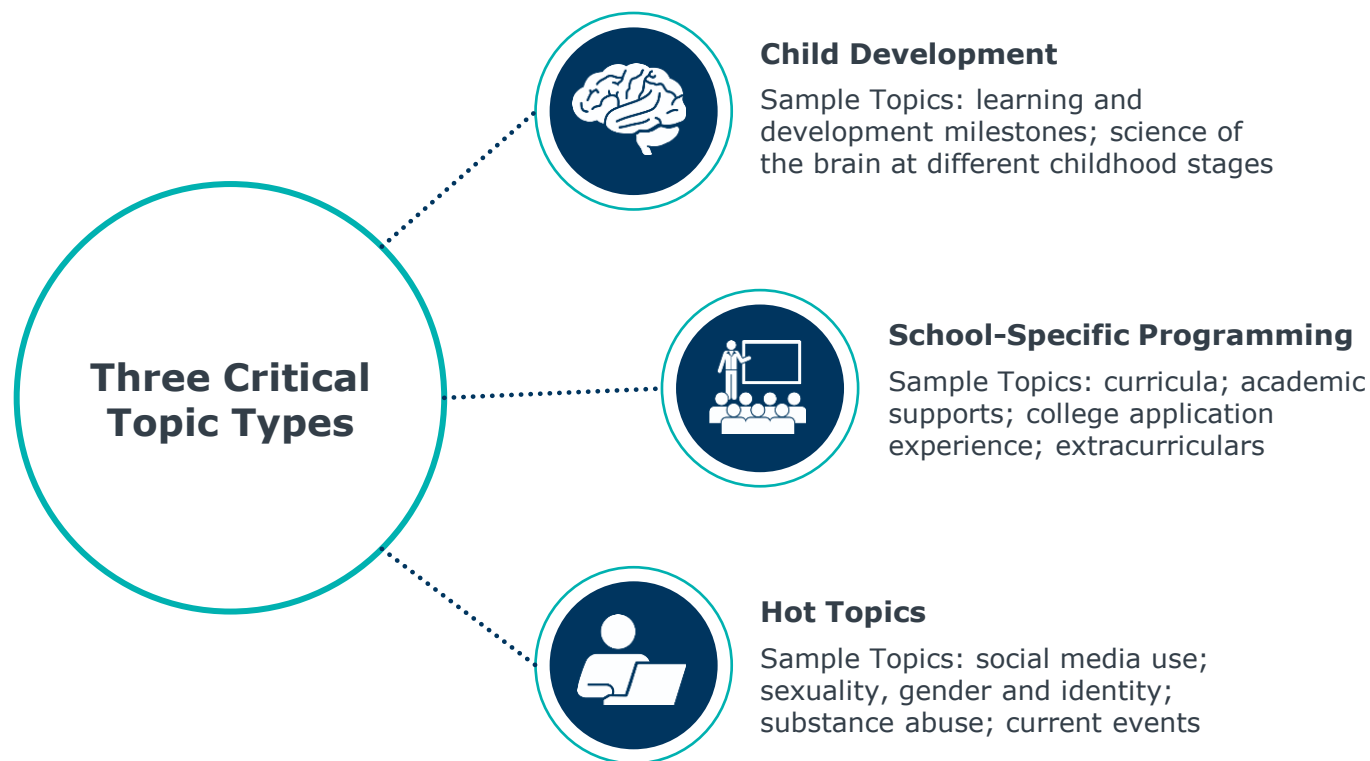
By demonstrating an intentional, value- and mission-grounded philosophy on these topics during parent education events, schools can get ahead, and stay ahead, of parent concerns.



Tip: Enrollment events offer excellent existing content highlighting a school's academic methodology and approach to the student experience. Consider repurposing materials for current parents to demonstrate a clear philosophy during parent education programming.

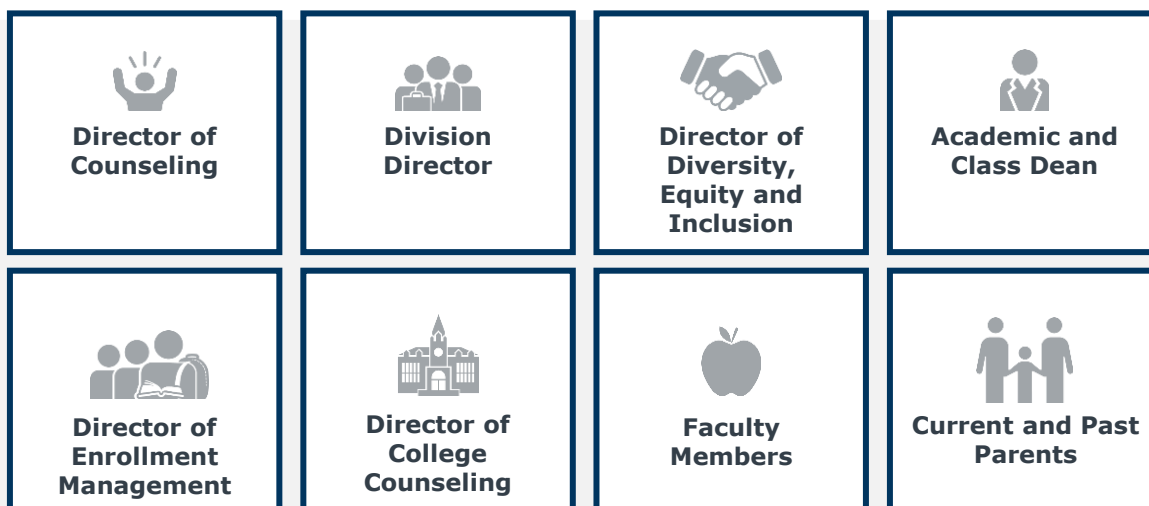
Varied Representation and Content

The second key element of effective parent education is varied content and representation. There are three critical content types that need to be covered throughout parent programming. This can be accomplished through a wide variety of events and activities, such as lectures, book clubs, or roundtable discussions.



Varied Representation Showcases Breadth of Expertise and Distributes Credibility

In addition to content areas, it is important to feature varied representation—such as different administrators, staff, and faculty—to showcase to parents the breadth of your expertise. Additionally, this will underscore the fact that knowledge does not reside with any one individual. Examples of who should be featured in parent education programming include:



Varied Representation and Content (Cont.)

Example: John Burroughs School’s Parent Education Curriculum

John Burroughs School provides an excellent example of varied content and representation in their parent education programming. Parents at John Burroughs can attend a wide variety of offerings, ranging from book clubs to counseling and wellness talks to school-specific updates to hot topics. These sessions are led by faculty, their Counseling Department, College Counseling department, and current parents, among others. John Burroughs’ programming helps the school establish and continually reinforce their school’s expertise – beyond just one topic area or one individual.



Book Clubs and Alumni Education Events

- Parenting Book Club: Inventing Ourselves: The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain**
Discussion Leader:
Wellness and Counseling Chair
- Faculty Lead Book Club: His Bloody Project**
Discussion Leader:
Teacher of Social Studies and World Civilization
- Parent to Parent Alumni Event (for Parents of Seniors)**
Adjusting to College – What to Expect and How to Support Your Child



Child Development: Grade Level Programming

- 7th Grade:** Staying Connected: Parenting a 7th Grader
- 8th Grade:** How to Navigate Difficult Conversations with Your Eighth Grader
- 9th Grade:** Secret Life of the 9th Grader: Understanding and Supporting your Highschooler Throughout Schoolwork, Socializing, Peer Pressure and Sport
- 10th Grade:** Coaching Your Child Through Their Sophomore Year: How to Help Them Achieve Their Goals and Make Responsible Decisions
- 11th Grade:** Reduce Risky Behavior: Moving from Conflict to Connection
- 12th Grade:** Science, Stress and Seniors



Hot Topics: Current and Evergreen

- Invisible to Visible: The Coronavirus and the Inequity It Reveals**
Panel moderated by JBS parent
- Japanese Culture and an Exploration of Origami in the Garden Exhibit**
Event hosted by 9th/10th Grade Principle and The Community Equity Partnership
- How to Talk to your Teen about Consent, Boundaries and Sexual Health**
Workshop hosted by Counseling Department
- Conversations that Count: Delaying Alcohol Use**
Event featuring student speeches to younger peers
- How to Talk About Politics in Your Family**
Topic of the parent book club, highlighting relevant articles and podcasts

Regular Cadence of Offerings



Tip: A good rule of thumb is to host one event per month across the school, with a minimum of one event per season in each division. Both educational programming and community-building events count towards this goal.

The third key element in effective parent education programming is establishing a regular cadence of offerings. This is integral to solidifying your school as a source of guidance for parents - one that they can consistently count on. While there are several ways to approach building a parent programming calendar, two stand out as particularly effective. Below, you can find examples of *monthly* parent programming and *quarterly, themed* parent programming.

Deciding Between Virtual vs. In-Person

Before determining your calendar of parent programming events, you will need to evaluate which events are best suited for in-person and which should be offered virtually. For some events, the right answer might be to offer both. Use the following considerations to guide your decision:

- Will the timing of this event (during the workday, weekend, evening) be accessible?
- Is this event interactive/is there a community or relationship-building element to the event?
- What is the primary goal of this event? What is needed to achieve it?
- Would this content be relevant after the fact (e.g., in an archive online)?

Example: Trinity Pawling School Provides Monthly Content for Parents

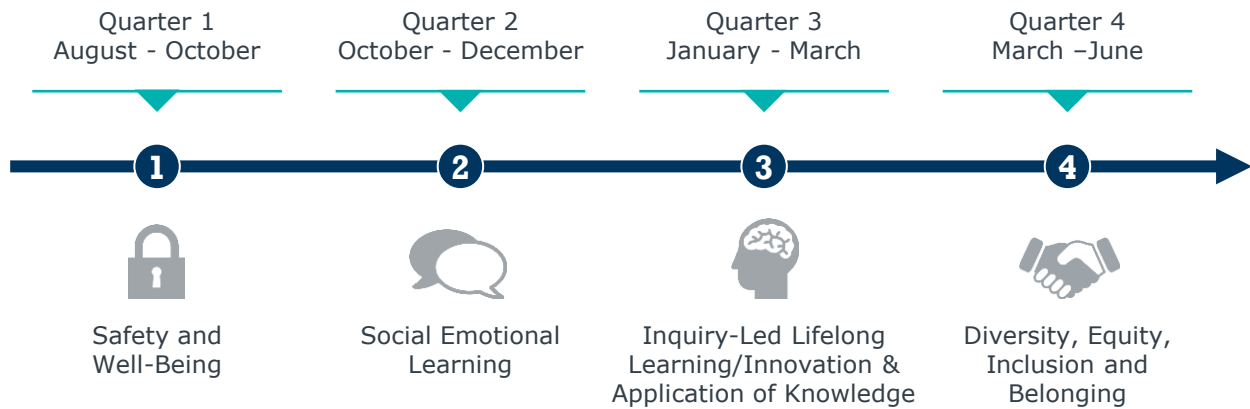
Trinity Pawling School provides its parents with education that is ongoing and accessible. Each month, the school offers at least one Pride Perspective Webinar (their branded parent education series). In addition to offering new topics each month, past sessions are archived on a central website so that they can easily be accessed by parents, who can consume the content at their convenience. Below is a sample of the Pride Perspectives Webinar calendar at Trinity-Pawling.

2019-2020		2020-2021	
April ▶	Q&A with School Leaders	September ▶	Q&A with the Admissions Team
May ▶	Coping Tips with Dean of Counseling	October ▶	Virtual Open House: The Trinity-Pawling Advantage
June ▶	Current Trends in College Counseling	November ▶	Wintersession at Trinity-Pawling
July ▶	Educating for an Ever-Changing World	December ▶	College Launch Day for the Junior Class
August ▶	Reopening Campus: Part 2	January ▶	Pride Athletics

Regular Cadence of Offerings (Cont.)

Example: Punahou School Organizes Calendar by Quarterly Theme

Alternatively, Punahou School divides its calendar of parent education programming by quarterly themes. Within each theme, the school offers relevant parent education and events and Parent Faculty Association talks. While programming is offered every month, the calendar is approached more holistically in combination with online resources and email blasts. Below is a sample of the annual calendar and what one month looks like at Punahou School.



January Parent Events

- ▶ **January 6th:** Grade 10 Parent Night
- ▶ **January 13th:** Building a Family Charter Workshop (Team Up! Event)
- ▶ **January 14th:** PFA Monthly Gathering/Teacher Talk: Finding Our Way: Punahou’s Voyaging Program
- ▶ **January 26th:** Why Sleep Is Vital to Learning with Stanford Universities

JANUARY						
mo	tu	we	th	fr	sa	su
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Branded Program

The last element in designing effective parent education programming is to create a brand identity for your offerings. The intentional step to establish a visual brand for your parent programming signals your school's ongoing dedication to educating the parent community, with the added benefit of making it a familiar sight to parents when events are marketed. What's more, it allows you to unify your offerings, and demonstrate the true value add you are providing for parents.

What Is Brand Identity?

Brand identity refers specifically to the **visual components** that represent a brand. Effectively creating a brand identity ensures that it is easily recognizable to existing customers, and attractive to new ones. These components include, but are not limited to, logo, color palette, images and typeface. Establishing a distinct brand identity for parent programming is an untapped opportunity for independent schools to clearly distinguish the value of these offerings for parents.

Critical Considerations for Building Your Parent Programming Brand

Schools must ensure that they have a name and visual brand for their parent education offerings. Use the following questions to guide your conversations about establishing that brand identity.

- What will you name your parent education programming?
- What will your logo be?
- Will there be any additional consistent visuals (color palette, typeface, etc.)?
- Do you have a dedicated place on your website for this programming?
- Will you have a dedicated place in emails or newsletters to marketing upcoming activities and events?

Maintain Consistent Visual Elements

Once you have determined the brand identity, it is important to ensure that it is consistent across marketing materials. To do so, create a set of brand guidelines or a brand style guide to be used across mediums and messages. This should be distributed to everyone who creates content or programming involving parents, including faculty, staff, and administrators.

Example: Trinity Pawling School's Branded Webinar Series

Key Elements

- ▶ Parent programming united under name **Pride Perspectives** webinar series
- ▶ Weekly parent newsletter titled **The Pride Post** keeps parents updated on offerings
- ▶ A dedicated landing page on the school website shows **upcoming webinars** and an **archive of past webinars**
- ▶ Branding uses **school colors**, **distinct logo** for programming

HOME > OUR SCHOOL > PRIDE PERSPECTIVES WEBINAR SERIES

Pride Perspectives Webinar Series

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY

Pride Perspectives is Trinity-Pawling's series of interactive webinars featuring key members of the school community. Launched in the spring of 2020, the series keeps the Trinity-Pawling community near and far connected, and highlights the many advantages of a Trinity-Pawling education. Join hosts Headmaster Bill Taylor and Director of Admission Jeff Beck along with Trinity-Pawling faculty, as the *Pride Perspectives* series continues throughout the year. Onward!

UPCOMING WEBINARS • FALL 2021

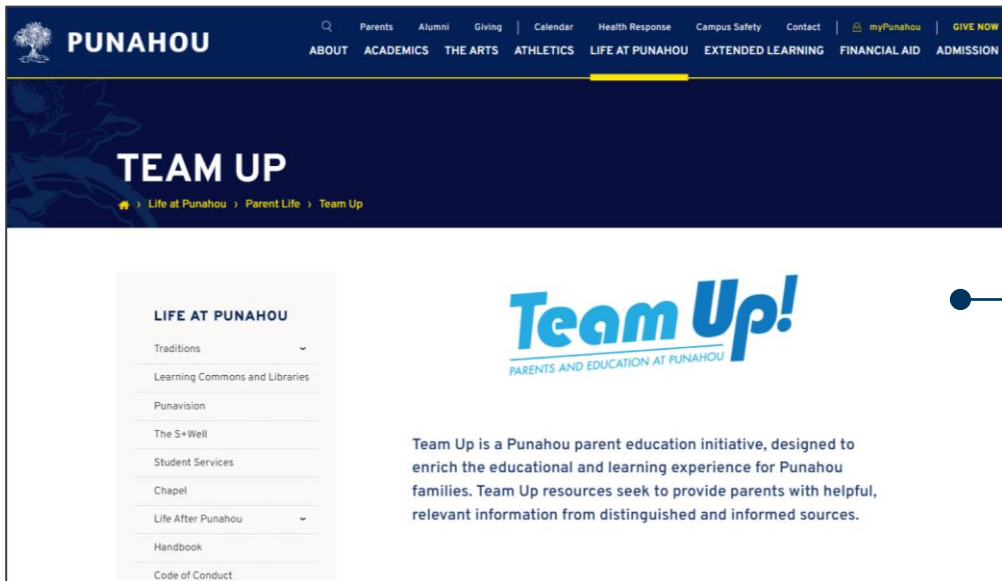
- ▶ OCTOBER 13, 2021 • THE INSTITUTES FOR ACTIVE LEARNING & SATURDAY PROGRAMMING
- ▶ OCTOBER 27, 2021 • TRADITION + INNOVATION = TRINITY-PAWLING'S DISTINCTION
- ▶ NOVEMBER 10, 2021 • WINTERSESSION AT TRINITY-PAWLING
- ▶ DECEMBER 1, 2021 • THE ADVANTAGE OF THE PRACTICUM & COLLEGE COUNSELING

Branded Program (Cont.)

Example: Punahou School’s Branded Parent Education Initiative

Three years ago, Punahou school set out on a mission to revamp their parent education programming. The goal was to move from offering pockets of parent education to a more unified, holistic approach, where parents were in “regular conversation” with the school. What’s more, they wanted to provide parents information that was school-approved, school-curated, and aligned with school philosophy.

In order to ensure parents knew what the initiative was and that they would be able to easily recognize its distinct offerings, Punahou branded this new suite of parent education resources and programming, and integrated brand identity components into its website and parent emails.



Key Elements

- ▶ Parent education initiative consolidated under name **Team Up!**
- ▶ **Dedicated landing page with distinctive logo** provides archived event recordings, resources, podcasts, parent survey
- ▶ Events, content, regularly incorporated into emails through a branded **Tip of Week**

Next Steps: Designing Your Own Parent Education Curriculum

As your team begins to plan next steps, EAB is here to help. Contact your dedicated advisor to set up a time with our experts, who can help walk through the program design process with you as you determine curriculum, cadence, and branding.