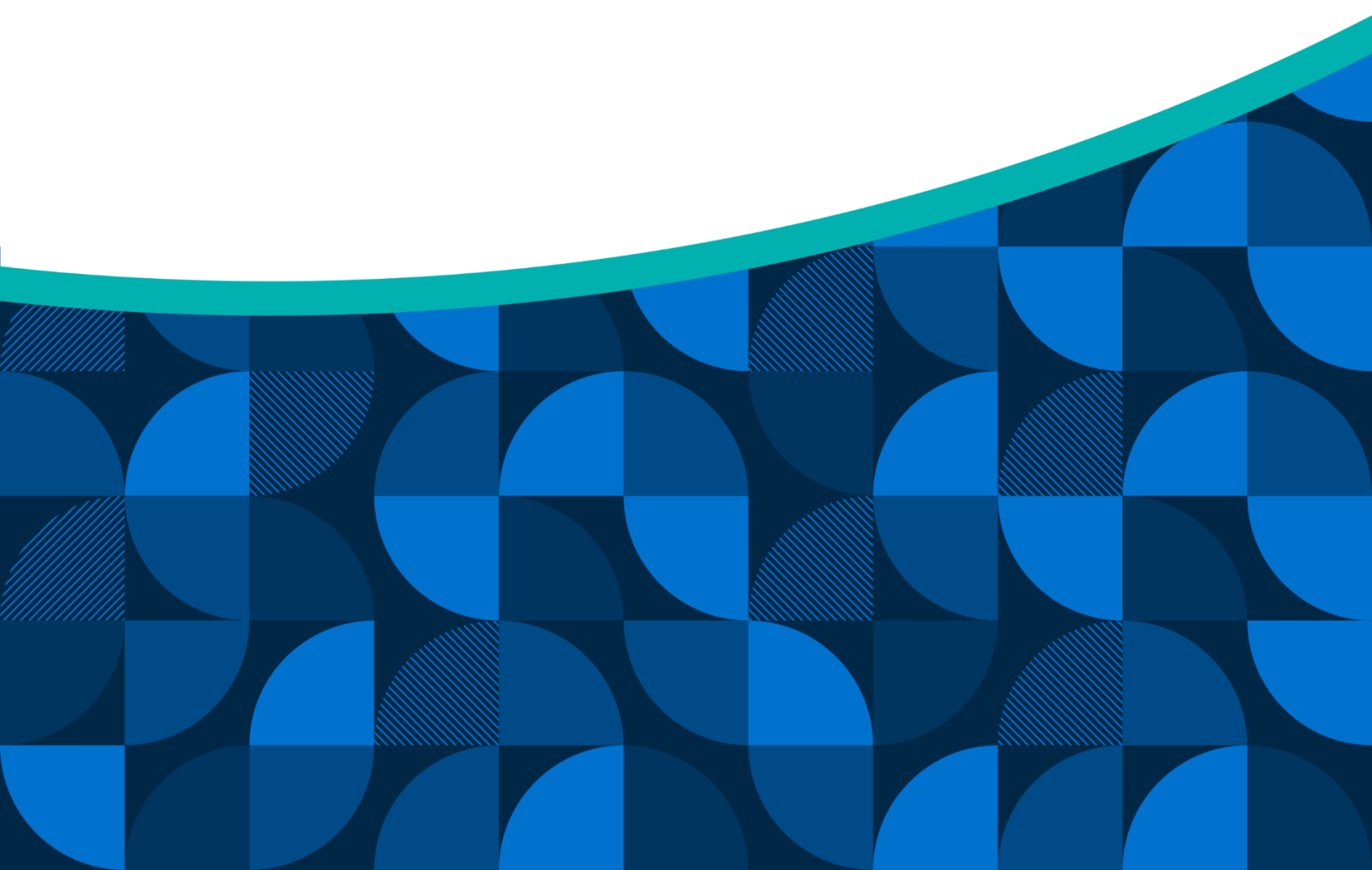




INDEPENDENT SCHOOL EXECUTIVE FORUM

Messaging Your Value Proposition

A Tool to Help Independent Schools Articulate Their Unique Strengths in the Current Market



Strategic Message Planning Worksheet

This tool guides you to articulate your value to prospective families using questions aimed at two groups of parents: those who are unaware of the value of an independent school education and those who are not convinced that their family belongs at your school, as outlined below.



Prospects Who Are Not Bought into Your School's Value

- What differentiates your school from other schools in the market?
- What type of unique academic programming or student experience does your school offer?



Prospects Who Do Not See Themselves Fitting in at Your School

- What misperceptions may exist about your school in the broader community?
- What information can you share to challenge families' misperceptions about your school?

To address these prospects, we have developed a series of questions to help articulate your value to these families. After using this planning tool, incorporate your insights into your broader marketing and communications strategy.

This tool is divided into two sections:



Section 1: What Unique Value Does Your School Offer?

As more education options become available to students, you must clearly make the case to families of their unique value.

- Section one of this tool asks you to articulate the academic and extracurricular offerings available to students at your school, which is critically important to highlight in your communications and marketing materials.



Section 2: What Misconceptions Exist about Your School?

Not all families feel welcome at independent schools; many view them as enrolling a homogenous student body of white, wealthy students. Others may have perceptions about the culture of independent schools (e.g., athletics-focused, or a stressful academic environment).

- Section two of this tool asks you to assess how outsiders view your school. Being transparent in addressing these misperceptions is vital to countering these notions in your messaging to prospects.

What Unique Value Does Your School Offer?

1 Identify Your Value Proposition

Consider the following:

- What makes your school unique among other options (public, private, homeschool)?
- Articulate the “independent school advantage” for those families that are unfamiliar with an independent school education. Use concrete examples and data to showcase what makes independent schools the best option for students.

2 Describe School-Specific Programming

Include descriptions of programs offered at your school that make your academic experience unique.

- What programs or initiatives do you offer that distinguish you from other independent schools in the area (e.g., hands-on internship experiences, a strong STEM program)?
- What data do you have to quantify the impact of these programs or initiatives? Do you have quotes or anecdotes to further illustrate this impact?

What Unique Value Does Your School Offer?

3 Define the Goals of Your School's Education

- What are the attributes of the typical graduate of your school (e.g., global citizen)?
- What types of school initiatives, academic requirements, or teaching practices help to shape your students (e.g., participation in international exchanges, community service requirements)?

4 Quantify the Impact of Your School's Education

- In what colleges do your students enroll? What percentage of alumni earn a graduate degree?
- In what professions do your students work? Do you have notable alumni?

What Misconceptions Exist about Your School?

5 Share Key Characteristics of Your School Community

Include information that may challenge existing perceptions about your school community.

Percentage of families that receive financial aid at your school

Demographics of student population

Range of income levels of families receiving aid (e.g., \$50K-\$250K)

Number of zip codes represented among enrolled students

6 Identify Common Misconceptions about Your School

- Are there aspects of your reputation that do not accurately reflect your school community (e.g., the school is not diverse, the school only enrolls wealthy students, the school does not support students with learning differences)?

7 Address Common Misconceptions about Your School

- What types of programs, initiatives, facts, or anecdotes counteract the negative misperceptions associated with your school (e.g., high percentage of students receiving financial aid)?



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