



# What Every Head of School Needs to Know About Enrollment Management

ACIS

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# The Enrollment Management Association

The Enrollment Management Association provides unparalleled leadership and service in meeting the admission and enrollment needs of schools, students, and families. Today, we support and stand with our community of more than 1,200 independent schools all across the globe who empower students to navigate their unique paths to success. At EMA, we know that when our school leaders embrace the right data, training, tools, and resources, they help each student on their journey toward success.

**How do you go about  
making a major purchase?**









**1**

We Are In a  
Disrupted  
Environment



# Independent School Disruptors



Increased  
Awareness of  
Injustice



Global  
Pandemic &  
Recession



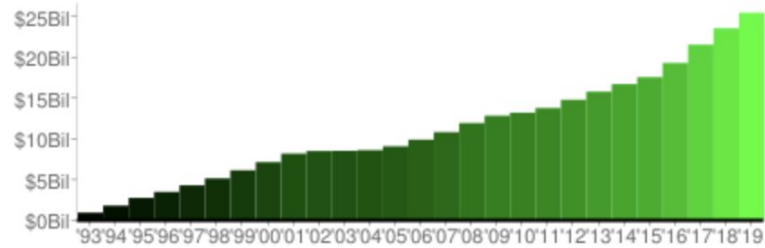
Generational  
Changes

# Colorado

## Gained \$26.59 billion in annual AGI\*

Wealth Migration 1992-2019

\$2,762 of adjusted gross income gained in the last 59 seconds.



### Gained Wealth From:

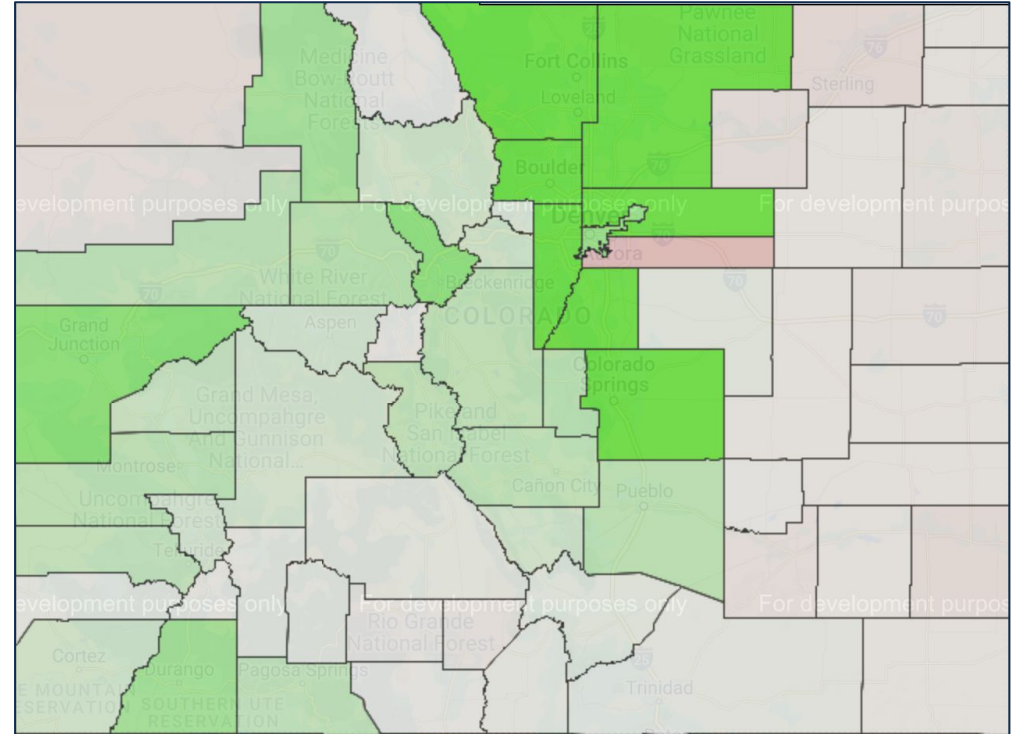
\$7.09 billion	California
\$3.46 billion	Illinois
\$2.08 billion	New York
\$1.94 billion	Texas
\$1.26 billion	Virginia

### Lost Wealth To:

\$862.61 million	Arizona
\$718.90 million	Florida
\$556.82 million	Montana
\$377.00 million	Washington
\$349.19 million	Idaho



### Wealth Gained (Lost), in billions:



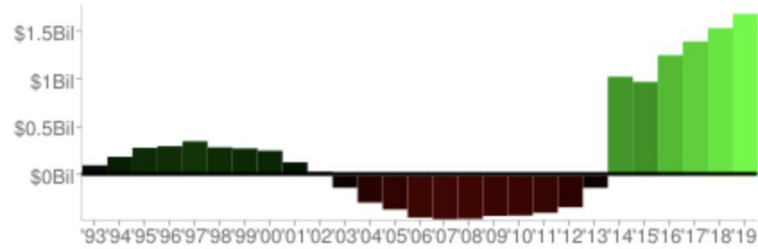
Source: How Money Walks

# Jefferson County (CO)

## Gained \$1.77 billion in annual AGI\*

Wealth Migration 1992-2019

\$299 of adjusted gross income gained in the last 1 minute and 36 seconds.



### Gained Wealth From:

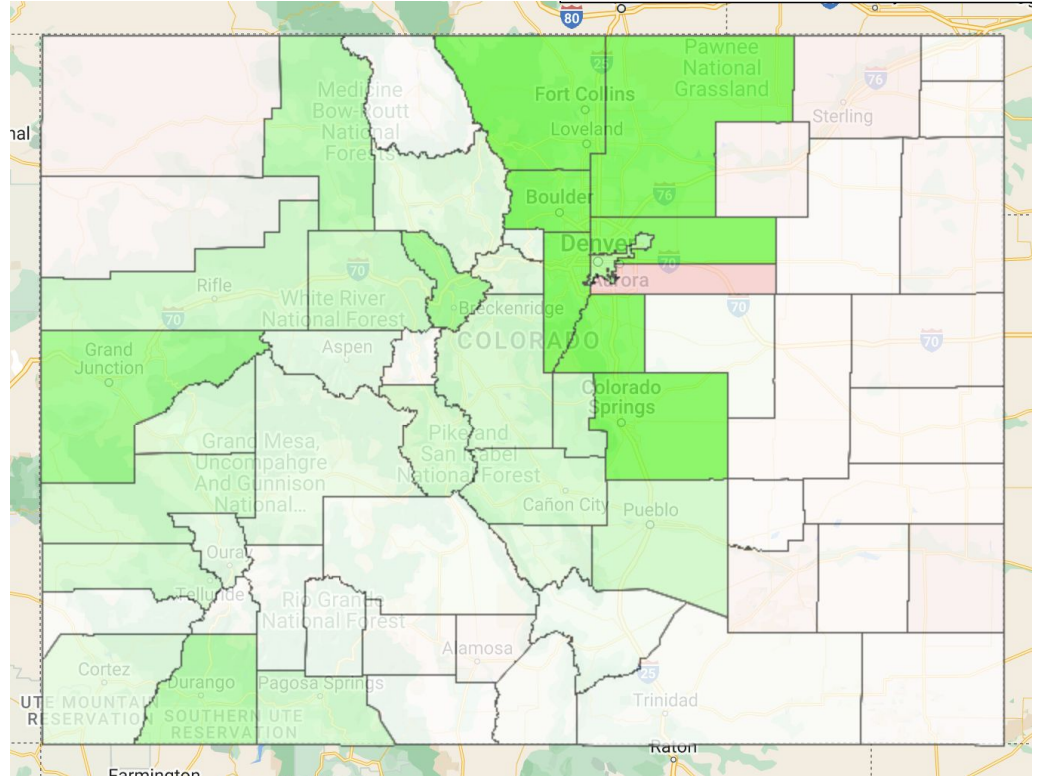
- \$1.41 billion Denver County, CO
- \$167.24 million Boulder County, CO
- \$160.99 million Cook County, IL
- \$120.22 million Harris County, TX
- \$117.71 million Los Angeles County, CA

### Lost Wealth To:

- \$1.05 billion Douglas County, CO
- \$648.79 million Adams County, CO
- \$213.24 million Weld County, CO
- \$121.07 million Larimer County, CO
- \$103.04 million Maricopa County, AZ



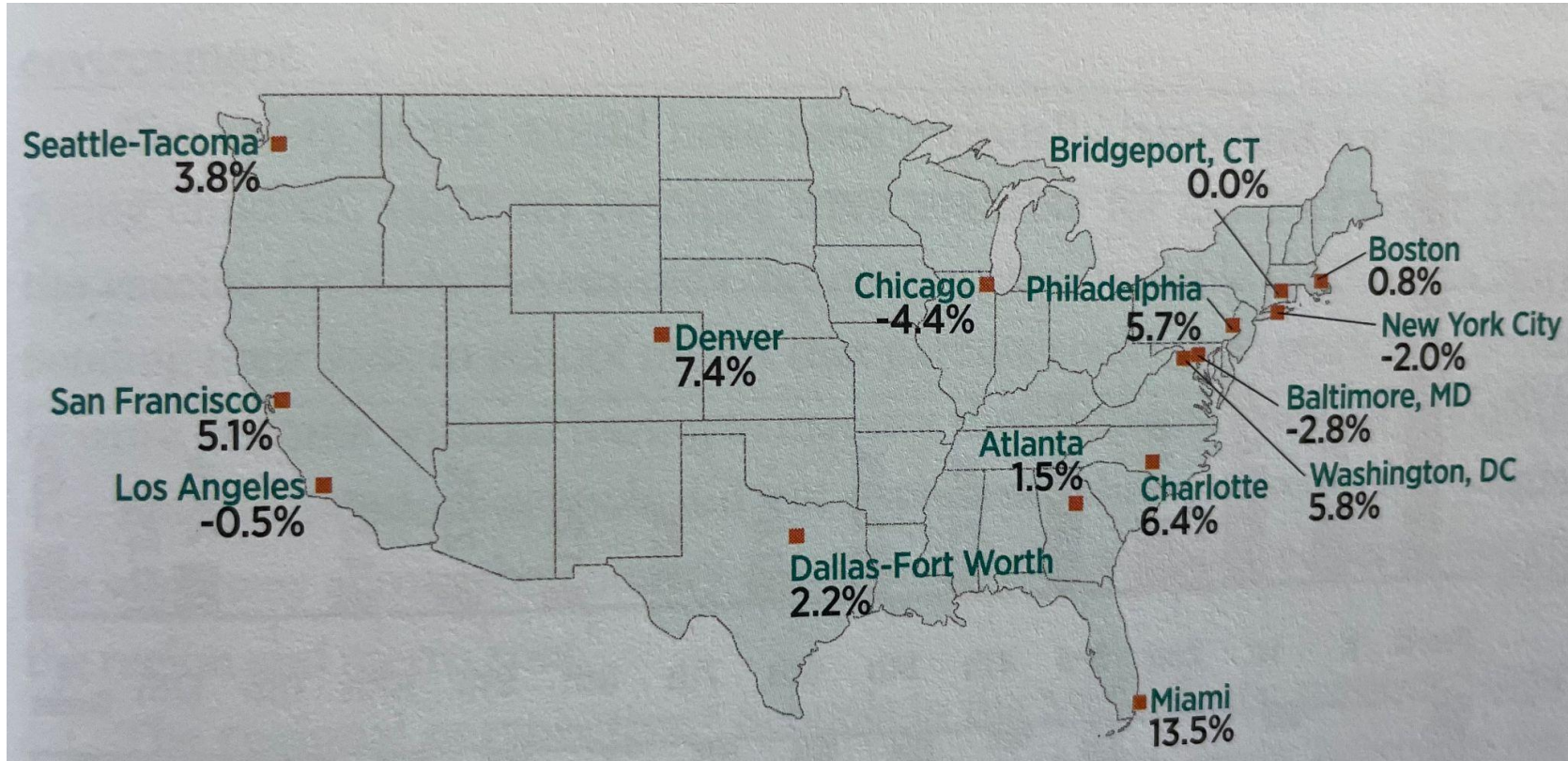
### Wealth Gained (Lost), in billions:



Source: How Money Walks



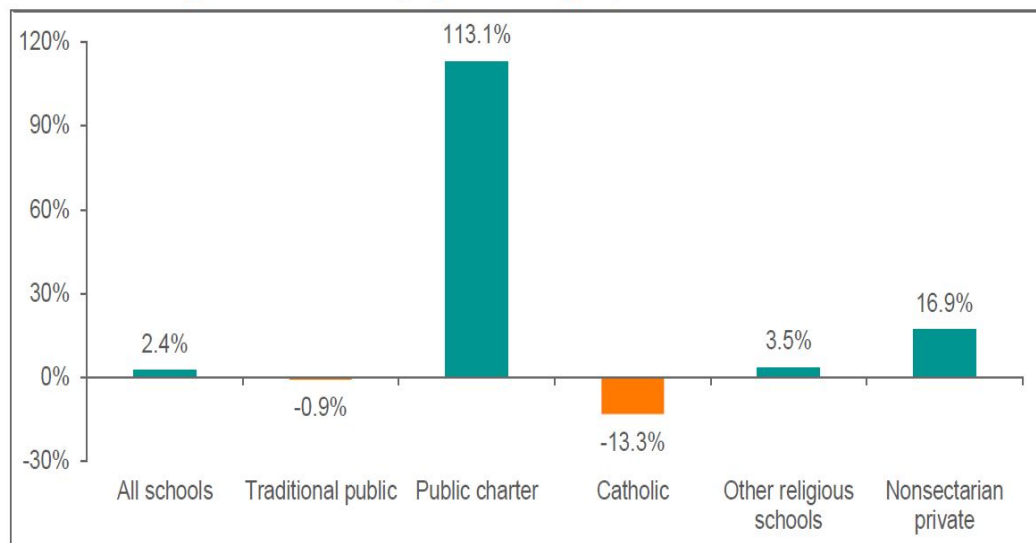
# Location Can Make a Difference



Source: 2022-2023 NAIS Trendbook

# Charter School & Ind. Schl. Growth

## Percent change in enrollment, by school type, 2009–2010 to 2019–2020\*



### HEADLINE NEWS FROM THE NAIS TRENDBOOK

## Enrollment Rebounds



After falling early in the pandemic, median enrollment grew in 2021-2022. A major driver: surges in pre-K through third grade.

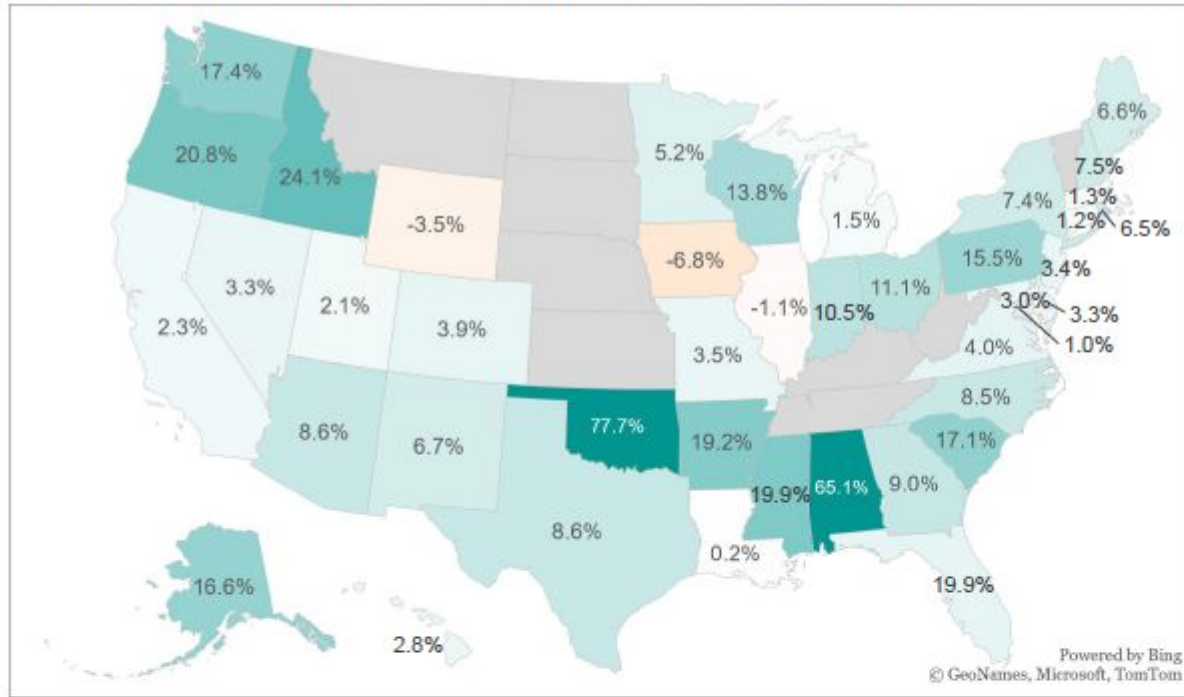
Median enrollment per school	2020-21	2021-22
	378	396

\*National Association of Independent Schools,

The State of K-12 Enrollment 2021-2022, May 2022 National, May 2022 and NAIS 2022-23 Trendbook

# Charter School Growth

Growth in charter school enrollment by state, 2019–2020 to 2020–2021



# 82%

The predominant generational cohort shopping for independent schools is Gen X parents in their 40's and 50's who research online and shop in person and prefer a clear path to purchase.

# 61%

More than half of parents said diversity was one of their top factors when considering an independent school ahead of financial aid, school reputation, and athletics.



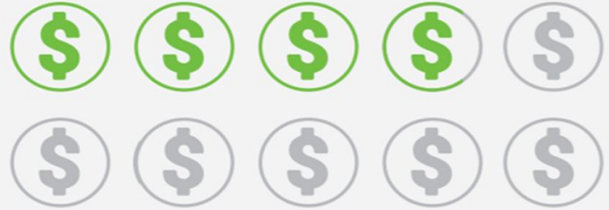
Average math and reading scores declined for most states and grades. Students' confidence in their skills also declined.

# 65%

More than half of parents searching for an independent school reported they were searching for an independent school prior to the last year at their child's current school.



# Value of the Investment



**38%** Only 38% of parents said they were "extremely satisfied" with the value of their investment in private schools.



With the amount of money parents are paying in tuition, schools should hope that more than four in ten are extremely sure they are getting their money's worth.



2

Enrollment is the  
Breadwinner of  
Independent  
Schools

# Independent School Revenues and Expenses by Category: 2020-21 School Year



**TUITION**

- Net Tuition and Fees 74.0%
- Endowment and Surplus Draw 4.6%
- Interest and Investment 4.0%
- Auxiliary 3.0%
- Annual Giving 4.8%
- Other 9.7%



**TEACHERS**

- Salary and Benefits 63.9%
- Tuition Remission 1.3%
- Administrative 4.6%
- Athletics 0.7%
- Instructional 3.3%
- Facility Maintenance 7.2%
- Technology (operational) 1.7%
- Other 17.3%

# 74%

Most schools earn most of their annual operating revenue from tuition.

# \$0

Yet the median spend on professional development for enrollment teams is zero.

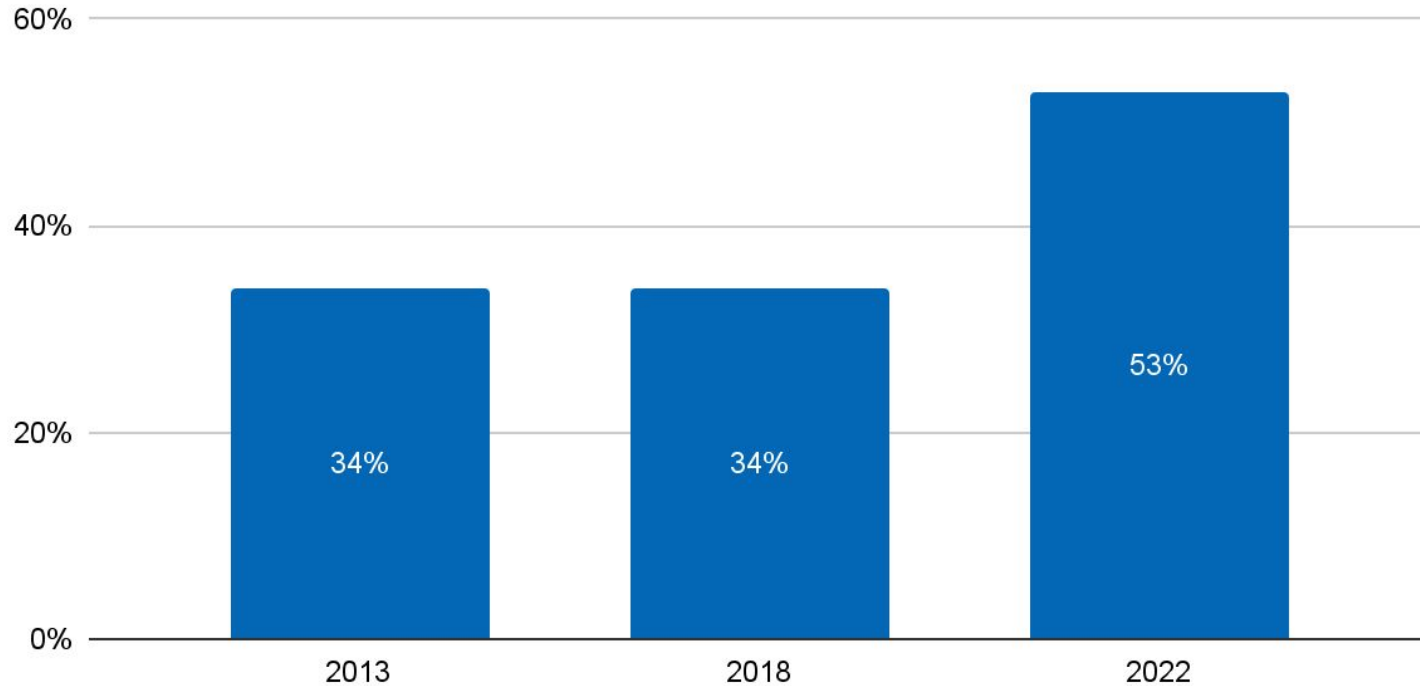
# \$7

Median ROI on a dollar spent in enrollment.

# 17%

Yet fewer than one in five schools has a marketing department that spends 70% of its efforts on enrollment.

# Percent of Enrollment Leaders Who Regularly Attend Board Meetings



Source: EMA's State of the Enrollment Industry Report 2013 - 2022



Enrollment is the breadwinner at independent schools yet it is often under-resourced.



**3**

How Should  
Independent  
Schools  
Respond?

For independent schools to continue to survive and thrive school leaders must make a shift from an **admission** mindset to an **enrollment management** posture.

Is your school doing admission or enrollment management?

## What do *they* do?

Adults in the school community have the business knowledge and buy-in to create a shared sense of responsibility and purpose around enrollment.

## Who should I tell?

Adults in the community have a working knowledge retention policies and procedures and know how and when to alert the team if a family is at risk of departing.

## Everyone is in admission!

Faculty don't need to be told they are a part of the admission office because they are engaged in ongoing dialog about their critical roles.

## We should advertise more.

The school has a nuanced understanding of its enrollment strengths and opportunities and has developed a multi-year plan which may include advertising.

Enrollment leaders are  
responsible for something  
they don't control.





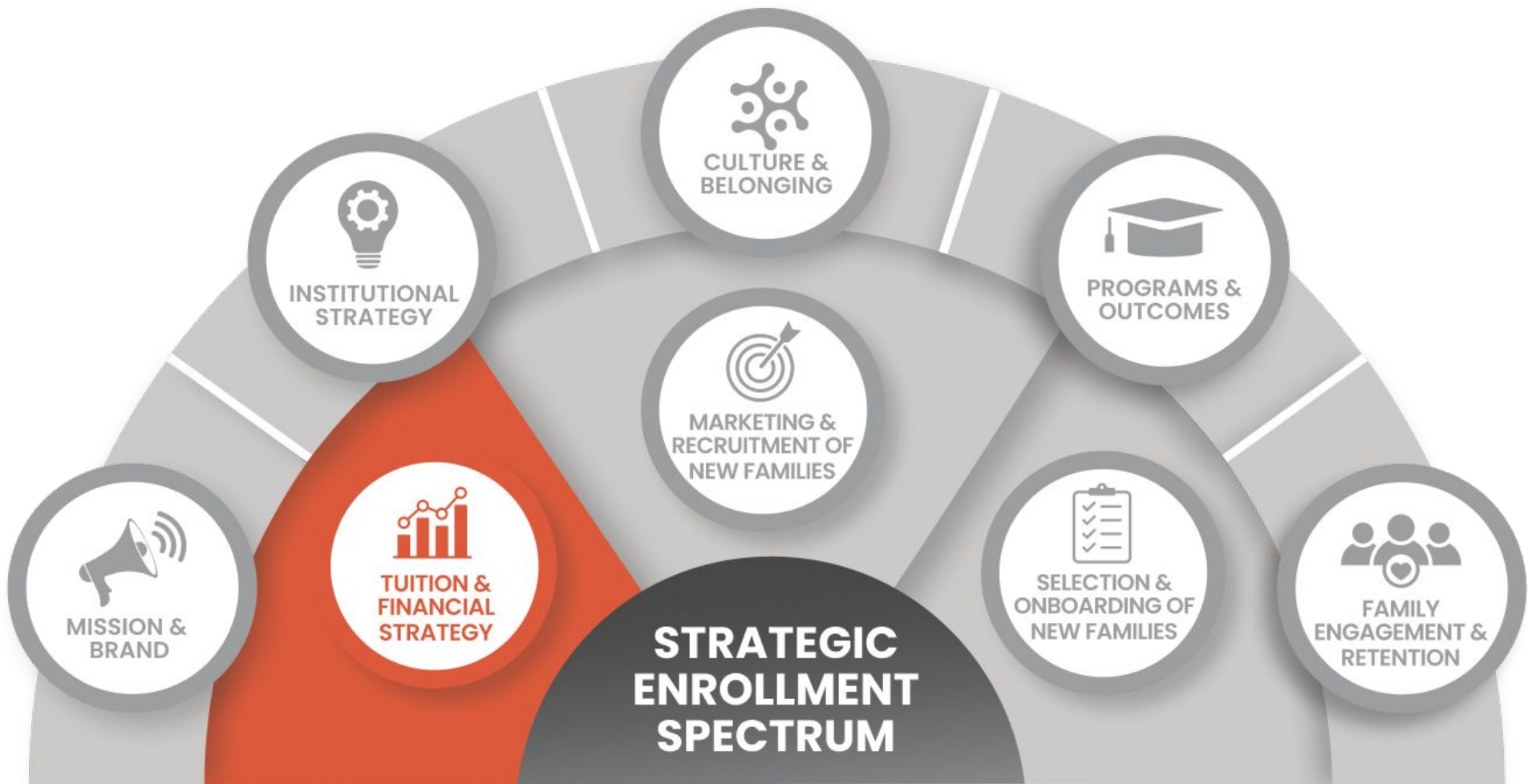
# **THE STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT SPECTRUM**





# Core Levers

Core spectrum categories are critical to the enrollment health of the school. These aspects tend to make up the central functions of the enrollment office and their most direct partners.



# Tuition & Financial Strategy

The school uses price to help achieve its goals.

The school takes a long-term view on price, financial aid, and fiscal sustainability to ensure it continues to deliver on its mission.

# Tuition & Financial Strategy

58% of families indicated that affordability was their biggest concern when applying to independent school.

Enrollment leader brings in tuition but is rarely involved in setting tuition.

Tuition increase brings financial aid budget implications.



CULTURE & BELONGING



INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY



PROGRAMS & OUTCOMES



MARKETING & RECRUITMENT OF NEW FAMILIES



SELECTION & ONBOARDING OF NEW FAMILIES



MISSION & BRAND



TUITION & FINANCIAL STRATEGY



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT & RETENTION

# Selection & Onboarding of New Families

The school welcomes the right families to the school.

The school has effective practices and tools to determine applicant fit and ensures new families join the community smoothly.


# Selection & Onboarding of New Families

We must balance our need for information to make informed admission decisions with a willingness to simplify the process for families.

54% of families apply to at least one school using a common application.

It is important that we understand the role each application piece plays in the process.



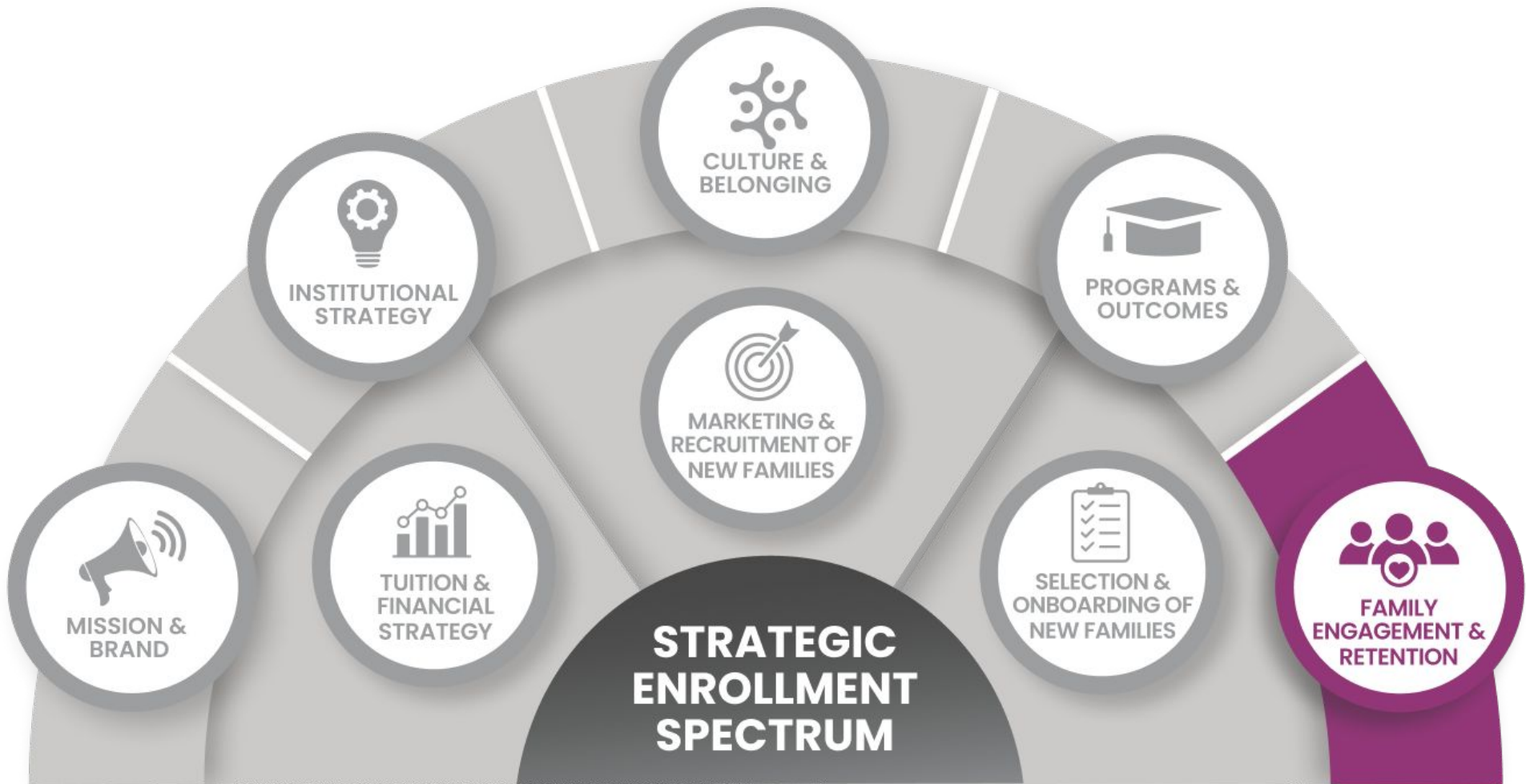


“The early interactions that parents and their children have with your school are critical in establishing the quality of the experience.”

— Chuck English

# Overarching Levers

Overarching spectrum levers are critical to the enrollment health of the school. These aspects cross multiple domains and therefore require leadership from the head of school, board of trustees, teachers, and other school leaders.



# Family Engagement & Retention

Families stay until graduation.

Through both reactive and proactive strategies the school ensures appropriate engagement and retention.

# Family Engagement & Retention

“The easiest student to recruit is the one you already have.”

- Every enrollment leader

# ACIS Concerns for the 2021-22 Enrollment Cycle

**73%**

Retention of current students

**38%**

Continued COVID-19 restrictions

**35%**

Increased requests for financial assistance

**34%**

Decline in applicant numbers or yield

# Is Your Attrition Healthy?

**15.75%**

ACIS median attrition  
2020-2021

**10.70%**

ACIS median  
attrition 2018-2019

**+5.05%**

Increase in  
attrition rate over  
past 3 years

# 65%

**of families applying to an  
independent school did so before the  
last year at their current school.**



**25%**  
of schools have a  
formal retention  
committee

# Retention Committee

A team intentionally assembled with representation across the school to identify potential enrollment challenges and develop a plan to address them by delivering a first-class experience.

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A team **intentionally assembled**

with representation across the school  
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# Retention Committee Composition



**Academics**



**Diversity, Equity  
& Inclusion**



**Business Office**



**Student Life**



**Extracurricular  
Offerings**



**Key Grade  
Levels**



**Division Heads**



# Begin with why families choose us

## **School is failing my child.**

Help me find a school that will address those obstacles so I can ensure that my child will not fall further behind and will eventually thrive in school.

## **Too many exams.**

Help me find a school that will focus on my child's social and emotional development

## **My child is exceptional.**

Help me find a school that will ensure my child's continued growth so he or she will fulfill his or her potential, mature, and be prepared for college.

## **College, college, college.**

Help me find a school with an excellent academic program and outstanding reputation so I can ensure that my child gets into one of the select set of schools.

# Retention: Tracking

- Track the reasons students voluntarily depart the school
  - Identify what and why common threads exist. Examples may include:
    - Grade Level
    - Extracurricular Involvement
    - Transfer Schools
- While focus is on voluntarily attrition, consider any common threads among involuntary attrition.

# Retention: Measuring

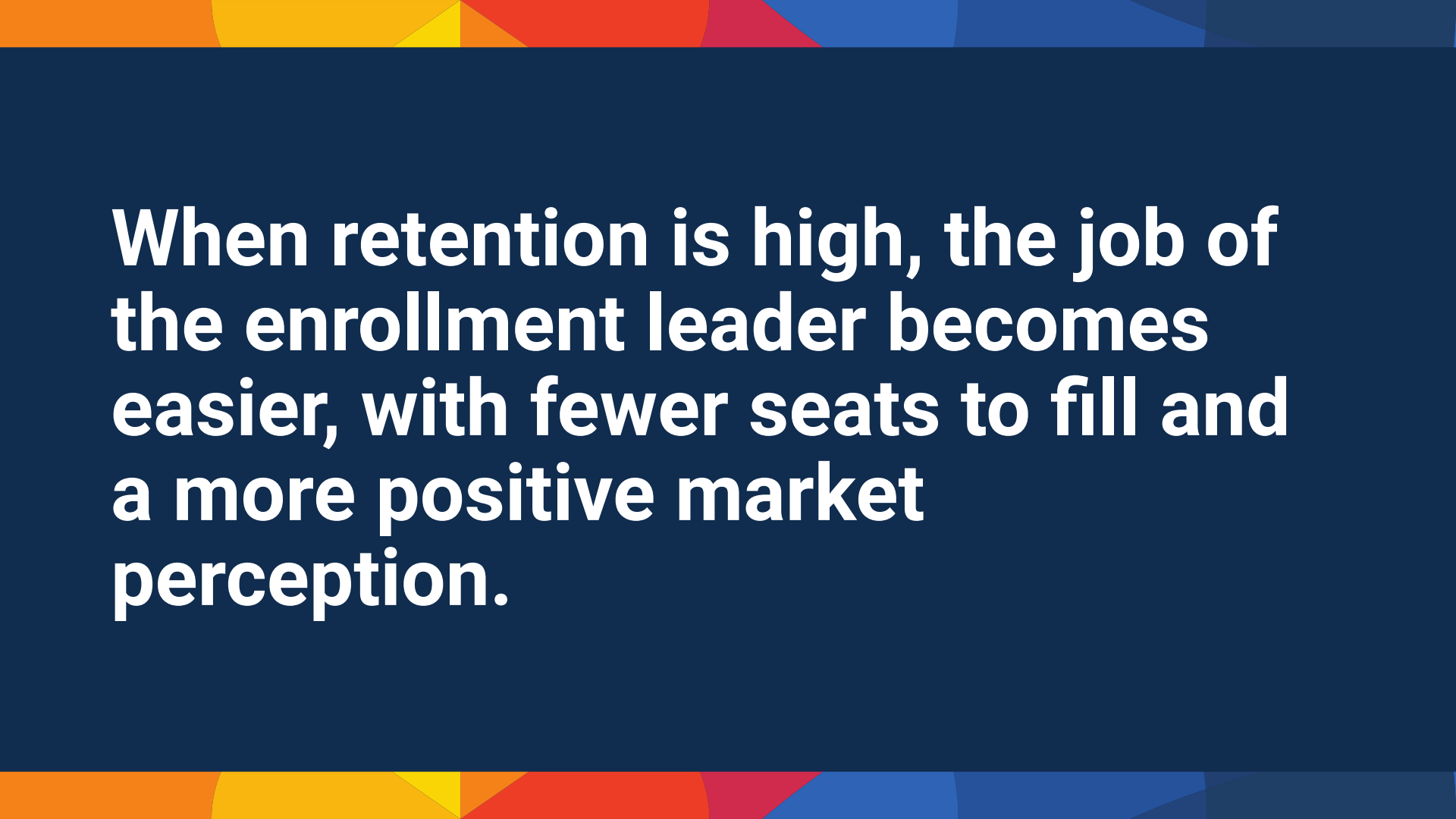
Measure attrition, including by grade and division level

- Compare to national and regional benchmarks, as well as school's historical attrition
  - The national and regional benchmark does not have to be our benchmark - aim high!
- Share data and discuss with retention committee members - seeing is believing!
- Short-term trends vs. consistent patterns

# Retention: Auditing

Audit the effectiveness of the retention program on a yearly basis

- Ensure there is sufficient representation among student groups for whom retention has been a challenge (ex: grade level, extracurricular)
- Work with school leaders to revise and adjust retention strategies
- Don't be too hard on ourselves!



**When retention is high, the job of the enrollment leader becomes easier, with fewer seats to fill and a more positive market perception.**



# Questions Boards Should Be Asking

- To what degree are we operating under an enrollment mindset rather than an admission posture?
- Which of the eight levers are most important for us?
- What data do we have to support that assessment?
- What is our plan & how do we measure success?

# Questions Heads Should Be Asking

- To what degree are we operating under an enrollment mindset rather than an admission posture?
- Do we have a retention committee?
- Does my enrollment team participate in professional development?
- Does my business officer share financial information regularly with faculty and staff?

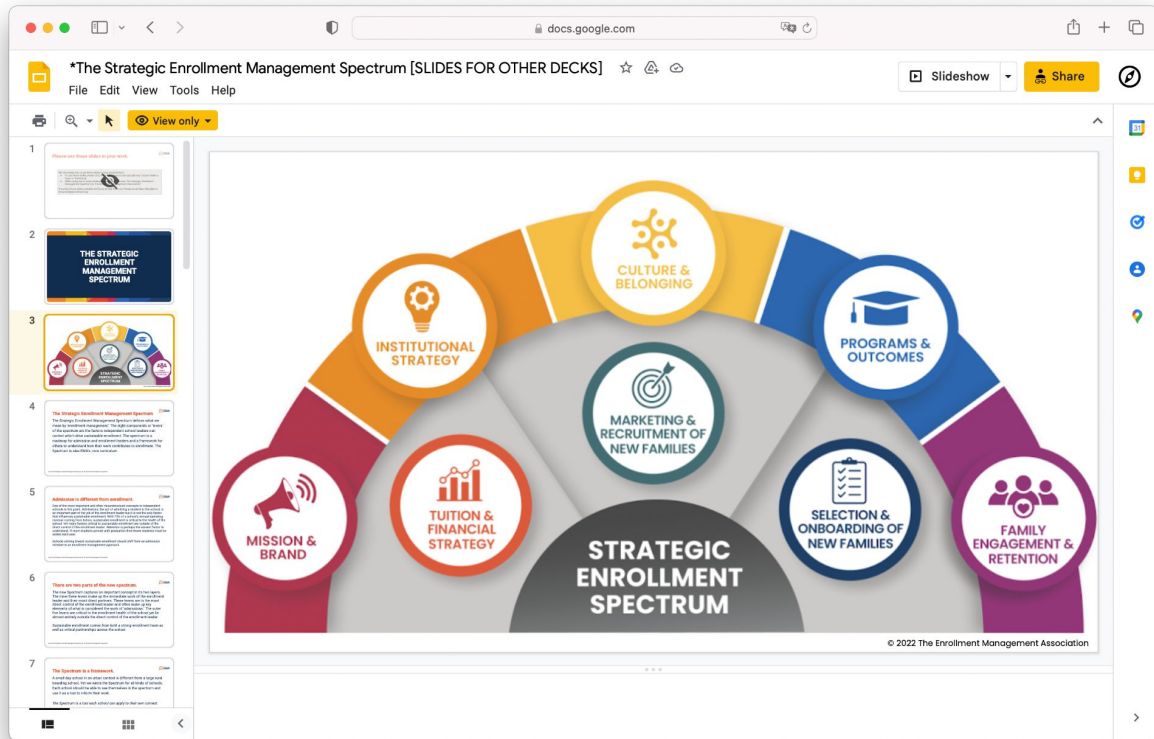


**What stood out to you?  
What is important at your  
school?**

# Q&A

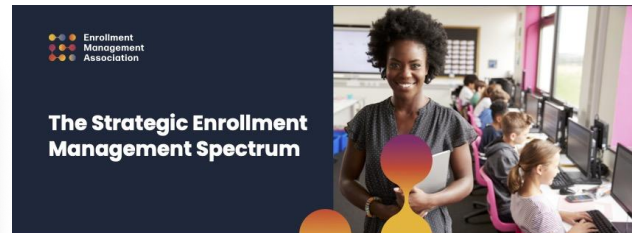
# Additional Resources

# enrollment.org/spectrum



The screenshot shows a Google Slides presentation with the following components:

- Title:** \*The Strategic Enrollment Management Spectrum [SLIDES FOR OTHER DECKS]
- Navigation:** Slideshow, Share, View only.
- Slide 1:** Overview slide showing the Strategic Enrollment Management Spectrum diagram.
- Slide 2:** THE STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT SPECTRUM
- Slide 3:** Overview of the Spectrum components.
- Slide 4:** The Strategic Enrollment Management Spectrum: From the School's Perspective. The Spectrum is a framework for admission and enrollment leaders and a framework for others to understand how their work contributes to enrollment.
- Slide 5:** Mission & Brand: Mission and brand are the foundation of the Spectrum. They define the school's purpose and identity, and they guide all other components of the Spectrum.
- Slide 6:** Tuition & Financial Strategy: Tuition and financial strategy is a critical component of the Spectrum. It ensures that the school's financial goals are aligned with its enrollment goals.
- Slide 7:** Marketing & Recruitment of New Families: Marketing and recruitment of new families is a key component of the Spectrum. It involves identifying and attracting new students to the school.
- Slide 8:** Selection & Onboarding of New Families: Selection and onboarding of new families is a critical component of the Spectrum. It ensures that the school's enrollment goals are met and that new students are well-prepared for school.
- Slide 9:** Family Engagement & Retention: Family engagement and retention is a key component of the Spectrum. It involves building strong relationships with families and ensuring that they are engaged in their child's education.
- Slide 10:** Programs & Outcomes: Programs and outcomes is a critical component of the Spectrum. It ensures that the school's programs are aligned with its enrollment goals and that students are achieving the desired outcomes.
- Slide 11:** Institutional Strategy: Institutional strategy is a key component of the Spectrum. It involves setting the school's long-term goals and ensuring that all other components of the Spectrum are aligned with these goals.
- Slide 12:** Culture & Belonging: Culture and belonging is a critical component of the Spectrum. It ensures that the school's culture is inclusive and that all students feel a sense of belonging.



## The Strategic Enrollment Management Spectrum



**The Strategic Enrollment Management Spectrum** defines what we mean by "enrollment management."

The Spectrum captures an important concept in its two layers. Across the two layers, there are eight components or "levers" that independent school leaders can control to drive sustainable enrollment. The Spectrum is a roadmap for admission and enrollment leaders and a framework for others to understand how their work contributes to enrollment.

**The work of admissions is different from the work of enrollment management.** Admissions, the act of admitting a student to the school, is an important part of the job of an enrollment leader but it is not the only factor that influences sustainable enrollment. With 70% of a school's annual operating revenue coming from tuition\*, sustainable enrollment is critical to the health of the school. Yet many factors critical to sustainable enrollment are outside of the direct control of the enrollment leader. Schools striving toward sustainable enrollment should shift from an admission approach to an enrollment management mindset.



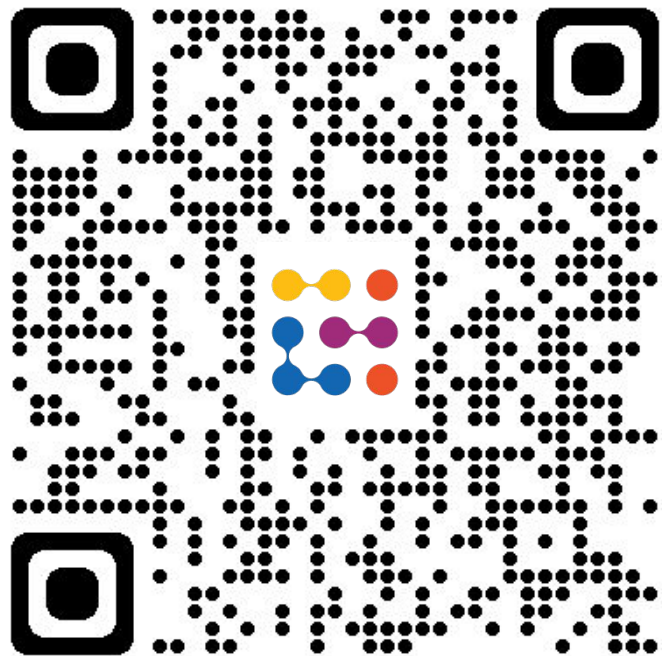
Learn More About the Key Components of The Strategic Enrollment Management Spectrum



# The 2022 Independent School Cost-Per-Enrollment Study

Strengthen Your Enrollment Management  
Strategy with New Industry Research

A joint report from the Enrollment Management Association, the National Association of  
Independent Schools, and the National Business Officers Association



Get the full report in the EMA Community!

# How to Manage a Wait Pool

Due to a surge in interest caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools are now managing wait pools for the first time. This mini-course offers strategies for organizing a wait pool and supporting families at all stages of the process.



**New Learning Pass course  
featuring Laurel Baker Tew!**

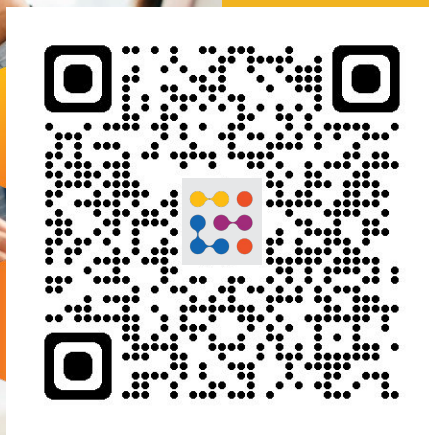




# Anti-Bias Training for Admission Committee File Readers

2-hour Online Workshop

January 24 @ 11 am ET  
\$99 Per Person or  
\$199 For Your Whole Team





**Thank you!**