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**Giving and Getting Involved:
A Guide to New Parent Philanthropy at Independent Schools**

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Abstract

Sending a child to independent school means making a significant financial investment in education. With the cost of yearly high school tuition approaching and often surpassing $50,000, the need for additional fundraising revenue can come as a surprise for many families. But the truth is, independent schools rely on charitable contributions to address the gap between the cost of tuition and the actual cost of educating each student. Current parents are solicited each year for an Annual Fund donation with the hopes that they will make a meaningful contribution at a level that feels appropriate for their family. Since parents are most active during the time that their students are enrolled in the school, it's important to maximize the relationship potential by getting parents involved in giving and volunteering as soon as possible. In order to best understand how to integrate new parents into the philanthropic life of the school, extensive research was conducted around how to build loyal fundraising relationships, what materials are most useful when it comes to educating new parents, and how volunteerism can impact fundraising. Data collected from a literature review, a series of expert interviews, and a content analysis of school giving webpages informed several recommendations for independent schools as they work towards building and nurturing a thriving culture of philanthropy. Evaluating capacity for a new parent program, researching and segmenting new families, focusing on engagement, providing useful and compelling materials, investing in volunteers, and soliciting strategically can all help ensure that new families are being thoughtfully and successfully introduced to fundraising. As educational landscape continues to evolve and decisions are being made about where and how children be educated, it's important to ensure a sustainable future for independent schools through effective fundraising practices.

Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Section 1. Introduction

When it comes to education, parents want to ensure they are making the best choices for their children. With so many options for home schools, public schools, charter schools, alternative schools, and independent schools, navigating the educational landscape can be a treacherous journey for many families. For some, making an investment in independent school education will be the path they take for one or more of their children. However, the choice to send a child to an independent school means making a significant financial investment. Independent schools charge tuition to ensure that students have access to a variety of extracurricular activities, that they can benefit from small classes taught by highly qualified faculty and staff, and that they are able to take advantage of personalized programming and support.

With many independent school tuitions approaching or surpassing $50,000 annually, it's easy to understand why most parents assume that tuition covers the full cost of educating their child(ren). However, tuition typically only covers 70-90 percent of the operating costs associated with the school each year. This difference between the price of tuition and the actual cost of educating each student is often referred to as the gap (Asen, 2012). In order to address that gap, schools often solicit Annual Fund donations from their school community. Current parents, parents of alumni, grandparents, faculty, staff, friends and appropriate organizations are typically asked to make a yearly Annual Fund gift to help offset some of the operating costs that aren't covered by tuition. For many schools, current parents represent the constituency with greatest participation in the Annual Fund, so engaging this group is particularly important. And since parents are typically most active in the life of the school during the years that their children are enrolled, it's important to engage current parents early on in their journeys to maximize relationship potential.

Purpose Statement and Paper Organization

The purpose of this paper is to understand how to best capture and build relationships with new parents as they enter the school to facilitate long- term giving and community involvement. The paper will first provide a review of relevant literature on the topic of independent school philanthropy and volunteerism. From there, it will outline the methods for data collection and analysis. Finally, it will offer detailed recommendations, implications for the sector, and opportunities for continued research. The deliverable goal of this project is to serve as a practical and applicable

framework for a new parent fundraising program that could be implemented and scaled for any independent school.

Section 2: Literature Review

The following literature review will touch on three topics that are fundamental to creating and nurturing a thriving culture of philanthropy at independent schools. Since much of the literature around fundraising focuses on relationship building, there will be an emphasis on the resources, tools, and strategies available to strengthen relationships with prospective donors. From there, the literature review will address the importance of donor education as well as the impact of volunteerism on philanthropy. Finally, three research questions that were informed by the review of the available literature will be presented and will continue to guide the remainder of the paper. Resources for the following literature review were collected from the Gleeson Library, Google Scholar, and other publications relevant to nonprofit management, fundraising and communications.

Building and Managing Successful Fundraising Relationships:

In the last 30 to 40 years, fundraising has become significantly less transactional (Sargeant & Shang, 2017.) Rather than focusing on discrete donations, fundraising has evolved to prioritize maintaining long term relationships with donors (Ahern and Joyaux, 2007.) At its core, fundraising is much more than soliciting gifts, it's about building loyalty and inspiring stakeholder engagement over time. In order to have a successful long-term fundraising relationships with parents, it's important to get to know who they are and to get a sense of their priorities, interest in getting involved, and preferred methods of outreach. Investing time and care into building relationships can help ensure satisfied and loyal donors who continue giving year after year (Sargeant & Shang, 2017.) Since Annual Fund gifts are solicited from families every year, a focus on donor loyalty is critical.

Nurturing relationships means taking the time to understand your donors and their behaviors. In order to "understand what motivates [donors] to give, how they like to be approached, the messages they prefer, the outcomes they want to see, how they like to have their gifts acknowledged, and so on," it's important to appropriately segment your donor markets (Sargeant & Shang, 2017.) There is no one size fits all answer when it comes to how to best segment a large groups of constituents, but there

are many already existing segmentation theories and models that can help an organization best understand how to effectively communicate with their publics.

One way to understand how to best segment with your parents may be to see where they fall in their donor cycle. There are several different iterations of a life cycle map that can be used to help ensure that your organization is engaging in appropriate and effective outreach. While the lifecycle map may look different depending on the needs of the organizations, it can be used to pinpoint where your parents currently are on their fundraising journey and where you'd like them to end up. Figures 1,2 and 3 show different examples of donor lifecycle maps:

Figure 1. Donor Lifecycle Map

The Donor Lifecycle Map*

Ultimate giving — First gift
Major or "stretch" giving — Second gift — Second-year active
Multi-year active

* "Donor Lifecycle Map" was published prior on 101fundraising.org by Sarah Clifton.

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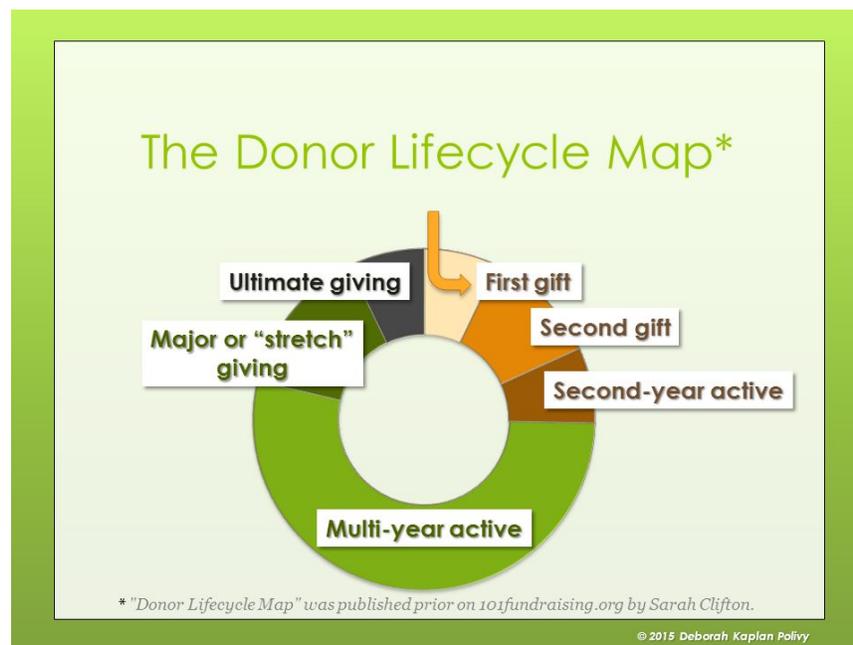
Source: Sarah Clifton, 2011.

Figure 2. Donor Development Cycle

DONOR CYCLE
The Donor Development Cycle

Source: SketchBubble, 2019

Figure 3. The Cycle of Donor Relations

Source: International Fundraising Congress, 2013

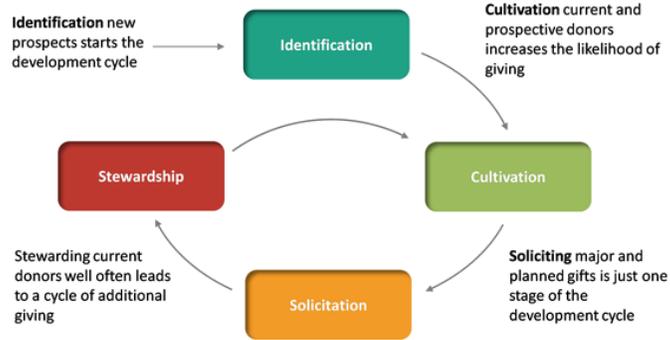Each map looks a bit different, but all three examples provide a framework through which to identify where donors currently are in their relationship with your organization and to help imagine a forward moving trajectory for each donor. It's important to think of a relationship with a donor as one that grows and evolves depending on what stage of the relationships each donor is in. A lifecycle map can also be a helpful way to better understand the effectiveness of tools used to engage with your donors (Polivy, 2014.) If donors are not moving along in the cycle at a reasonable rate, an organization may want to consider using a different approach. Not only does a life cycle map help guide and analyze a strategy for outreach, it can be an effective tool to help fundraisers better understand the full trajectory of each relationship (Polivy, 2014.)

Another way to segment incoming parents is by placing them into different groups depending on their experience with and motivation for choosing independent schools. In her book, *Philanthropy at Independent Schools*, Helen Colson identifies four different parent groups that are likely to appear in a school community: the public school parent, the foreign born parent, the financial-aid parent, and the consumer parent (Colson, 2015) . While this certainly isn't an exhaustive list of the type of parents who may find themselves at an independent school, it provides a useful framework for beginning to think about the ways development officers can segment parent groups for more effective outreach strategies.

Parents who fall into different groups may require a different strategy when it comes to education and stewardship (Colson, 2015.) For example, public school parents and foreign born parents may not "understand the economics of private-sector education" or "view their children's school as a charitable institution worthy of support" (Colson, 2015, p.6.) Therefore, parents in these groups may benefit from a greater initial investment in donor education to better understand the role of philanthropy at independent schools. Consumer parents on the other hand may understand philanthropy, but they may think of tuition as an investment and find themselves interested in "the nature and quality of the return" on their investment. Therefore, outreach focused on how their donations will improve the quality of their child's education can be particularly effective. And lastly, parents who receive financial aid may be "less able to offer generous support," but their participation in the Annual Fund has an impact when it comes to applying for and receiving grants (Colson, 2015.) Therefore, it's crucial that this parent archetype be thoughtfully engaged in the conversation and

understand that their contributions, regardless of size, can have an incredibly positive impact on the school community.

Donors can also be segmented by gift capacity, geographic location, philanthropic interests, etc. And since there are so many categories of donors and operational strategies, there's no real way to develop universal recommendations for successful segmentation (Rupp, Kern, & Helmig, 2014.) However, regardless of how your organization decides to best segment donors, it's important that outreach feels targeted and specific to each group. Segmenting is " not only a more respectful approach (treating donors as individuals), it makes good economic sense, as donors approached with a tailored solicitation that reflects their genuine concerns are interests are significantly more likely to respond, derive satisfaction from their giving and to give loyally over time" (Sargeant & Shang, 2017, p.182.) And with each group potentially requiring different strategies or tools, segmentation can help keep fundraisers organized and on track. Segmentation can also help organizations be thoughtful when it comes to the allocation of resources to reach different target groups (Rupp, Kern, & Helmig, 2014.) For example, if an organizations segments based on giving potential, it might make sense for that organization to expend more resources communicating with those individuals who are more likely to perform at a higher capacity and fewer resources on prospects who are unlikely to give or who will only make small gifts.

Stewardship is another important element of building successful fundraising relationships with donors (Sargeant & Shang, 2017.) Since we know that trust is an important part of successful donor relationships, it makes sense that an investment in stewardship strengthens a culture of philanthropy (Hon and Gronig 1999.) At its most fundamental level, stewardship is how organizations illustrate to their donors that there is a sense of ethical accountability for dollars donated (Tempel, 2001.) When donors give financial resources, they want to be sure that those funds are being appropriately managed and distributed. And not only do they want to be sure their dollars are being used for mission fulfilment, they may also want to be thanked for their gifts, given updates on how their gifts are being used, and communicated with regularly. Stewarding donors can be a commitment, but it is one that is critical for successful and long last relationships.

Once donors have been appropriately segmented, communicated with, and stewarded, it's important to take time to analyze the effectiveness of your relationships with your donors. Organizations can get a sense of how successful their relationships are with their donors by examining those relationships through the lenses of trust,

control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. Hon and Gronig (1999) developed the following definitions:

Trust refers to "one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party." It includes integrity, dependability and competence.

Control Mutuality is "the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another. Although some imbalance is natural, stable relationships require that organizations and publics each have some control over the other."

Commitment is "the extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote."

Satisfaction is "the extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other… a satisfying relationship is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs"

Evaluating these factors can help organizations understand their relationships with their publics, and in this case, with their donors. Organizations that take time to thoughtfully nurture relationships with donors will likely find that there are high levels of trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. Relationship nurturing also has significant influence on trust for annual and major gift donors as well as on control mutuality for major gift donors (Waters, 2011). Donors who have positive relationships with organizations will be more satisfied, loyal, and likely to give. Therefore it's important to dedicate time to building, managing, and evaluating your relationships with your donors.

Educating New Donors

In order to help donors make informed and appropriate decisions, it's important to educate them about fundraising at your organization (Sargeant & Shang, 2017.) When it comes to new parents who may not fully understand the culture of philanthropy at independent schools, donor education is crucial for robust donor engagement (Colson, 2015). Colson argues that before you solicit your parents, you have to ensure they first understand philanthropy, the economics of independent education, the need for volunteer support, and the ways philanthropy are critical for mission fulfilment. Once there is a basic understanding of these elements, a fundraising appeal naturally follows. While development is the most directly involved with

fundraising education, philanthropy should be supported and talked about in admissions materials, by the Head of School, and by trustees and other volunteers (Colson, 2015).

An important element of donor education is helping potential prospects understand why they should consider your organization a philanthropic priority. For many nonprofit organizations, it's important to position the organization in a way that helps donors understand why their particular organization, as opposed to a similar organization, is worthy of their support (Frumkin & Kim, 2001.) When it comes to independent schools, parents who have enrolled their children already bought in to the mission of the organization and see the unique advantages of the school they have chosen. Therefore, positioning becomes less of a priority, and helping parents understand why it's important to donate on top of paying tuition becomes the challenge. One important way to address this challenge is to build a compelling case for support (Sargeant & Shang, 2017.) This case for support should
" provide a detailed rationale to donors of why their support is needed and should engender a sense of immediacy, excitement and purpose" (Sargeant & Shang, 2017, p.209.) A case for support should also clearly articulate the mission and vision of the organization in a way that helps donors understand why their investment is critical for organizational sustainability (Garecht, 2016.) Donors have different motivations for giving to organizations, but many donors are motivated to give to organizations who have helped them or somebody they know (Van Slyke & Brooks, 2005.) So, a case for support that focuses on how schools are serving their students could be particularly effective for parent donors.

It's also important to communicate your case for support in a way that encourages people to take action. Getting people to care about and understand your organization is only part of the battle. Once donor prospects are educated, they need to feel compelled to take the steps to make a donation. In their article, *The Science of What Makes People Care*, Ann Christiano and Annie Neimand identify five principles that can be used to create a communication strategy to maximize audience reaction and catalyze behavior changes in constituents. The power to evoke meaningful emotions and the provision of a logical path to action are both critical to a successful communication campaign (Christiano & Neimand, 2018.) Weaving the importance of fundraising and meaningful calls to action into your organizations story is critical to stakeholder engagement and financial success. Therefore, it's important to consider the ways you engage with new parents as the initial messages they are hearing about your school can impact the level of new parent investment in your organization.

Volunteering and Giving

Volunteerism is an important part of the equation when it comes to understanding philanthropy and engagement. Since schools are not only looking for financial support, but general parent engagement, it's important to have appropriate spaces for parents to get involved via volunteer opportunities. According to Laura Gee, "there are many factors that will affect a household's choice to contribute time to the school, including but not limited to feelings of efficacy, social norms, school outreach, the saliency of the school, and whether the school has been chosen or is simply the default" (Gee, 2011, p. 553) Volunteerism promotes community engagement, the accomplishment of strategic goals, and productive relationships between volunteers and staff. Not only do volunteers benefit from the opportunity to learn new skills and become more involved in their school community, an effective and robust volunteer program can have positive impacts on fundraising initiatives.

Volunteerism and financial donations are closely linked. According to a research survey done by Fidelity, 87% of participants indicated that there is an overlap between the organizations they give to and the organizations they volunteer with. Additionally, 50% of participants indicated they give more financial support to an organization because they volunteer (Fidelity, 2014). Similarly, in Jeffrey Callen's 1994 article, *Money Donations, Volunteering, and Organizational Efficiency,* his research indicated that "donations of money and donations of time are complementary to each other at the organizational level" (Callen, 1994, p.224) Findings from Madalena Eca De Abreu et al also support the hypothesis that volunteerism and financial donations are connected providing evidence that "volunteerism has a positive association with the likelihood of someone being a regular donor" (Madalena Eca De Abreu et al , 2015, p. 47.) Ultimately:

> Individuals that volunteer for charitable organizations, irrespective of their demographic attributes, are more likely to give. Thus, an organization's volunteers should be among the first donor segments that nonprofit managers look to when seeking to develop and cultivate new sources of financial capital. By virtue of their commitment to volunteerism, these individuals are already invested in the organization's mission and are contributing time (Van Slyke & Brooks, 2005, p. 209)

There are certainly many benefits to having volunteers involved in a nonprofit organizations. Volunteers are dedicated to the organization, they value the mission, and are committed to seeing the organization succeed. And on top of that, the correlation between volunteerism and financial donations presents a valuable case for engaging new parents as volunteers early on in their journey with the school.

Research Questions:

Based on an in-depth review of relevant literature, the following questions are to be explored:

1. How can you build successful relationships with new parents?

2. What are the most effective ways to educate parents about philanthropy at independent schools?

3. How can volunteerism impact philanthropy at independent schools?

Conclusion

Successful fundraising is a dynamic and multifaceted process. It calls for an investment in relationship building, in strategic communication, and in ensuring opportunities for parents to feel like they are making a measurable difference through their volunteer efforts. While engaging current parents can be a time consuming and nuanced task, it can ultimately lead to a more successful, involved, and committed school community. A robust culture of philanthropy is critical to the sustainability of independent schools. In a world where there are so many different schooling options, independent schools are always vulnerable to changes in educational investment trends. Given the number of choices available, it's important for schools to be prepared to fundraise successfully in order to continue thriving well into the future.

Section 3: Methods and Approaches

Expert Interviews

In order to better understand philanthropy at independent schools, particularly how to engage new parents, a series of interviews were conducted with experts in the field. Interviews were held with Independent School Directors of Development, Independent

School parents who are involved in fundraising, and one Independent School Campaign and Fundraising consultant. Table 1 details the interviewees, their positions, and their areas of expertise. It was important to include both professionals in the field as well as independent school parents to understand the multiple nuanced perspectives of fundraising relationships.

Table 1: Expert Interviews

Jennifer Rawlings	Director of Development, Edmund Burke School
Margaret McGuigan	Director of Development, Saint James School
Meredith Jason	Trustee, Edmund Burke School Capital Campaign Chair, Edmund Burke School Volunteer, Edmund Burke School Past Parent, Edmund Burke School
Wendy Cividanes	Trustee, Edmund Burke School, Lowell School Development Committee Member, Edmund Burke School Annual Fund and Auction Volunteer Parent, Edmund Burke School & Sidwell Friends School
Patricia King Jackson	Principal, Patricia King Jackson Associates Fundraising and Management Consultant

The five expert interviews conducted were semi- structured interviews. Four of the five interviews were conducted over the phone and one of the interviews was conducted in-person. Every potential interviewee responded quickly and was eager to set up a time to speak with me. All interviews were conducted as planned with no issues or interruptions. It was important to record interviews so that they could later be transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Interviewees were not offered any compensation or incentives for their participation.

Two separate sets of questions were used to help guide the interviews. One set was intended for development professionals and the other set was designed for parents. Two sets of questions were created to account for the differences in experience between fundraiser and donor. It was important to start with a specific set of questions for each group in order to accurately compare results, but the semi structured nature of the interviews was helpful in allowing appropriate follow -up and additional questions as needed. Both sets of questions were intended as a guide to explore the major themes that emerged from the literature review and addressed the research questions. However, follow-up and additional questions varied by participant.

Table 2 shows the first set of questions which was used with development professionals

Table 2. Interview Questions Set One

Q1	What is (school name) currently doing to involve new parents in the school community?
Q2	How are you educating new parents about giving and getting involved?
Q3	What materials are you using to educate new parents about giving?
Q4	What kinds of events do you have for new parents?
Q5	Are you currently doing any prospect research? If no, is this something you'd like to do/plan to do with the appropriate resources
Q6	In your opinion, what is the role of the head of school in fundraising?
Q7	Do you communicate with the admissions office about prospects?
Q8	Do you give your parent families a specific ask in their solicitation letter?
Q9	With unlimited resources, what would an idea new parent program look like for your school?

Table 3 shows the set of questions that was used during the interviews with independent school parents.

Table 3. Interview Questions Set Two

Q1	Did you have experience with Independent Schools prior to sending your child (ren) to _____ (school name)?
Q2	What was your new parent experience as it relates to giving and getting involved?
Q3	What could have made your experience better?
Q4	Do you feel like you understood the culture of giving at (school name?)
Q5	Where there any events you felt were particularly helpful for you as a new parent?
Q6	What types of events would you have benefited from as a new parent?
Q7	Where there any particular staff relationships that were important on your journey to understanding giving?
Q8	How did you get involved in volunteering at the school?
Q10	Did your work as a volunteer help you better understand the role of giving at the school?
Q11	Did your work as a volunteer influence your likelihood/amount of giving?
Q12	Are there any particular materials you received from the school that were helpful when it came to understanding the ways to engage with the school community?
Q13	Do you feel comfortable with receiving a specific ask from the development office?

I also asked interviewees to share any fundraising materials from their organizations that they were comfortable allowing me to review. I was able to gain

access to several pieces of archival data including several pieces of fundraising materials giving and getting involved resources, fundraising letters, and other cultivation tools.

It may also be relevant to note that I have worked with all interviewees in a professional capacity prior to conducting interviews. As a result, I came into the interviews with a solid understanding of the organizations they are associated with and many of the fundraising practices discussed.

Content Analysis

Since education is such an important element for philanthropic success at schools, it was important to understand what kind of resources are readily available for parents. In order to get a sense of the consistency of information available for parents online about fundraising at schools, a content analysis was performed on the giving webpages of 10 Bay Area independent Schools. In order to considered for analysis, schools had to meet the following requirements.

1. Schools had to offer a high school component (Grades 9-12.)
2. Schools had to charge high school tuition over $45,000
3. Schools had to be located in the Bay Area
4. Schools had to operate as a day school
5. Schools had to have a clearly defined "giving" page on their website

Things that were not considered during the selection process were the gender of students (all girls, all boys and co-ed schools were considered), whether or not the school was secular or religiously affiliated, and the number of students enrolled. Schools were randomly selected- the first 10 schools that met the criteria during an online search for "Independent School in the Bay Area" were the schools that were chosen for data analysis.

The purpose of the analysis was to see what sort of information is readily available about the Annual Fund on the giving section of school websites. Once 10 schools were identified the same set of questions was asked for each website. Table 4 provides a complete list of questions.

Table 4. Content Analysis Questions

Q1	Was the Annual Fund fundraising goal clearly listed?
Q2	Did the school report on the percentage of parents who were participating in the Annual Fund?
Q3	Did the school identify what percentage of the operating budget was covered by the Annual Fund?
Q4	Did the school specifically identify what the "gap" amount is for each child??
Q5	Was there an option to designate an Annual Fund gift to a specific program?
Q6	Were parent Annual Fund Chairs listed?
Q7	Was there a Frequently Asked Questions section?
Q8	Did the giving section also provide information about volunteering?

Data collected during the expert interviews and the content analysis is intended to help provide a clearer understanding of what resources are available to parents, what they need to better understand philanthropy at Independent Schools and how getting involved through volunteer opportunities can help better understand the role of fundraising at schools.

Section 4. Data Analysis

What the Experts Say

Expert interviews were particularly helpful in understanding preferences and best practices in the industry when it comes to independent school fundraising. Interviews were semi-structured so every conversation was different, but several themes emerged throughout my interviews. There were areas were all five interviewees held the same opinions and some areas where they expressed different preferences.

Figure 4 identifies some areas where expert interviewees were in agreement. These included important strategies, tools, and motivations around independent school fundraising.

Figure 4. Similar Expert Interview Themes

Engagement	• Build relationships with staff and other families • Talk to parents and educate them about fundraising • Involve new parents in the community
Prospect Research	• Get a sense of your community • Concrete numbers help the advacement office and parent volunteers
School Culture	• Families should make gifts that they are proud of • If there is a close community and enthusiastic culture of giving, new families will be inspired to give
Volunteering	• Volunteers are more likely to understand giving • Volunteering impacts the number of gifts and amount of gifts schools receive
Education	• Parents are often confused by Annual Giving • Parents want to understand why they are being asked to donate

Each of my interviewees specifically mentioned the word "engagement" in reference to encouraging parents to get involved in fundraising. They all agreed that it's important to create foundational relationships prior to fundraising. This could mean creating relationships with other parents, with faculty and staff, or with the Head of School. Similarly, all interviewees, particularly those who work professionally in development, were enthusiastic about prospect research as a helpful tool in identifying doors and asking them for an appropriate gift. School culture was something that also emerged as a common denominator; new parents are more likely to get involved when there is a school culture that welcomes parents, encourages community building, and shares a common investment in the success of students. Unsurprisingly, interviewees also all agreed that donor education and volunteerism both play a role in the way that new parents conceive of their roles as donors.

While there seems to be quite a bit of general agreement on how to best encourage a successful culture of philanthropy, interviewees did differ on a few topics. Whether they disagreed on the usefulness of a particular strategy or on a particular element of a strategic approach, Figure 5 illustrates areas where my expert interviews were not aligned.

Figure 5. Different Expert Interview Themes

Solicit with Specifit Amounts	• Specific amounts make some interviewees hesitate • Some interviewees prefer offering a range amount while others agree that a whole number is more impactful
Events	• Opinions vary on the types of events that benefit for new families • Opinions varied on which types of events should include fundraising and which should only be good will events
Meetings With Every Family	• Some experts felt that having the Head of School meet with every single new family might not always be to best use of his/her time or resources.

Interviewees often were not in total disagreement when it came to the above topics, rather their idea on how to best use strategies varied.

The data gathered from the content analysis was valuable in determining what type of information is available to parents online about giving and volunteering. Please see Table 5 for the data collected by school name

Table 5. Content Analysis Data

School Name	Tuition	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Lick-Wilmerding School	44,127	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no
Drew School	49,500	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
Urban School	48,941	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no
Castilleja	49,900	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	no	no
Menlo School	49,119	yes	no	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no
Schools of the Sacred Heart	45,900	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	yes	no
College Preparatory	46,000	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
San Domenico School	50,372	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes	no
Head-Royce School	45,600	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes	no
Crystal Springs Uplands	49,110	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes

According to the content analysis, the following percentages are true of schools considered:

- 40% of school websites clearly listed the Annual Fund fundraising goal
- 20% of school websites report on the percentage of parents who were participating in the Annual Fund
- 20% of school websites identified what percentage of the operating budget was covered by the Annual Fund
- 10% of school websites identify what the "gap" amount is for each child
- 40% of school websites provided an option to designate Annual Fund gifts to specific programs
- 20% of school websites listed their parent Annual Fund Chairs
- 40% of school websites provided a frequently asked questions section
- 10% of school websites provided information on how to volunteer on their support page

Figure 6 shows the same data presented in a bar graph to help visualize how many schools are not providing enough information on their giving website pages.

Figure 6. Content Analysis Bar Graph
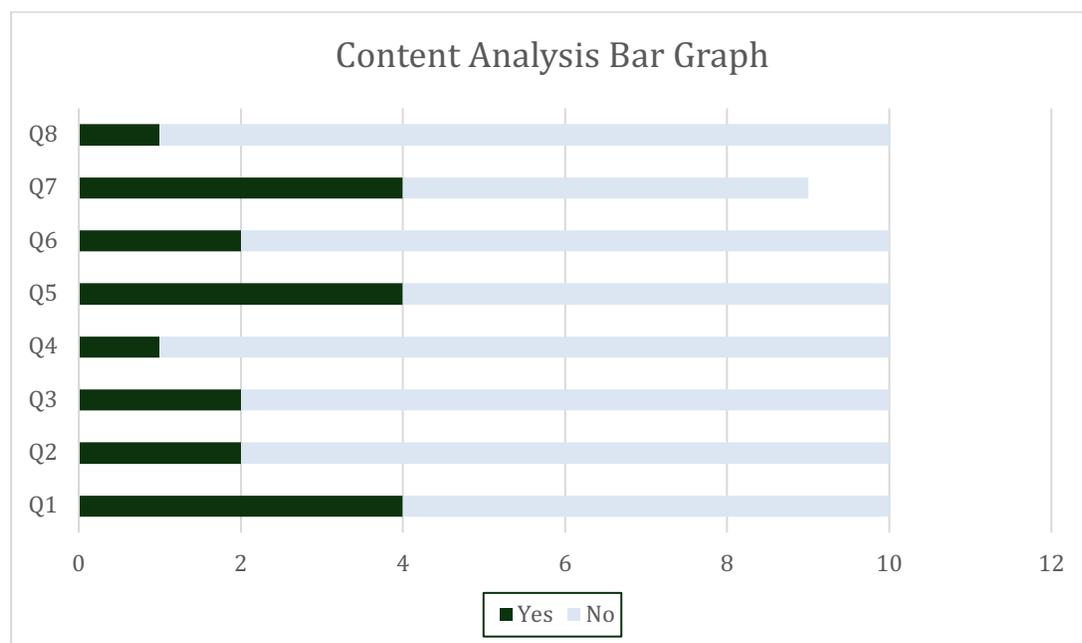
Given how many times a response of "no" was recorded for each question, it's clear that there's space for schools to include more resources on their websites with helpful and specific facts and figures. When it comes to specific figures that vary by school community, it was interesting to see that many school's did not list their Annual Fundraising goal, the percentage of parents who participate, the amount of the operating budget covered by the Annual Fund, or the number of dollars in the gap between the cost of tuition and the price to educate each student. In terms of general information, few schools provided a frequently asked questions page which is an easy resource to help parents better understand the roles and expectations in their school community. Many schools didn't provide the names of Annual Fund co-chairs or other volunteer leaders to get in touch with in the event that there were any questions or concerns that parents wanted to discuss with a peer parent or include information about volunteering on their giving/supporting pages. And lastly, it was also interesting to see that some schools allowed the option to designate Annual Fund gifts to specific programs. Historically, Annual Fund dollars are intended to be "unrestricted" meaning that they can be used to address whichever need is the highest priority. Giving donors the option to restrict their dollars without offering an explanation as to why or how can cause confusion around the typical intention of an Annual Fund Donation.

New Parent Giving and Getting Involved Mind Map

Taking into consideration the data collected and analyzed from an extensive literature review, five expert interviews, and a brief content analysis, the following mind map was created in order to better understand the many elements that factor in to creating a thriving culture of philanthropy that meaningfully integrates new families for maximized fundraising and volunteer potential. Given how many elements go into a successful fundraising program, a mind map felt like the most appropriate figure to use in order to best visualize the work that needs to be done during an Annual Fund cycle.

Figure 7: New Parent Giving and Getting Involved Mind Map

Source: Author's Creation, 2019.

Section 5: Implications and Recommendations

Fundraising will continue to play an important role in the future of nonprofit sector. Successful strategies for finding, soliciting, and stewarding donors allow organizations access to the philanthropic gifts of time and money that support mission fulfilment. While there is a huge variety in the types of organizations operating within the sector, every single one of them benefits from the support of their stakeholders. For independent schools in particular, that support is critical to sustain operating budgets, maintain and grow facilities, and continue implementing programs that will allow children to thrive. An investment in education is an investment in the future generation of leaders, activists, and citizens. Ensuring that the youth of today are prepared to take on the future of tomorrow is a responsibility we all bear.

While independent schools aren't the best fit for every student, they do represent 25% of all schools in the US so ensuring their continued success is critical to the educational landscape of our country. However, with such a high price tag, changes

in economic trends can take a toll on independent schools. Therefore, it's important that independent schools be able to fundraise effectively. And since part of effective fundraising is maximizing donor potential, it's important to get new parents involved in the philanthropic life of the school as early as possible. Taking into consideration the data collected and analyzed after an extensive literature review and a series of expert interviews, the following section will present some recommendations for independent schools seeking to maximize the fundraising potential of new parents. While certainly every independent school is different and may use more specific fundraising approaches that are applicable to their own school community, these recommendations will help provide a general framework that can begin to shape a successful new parent giving and getting involved program.

1. Evaluate Your School's Capacity for a New Program

The first step in building a successful new parent giving and getting involved program is to realistically evaluate your school community. Implementing a new parent program will likely take considerable time and resources. Depending on how sophisticated the program is and what sort of resources are already being used to welcome new parents, it's possible that there will need to be a significant investment of staff time, the creation of additional print/online materials, and the planning and execution of additional events. Before getting started, it's important to understand what the school's capacity is for a concerted effort on new families and to scale the program appropriately. It's always better to start small and continue to grow the program rather than retroactively scaling back a poorly performing program. New parents are only introduced to giving and getting involved once. It's critical for them to have a positive experience early on in their school career.

Before delving into a new program, it's important to get by-in from the faculty and staff members who will be involved. In order to get a sense of whether or not there will be enough administrative support for the program, there needs to be clearly defined roles and expectations for participating parties. Whose job will it be to input new family data, who will do the prospect research, who will write copy and send invitations to new parents, who will schedule the meetings, who will attend those meetings, who is responsible for follow up, who will write educational materials for new parents, who will be involved in planning new parent events? Figuring out the answer to all of these questions (and more) before launching the program will ensure that it runs more smoothly. While the Development office should be responsible for much of the program, It's likely that the admissions office will need to be involved in the collection of

new parent data, the communications office may need to be involved in the writing/reviewing of copy, the Head of School will need to be involved in the new parent meetings themselves, and any new parent events may need to be coordinated with the parents association. A robust new parent program will involve the cooperation of a large portion of the school community so being clear about roles, responsibilities, and expectations is very important. Please see Table 6 for a suggested breakdown of roles And not only is it important to clarify roles, it's also critical that the greater administrative school community understand and appreciate why an investment in new parent fundraising is being made. The implementation of a new parent program provides a great opportunity to educate or re-educate faculty and staff about the importance of philanthropy. In order for a new parent program to reach its full potential, its important that the school community be bought in to the importance of the program and the role of philanthropy at the school.

Table 6. Suggested Administrative Roles

Role	Responsibility
Admissions Office	-Provide new family data from application forms -Provide any anecdotal evidence from new family interviews -When possible, indicate which families are paying full tuition and which families are receiving financial aid
Prospect Researcher	-Run wealth screenings to identify giving capacity for each new family -segment parent list by category of prospects (sort parents by highest capacity to lowest capacity) -create detailed profiles for as many families as possible starting with highest capacity families
Director of Development	-Send welcome letter to new families (signed by Head of School) -Provide Head of School profiles of new families prior to any meetings -Sit in on meetings with Head of School- offer an explanation of giving and getting involved at the end of the meeting -With the help of prospect research, identify an appropriate ask amount for each new family

Assistant Director of Development	-Manage the scheduling of new parent meetings - Attend any new parent orientation events where staff have speaking roles and talk about the Annual Fund -Manage post meeting follow-up- thank parents for joining, send solicitation letter with ask amount - Work with Parents Association to plan and schedule appropriate new parent events
Director of Communications	-Review all outgoing letters and solicitations to new parents - Assist with the production of any new materials that need to be produced -Coordinate event outreach with currently scheduled events -Collaborate with Development Office to provide online materials
Parents Association Representatives	-With the support of the Development Office, plan and execute appropriate new family orientation events - Be available to speak with new families and offer info/insight about philanthropy at your school

While evaluating your schools readiness is just the first step in implementing a new parent program, it's crucial that care be taken to best understand what a new parent program would look like at your school. Before diving in, think about what is feasible for your school community and think strategically about using your resources to incorporate new parent giving into any existing structures and into the greater school community.

2. Research and Segment Your Incoming Families

In order to build the strongest relationships with incoming parents, it's important to get to know and understand your parents as they join your community. If possible, schools should consider making an investment in prospect research to better understand what kind of giving capacity, skills, interests, and personalities are enrolling. With limited resources, independent schools don't always feel like prospect research it's the best use of dollars, but it can be an amazing foundation on which to build relationships. And not only can starting the relationship early yield more fundraising success during the years the parents are at school, it has the potential to foster relationships that extend past the graduation date of their child. Prospect research can help identify which parent groups your new parents fall into, what strategy you might use to engage with them, and which donors have the potential to make major gifts to

the institution. In her book *Prospect Research: A Primer for Growing Nonprofits*, Cecilia Hogan offers a great introduction for organizations just beginning to engage in prospect research. She makes a compelling case for prospect research, arguing that the work done before the first meeting may be the most important work you do in your relationship building.

While some schools may have the resources to research and meet with every new family, other schools may only be able to meet with the top 30 percent of new parent donors or even maybe just the top 10 prospects. Prospect research can help prioritize families so schools have an idea of who the top prospects are and help provide useful background information that may inform and guide the direction of a meeting conversation. And even if a school isn't in a position to meet with individual families, knowing who the highest priority families are can help the development office make an extra effort to get those families involved in other school community events. While schools can prioritize donors by a variety of categories, the following table can provide a helpful model for prioritizing families based on giving capacity.

Table 7. Priority Segmentation

Student First name	Student Last Name	Parent Salutation	Priority	Wealth Rating	Major Gift Capacity	Real Estate	Annual Fund Ask
John	Doe	Jane and Jack Doe	1 - Very	$2,500,001 - $5,000,000	$100,001 - $250,000	$2,100,000 Purchased for $1,700,000	$7,500-$10,000
Jane	Smith	Polly and Patrick Smith	2- High	$1,000,001 - $2,500,000	$50,001 - $100,000	$1,300,000 purchased for 500,000	$2,500-$5,000
Abby	Road	John and Ringo Road	3- Medium	$500,001 - $1,000,000	$25,001 - $50,000	$800,000 purchased for 825,000	$750-$1,000
Kermit	Frog	Frank and Francis Frog	4-Low	$250,001 - $500,000	$10,001 - $25,000	$400,000 purchased for 345,000	$1-1$50

While schools may want to include more biographical information for each family or some additional notes, this can provide a rough template for prioritizing families. Maybe meetings are held with those families who fall into the very high or high priority, or maybe families can sign up in small groups to meet with the Head of School. Either way, it's important to appropriately a scale a new parent program to the size of your school community and the availability of resources. Schools who find they are likely unable to research, meet with, and personally steward all new parents will need to consider starting with a slightly smaller new parent program. It's important to take a strategic and realistic approach to welcoming new families.

Lastly, integrating the new parent program into the current school calendar can be a challenge, so evaluating timing before launching is critical. It's likely that new families will be exhausted with other campus orientation events so thinking through appropriate times to add new events or opportunities to include fundraising messages in existing events is important. Similarly, Development staff will need to be thoughtful about the flow of solicitations. Current parents and new parents will likely be solicited at different times in the year, particularly if all new parents are being invited to meetings with the Head of School. For example, it's important to have the new parent meetings as early in the year as possible. Many schools report on parent participation at the end of December. For many schools, the goal is to have the majority of parents having already participated in the Annual Fund by this time. The earlier new parents understand the Annual Fund, the greater likelihood that they will be able to make their gifts by December 31. Similarly, it also helps ensure that new parents have an accurate sense of what the giving expectation is so that they are able to consider a gift that is in line with what the development office has asked them for. If schools wait until the spring to conduct meetings, it's likely that new parents will have already heard fundraising messages from current parents or through other school communications and they may make an uninformed gift.

3. Focus on Engagement and Building Relationships

A reoccurring theme in both the literature review and the expert interviews is the power of focusing on engagement and relationships building when it comes to nurturing a thriving culture of philanthropy. In reality, asking for money is only a very small part of fundraising. The greatest expenditure of time and resources comes in building successful relationships with potential donors. Taking the time to educate parents about giving at the school, providing them with opportunities to get involved as

volunteers, giving them a voice in committee meetings, getting a feel for skills and talents, and stewarding them appropriately can all help ensure that parents are motivated and inspired to make meaningful gifts to your school year after year.

One of the things that both parents I interviewed appreciated was the opportunity to meet with the Head of School one on one. While the meetings themselves focused on getting the know the family and talk about the students, one of the long term effects was opening a dialogue that made solicitations from the Head of School seem more authentic and appropriate. If the Head of School is unable to meet individually with parents, inviting them to smaller intimate gatherings like a coffee or a breakfast can be a nice way to build meaningful relationships with a greater portion of the parent body. Whether it's one large even with new parents, casual events with smaller groups or new parents or one on one meetings with individual families, the opportunity to create a connection with the Head of School will go a long way in creating trusting and loyal relationships with parents.

Similarly, events that are tailored specifically for new parents to get to know each other and learn more about the community can help families feel more engaged in the life of the school. For some parents big all-school events are a great way to get involved, but for some families, those types of events can be intimidating. Similarly, some parents enjoy events that are held during the day, but because of work schedules, some families may feel excluded from participating. It's important to create events of varying sizes and that occur at different times of the day and week so that all new families that would like to get involved feel like they can attend events that fit into their lifestyle. Not only does the planning of events often provide opportunities to volunteer, events are a space where people can learn more about philanthropy.

Another way to help parents who feel less comfortable in social settings is to pair new families with a returning "buddy" family. The returning families can help new parents understand the rhythm of the school, answer any questions, and be a friend at events and meetings. This type of relationship can allow community building without a tremendous amount of resources from the school. It can just be a simple way for people to feel seen, heard, and welcomed into a community. Whether it's an appreciation event, a community building event, a fundraising event, or a casual coffee between buddy parents, the importance of giving and getting involved should be communicated in a thoughtful and appropriate way. The more philanthropy becomes part of the conversation, the greater the chance that people feel comfortable and confident getting involved.

There are always opportunities to get parents more involved in the life of the school, even with limited resources. For new parents, the earlier they get involved, the more opportunities there are to engage with them. Parents are often eager to get involved in the community, but they may not know exactly how to begin the process. A focus on engagement will ensure that your school is focused on building meaningful relationships, not just soliciting donors.

4. Provide Access to Compelling and Informative Materials

Donors who understand and value the mission of an organization are more likely to consider contribute time and resources. If there is a clear need for support and a compelling case to be made for giving, donors will feel like their gifts are making a tangible difference. This can be particularly true at independent schools where parents may not come to the community understanding the need for philanthropic and volunteer support.

In order for parents to make the most informed decisions, it's critical that they have access to a variety of materials that answer questions, that clearly define community practices and expectations, and that point new parents to the appropriate places to ask additional questions. The types of materials a school can offer will depend on the resources available. Some schools may be able to provide beautifully designed fundraising materials to hand out at meetings and events. Other schools may find that printing and design costs may be prohibitive. But regardless of whether the school can provide glossy guides to giving, parents need to have some readily available source of information that they can access to better understand fundraising.

This also means maximizing giving pages on websites. The content analysis indicated that there is room for many schools to augment the amount of information that is available online about fundraising and volunteering. As often as possible, schools should provide their fundraising goals, updates on parent participation, a breakdown of how the Annual Fund supports the operational budget and the amount of the gap for each student. Interviews with parents also indicated that a frequently asked questions resource is particularly helpful as well as information about who to reach out to for additional questions.

Information is powerful. The truth is, schools really do depend on charitable donations in order to provide the best experience for their students. The more they are able to communicate with facts, figures, and resources, the more parents will begin to understand the importance and value of donating.

5. Nurture a Thriving Volunteer Program

Both the literature review and the expert interviews indicate that there is a relationship between giving and volunteering. Whether its training parents to engage in peer-to-peer solicitation, creating opportunities for them to get involved in planning events, or even thinking critically about who to invite to the join the Board of Trustees, an investment in volunteerism is an investment in building a strong culture of philanthropy. It's important that new parents begin to feel invested in the school, that they have an opportunity to build community with staff and other parents, and that they feel like their work has a meaningful impact on the organization. To ensure all of these things happen, schools need to take their volunteer programs seriously. When it comes to building a strong volunteer program, schools should consider accurate volunteer recruitment and placement, effective volunteer management, and appropriate volunteer acknowledgement and appreciation.

The first step in ensuring volunteers are happy is aligning their skills with the needs of the school. Volunteers want to feel like they are having a real impact on the organization, so pairing them with meaningful jobs where they feel confident and comfortable is critical. One way to do this is to create and provide clear job descriptions with the level of time commitment required, skill requirements and specific duties. This can help ensure that volunteers are matched with the appropriate positions (Brudney, 2012). It can be very discouraging for volunteers to show up only to find that there's no real job for them to do so it's important to have a variety of jobs available and ready. Parents might not want to commit to a job that required them to come in three times a week, but they may consider coming in on a monthly basis or taking a stack of letters home to stuff and mail. When possible, schools should provide volunteer opportunities for a variety of availability, skill, and commitment. See Appendix ? for an example of volunteer job descriptions.

Once the right volunteers have been recruited and matched with appropriate positions, thoughtful management can go a long way in building long lasting relationships. Volunteers need to feel productive, do work that challenges them, feel empowered and have opportunities for growth (Cnaan, R. A., & Cascio, T. A., 1998). To do this, organizations need to provide volunteers them with proper training, ongoing communication, evaluation of performance and recognition (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2005.) Ensuring that your volunteers feel prepared and have the materials and support they need to succeed is crucial. Please see Appendix? For an example of a helpful volunteer solicitors guide.

What also became apparent through the expert interviews is that one of a school's greatest volunteer assets is a strong group of parent solicitors. While solicitations from a major gifts officer or a Head of School can be very powerful, there is something particularly effective about peer-to-peer solicitations, particularly at small independent schools where community is often an important part of the culture. This is especially true when it comes to drawing in new parents who might not fully understand philanthropy at independent schools. Parents who are already supporting a school can oftentimes provide the most compelling cases for giving. It's incredibly meaningful to have a fellow parent explain the reasons she donates and ask a new parent to join her in supporting a school that is committed to the growth and education of your children.

6. Solicit Strategically

Nothing encourages people to give quite like actually asking them to. While there is some controversy around the effectiveness of including specific ask amounts in solicitations, four out of the five interviewees indicated that including a specific ask in a solicitation is a good strategy for new parent engagement. This might look like a specific number or it might look like a giving level range, but parents sometimes need a concrete figure to help them realistically consider their families contribution. Similarly, thinking strategically about who should be soliciting each parent is important. Should it be another parent, a board member, a staff member? Several interviewees agreed that having a peer parent solicit is particularly impactful and can be a great way to encourage a sense of school community between parents who have kids in similar grades, activities, or friend groups.

<center>**Section 6: Conclusions**</center>

Limitations

There is such an extensive range of independent schools, development professionals, and parents that this research was restricted to the experiences and data from a limited group of individuals and school websites. Moving forward, a much more compressive study could be conducted to ensure that the conclusions drawn and the recommendations suggested are reflective of a greater percentage of the independent school community.

Moving Forward

As incredibly important decisions continue to be made around education at the individual, national, and international level, it's important to remember that all schools experience different challenges. For independent schools, the challenge remains keeping tuition at a level that allows for a diverse group of students to join the community while still having the resources available to fulfill their missions. For many independent schools, the programs that make them unique are the ones that are supported by annual fundraising initiatives. In order for those programs to thrive, it's critical to have a robust culture of philanthropy. It is my hope that this project can provide schools with the tools to start being more strategic about the ways they integrate new parents into their community in order to ensure loyal fundraising relationships and long term sustainability.

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Appendix A. List of Schools and Websites for Content Analysis

Drew School	https://www.drewschool.org/support-us/supporting-drew
Lick-Wilmerding School	https://www.lwhs.org/support/annual-fund
Urban School of SF	https://www.urbanschool.org/support/annualfund
Castilleja	https://www.castilleja.org/give/annual-fund
Menlo	https://www.menloschool.org/support-menlo/annual-fund.php
Convent and Stuart Hall	https://www.sacredsf.org/giving/annual-fund
College Preparatory School	https://college-prep.myschoolapp.com/page/support-prep/annual-fund?siteId=841&ssl=1
San Domenico School	https://www.sandomenico.org/giving/the-san-domenico-fund
Head- Royce School	https://www.headroyce.org/hrs/giving/annual-fund
Crystal Springs Uplands School	https://www.csus.org/giving/supporting-crystal

Author's Bio

Gyra earned her Bachelor's Degree from the University of Richmond where she double majored in English and Latin American Studies. She has enjoyed working in independent school advancement for the last six years. She is currently pursuing her Masters of Nonprofit Administration to better understand how nonprofit organizations function and gain valuable leadership experience. She is looking forward to staying and San Francisco and continuing her career at The Bay School, where she will work as the Annual Funds and Events Manager. When she's not at her desk, you can find her smuggling pizza into movie theaters, perusing SF's amazing bookstores, enjoying the outdoors (while avoiding the hills) and stocking up on Trader Joe's cheeses.