



Reimagining Enrollment

Data-Driven Strategies for Sustainable Growth

From reactive tactics → a mission-aligned enrollment system

The moment we're in

Independent and faith-based schools are navigating shifting demographics, heightened competition, and increasingly discerning families. This session explores how school leaders can move their organizations beyond reactive tactics and toward a sustainable, data-informed enrollment strategy that aligns mission, marketing, admissions, and retention.

We'll focus on three moves:

- Find and fix friction points across the family journey
- Measure what matters (leading + lagging indicators)
- Turn insights into a 90-day action plan that builds trust with both team and board



You'll leave with

- A friction audit checklist
- A KPI menu + dashboard wireframe
- A 90-day diagnostic sprint plan

Flow: Context → Diagnose → Measure → Act

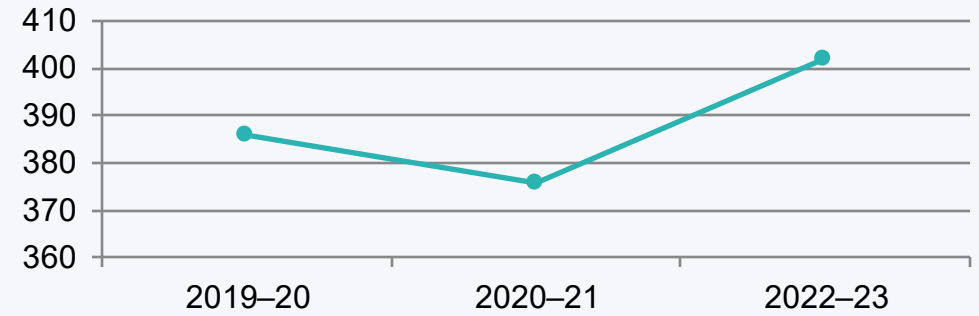
Why this matters (right now)

Shifting demand + more choice + more discerning families

Independent & faith-based schools are navigating:

- Competition is broader than other independent schools (public, charter, online).
- Digital-first marketing expectations are now the norm.
- Post-pandemic median enrollment has recovered overall — but many schools are still declining.
- Boards expect sustainable growth: mission impact + financial sustainability + community trust.

Median enrollment (NAIS schools)



Source: NAIS Trendbook excerpt



Enrollment is a year-round system — not a seasonal activity

Align mission, marketing, admissions, and retention into one operating model

When teams work in silos, schools get:

- Lack of visibility
- Unpredictable pipelines
- Inconsistent messaging
- Stressful “deadline seasons”
- Attrition surprises

A sustainable enrollment model looks like a flywheel:



Key idea: Growth and retention are equal priorities.

“Enrollment management encompasses far more than admissions statistics.”

It’s leveraging data to tell a coherent story across student experience, demographics, marketing, and program branding to understand why families choose to apply, enroll, and donate to your institution.

Market & Demand

- Who are we for?
- Where are families coming from?
- What’s changing in our area?

Funnel & Fit

- Where do families drop off?
- Which segments convert?
- How long does the process take?

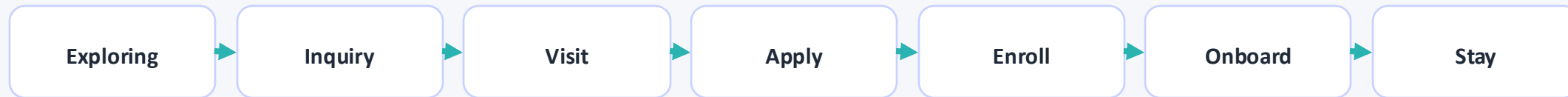
Experience & Retention

- Why do families stay?
- What predicts attrition?
- How does belonging show up?

Identify friction points (before they become losses)

Map the family journey from first click to re-enrollment

Where does momentum slow down?



Hint: friction often hides in “hand-offs” and unclear expectations.

Common friction points to audit

- Response time to inquiries (hours, not days)
- Tour/visit scheduling and follow-up cadence
- Clarity on affordability: total cost + financial assistance process
- Application length, required steps, and “stuck” moments
- Offer communication and enrollment deadlines



Measure what matters (and define it once)

Use a small set of shared metrics to drive action

A practical KPI menu

Metric of Value	Leading indicators (predict outcomes)	Lagging indicators (report outcomes)
Demand	Website engagement, inquiry-to-tour rate, lead source quality	Applications volume, applicant mix
Applications	Time-to-respond, app completion %, visit NPS/feedback	Yield, net tuition per enroll
Retention	Re-enrollment intent, attendance flags, family “temperature checks”	Attrition, persistence by segment
Trust	Insight into cost & aid, belonging signals, community referrals	Parent advocacy, re-enrollment %, referrals

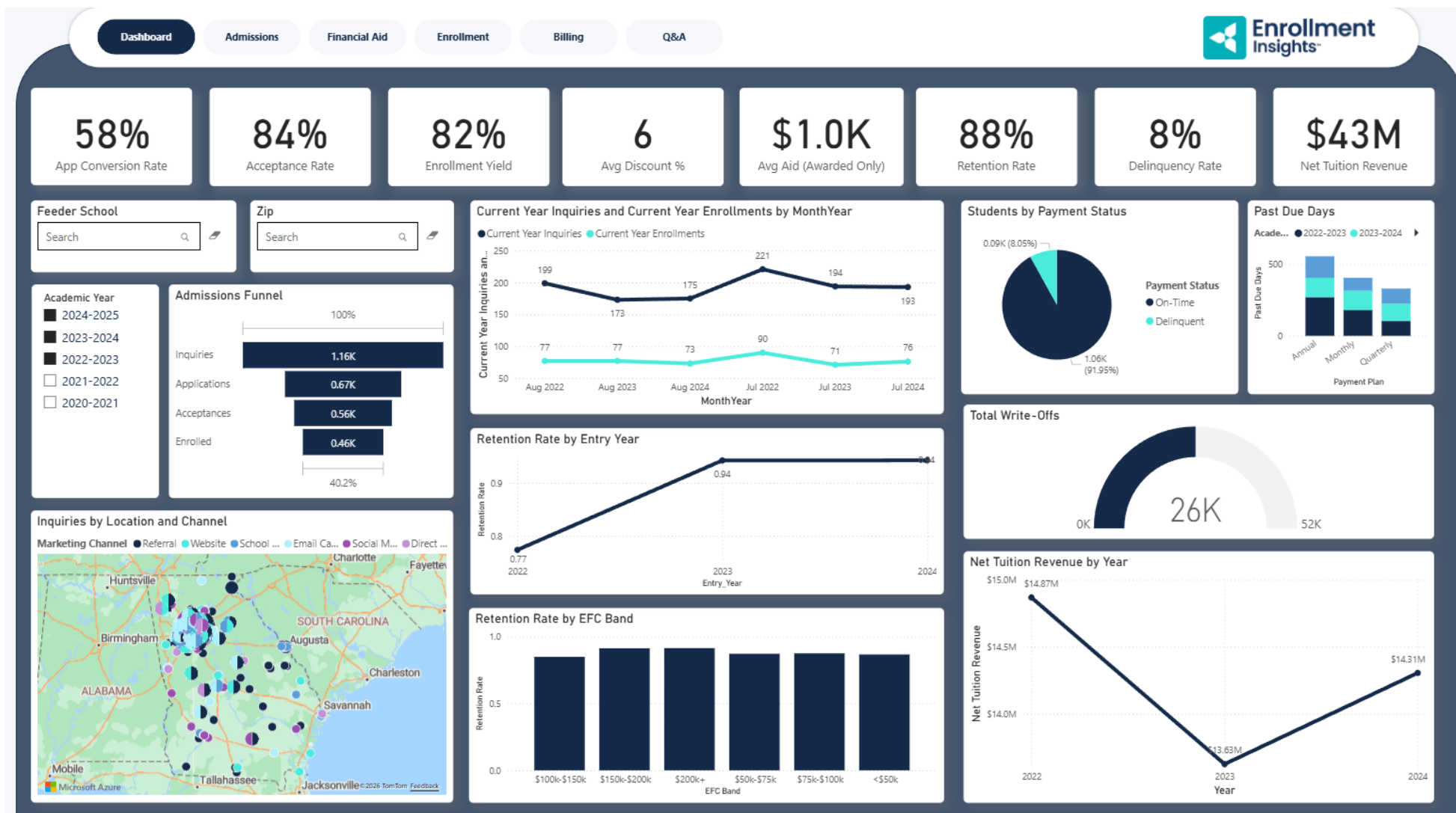
Benchmark smartly: tools like DASL help schools compare figures, set goals, and make data-driven decisions.

A one-page dashboard your team uses weekly

Consistency beats complexity — make it visible, shared, and actionable



"Enrollment Insights aligns school leaders and their boards with clear, real time, actionable intelligence about their entire school's funnel, from point of leads and inquiries all the way through re-enrollment."



Design principle:

Use technology to remove friction — and people to create trust.

Admission teams can infer what families need by listening closely across touchpoints.

Make it easier

- Fast response SLAs (same day).
- Clear next steps after every interaction.
- Shorter applications; save-progress always.
- Automated reminders that feel personal.
- Transparent timelines and decision criteria.

Make it warmer

- Structured “listening moments” (why now? what matters?).
- Student voices and authentic parent stories.
- Consistent hospitality across tours, calls, and emails.
- Follow-ups that reflect what you heard.
- A strong first-week onboarding for new families.

Families don't just evaluate tuition — they evaluate belonging.

Financial assistance practices can foster belonging — or create marginalization if costs and expectations aren't clear.

Clarify total cost

- Tuition + fees + “extras”
- Up-front calendar of costs
- One place online: simple, plain language

Normalize support

- Remove stigma in communications
- Train front-line staff for consistent answers
- Make aid a mission story, not a discount

Build belonging

- Inclusive participation in trips/activities
- Proactive check-ins with FA families
- Feedback loops: where do costs pinch?

Equal priority: recruitment + retention

NAIS highlights that recruiting and enrolling a new student often costs more than retaining a current one — especially with tight budgets.

Practical retention levers

- Re-enrollment intent survey + follow-up (segment by division).
- Early warning indicators: attendance, engagement, behavior, academic stress.
- Family listening tours: small groups, structured notes, clear next steps.
- Onboarding excellence: the first 90 days predict the year.
- Close the loop: communicate changes made from feedback.

Retention operating rhythm

Listen

Monthly “temperature” signals



Spot risk

Flags + patterns by segment



Intervene

Fast support + ownership



Improve

Experience fixes + comms

What to do (and what you'll have at the end)

1

Unify definitions

Agree on funnel stages + data sources + one owner for reporting.

Data dictionary + baseline dashboard

2

Map the journey

Identify hand-offs, delays, and moments where families hesitate.

Friction map + top 5 issues

3

Segment the funnel

Break conversion and yield by grade, geography, program, and aid.

Segment insights + priority audiences

4

Scan retention risk

Use intent signals and experience feedback to predict attrition.

Risk list + intervention plan

5

Launch 2–3 tests

Small, high-impact changes (messaging, process, onboarding).

Experiment results + next-quarter roadmap

Independent schools are “at a crossroads” — challenges and opportunity.

So the goal is not just enrollment growth — it’s sustainable growth that strengthens trust.

Strategy

- What is our “north star” enrollment target (headcount + net tuition)?
- Which programs and grades are we prioritizing — and why?
- How do we define and measure “fit” with mission?

Operations

- Where do families drop off — and what will we fix this quarter?
- What metrics does the team review weekly?
- How are marketing and admissions held accountable to outcomes?

Community trust

- How clear is our total cost of attendance?
- How are we supporting belonging for all families?
- What would make a family proudly recommend us?

Your next best step:

Pick one friction point.

Measure it weekly.

Fix it fast.

Repeat.

Q&A

Thank you for investing in sustainable growth and community trust.

