



About the Advocacy Initiative

It's time we told our story.

Research has confirmed the need for effective outreach to close the public knowledge gap about independent schools. Indeed, independent schools face several challenges. Surveys have revealed that the public views independent schools as being out of reach for most Americans from a financial, socioeconomic, and cultural standpoint. Reinforcing this perception, the entertainment industry frequently portrays independent schools as elitist and socially exclusive. We know that the public does not have deep knowledge of how independent schools necessarily employ quality teachers, keep students motivated and enthusiastic about learning, challenge students to do their best or encourage parental involvement in education.

As never before, it is critically important that we ensure prospective students and their families, future teachers, policymakers, the media, and the general public understand the unique characteristics and value of independent schools. The three-year advocacy initiative, organized and led by a broad coalition of independent school associations, is designed to achieve this shared goal.

Our Goals

With this communications effort, we aim to reach key audiences with a range of messages about independent schools. The messages, developed after research with both internal and external audiences, will help increase awareness of the unique value and characteristics of independent schools. Specifically, the advocacy tools and resources will provide guidance on how to:

- Increase understanding of the independent school community—who we are, what we stand for, and whom we serve;
- Fill the information gap—to effectively address the myths and misperceptions associated with independent schools; and
- Heighten awareness of your school—its mission, its impact on students' lives, and its place in local communities.

While these messages have application across our community, the vibrancy of the independent school story rests at the local level, in communities, on campuses, and in classrooms across the country. We urge you to visit www.isadvocacy.org to access a

copy of a comprehensive communications handbook to guide your implementation of the advocacy initiative and to review strategic recommendations and communications counsel.

Tools and Resources

This handbook comprises an overview of the advocacy initiative, our key messages and talking points, and guidance on how your school can begin to capture the public's attention as you celebrate the unique value and characteristics of your school. It includes step-by-step recommendations for how your school can launch local outreach efforts in the near future. Whether you are trying to enhance community relations with your county council to ease future zoning friction, attract high-quality science teachers, reach parents with school-age children to broaden your student body, or cultivate relationships with local press to better share your school's community involvement, the communications handbook will be your "go-to" resource.

Finally, we are excited about the prospect of our community effectively delivering a consistent set of messages about independent schools. Ultimately, we are most interested in seeing that attention is paid to our messages rather than to our organized outreach effort.

Please take the time to visit www.isadvocacy.org to learn more about the independent school advocacy initiative. Over the course of the next several years, as we work on implementing coordinated outreach efforts, this site will serve as a central resource for information, updates, and feedback.

We know that developing an advocacy strategy for your school will take time, commitment, and energy. Yet we believe that the potential rewards—for your school and our community—are substantial. We urge you to join us in this exciting new endeavor. Your involvement in this initiative is critical to its success. Please don't hesitate to contact your partner association should you have any questions or suggestions.