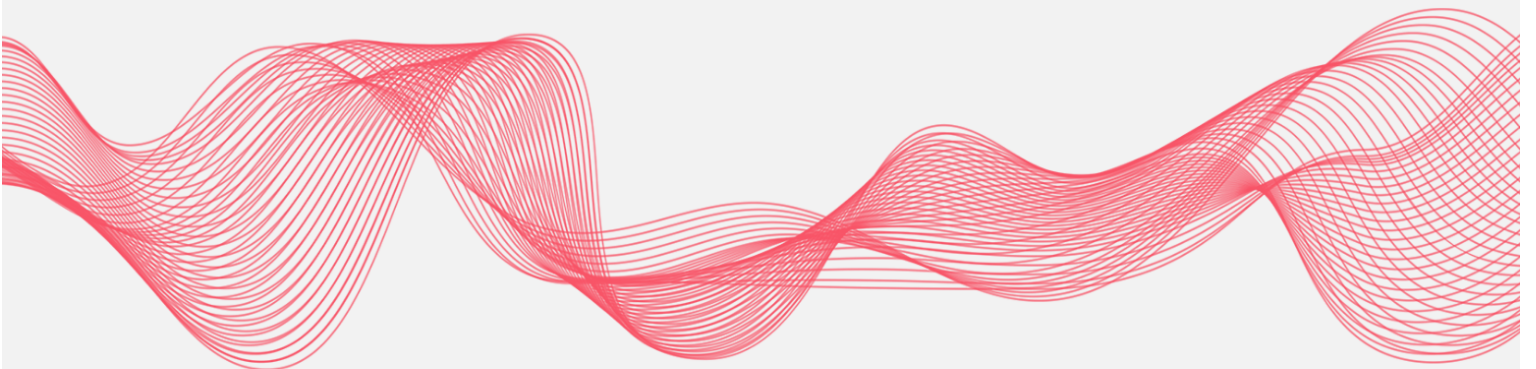




Marketing to Millennial Parents & Alumni

A COMPLETE GUIDE FOR SCHOOL MARKETERS



An Overview of Marketing Your School to Millennial Parents



Millennials are an independent school's most important, yet complex, demographic. Making up [25% of the world population](#), millennials were born between 1981 and 1996, and they'll turn [21-37 years old this year](#). This diverse group of executives and entrepreneurs, single moms and stay-at-home dads, comprises an important group of **young alumni**, **prospective parents**, and **current parents**.

This generation is tech-savvy, dislikes traditional advertising, prefers video to reading, values trust, and craves authenticity. Before diving into specific marketing strategies for this generation, let's take a look at a general overview of millennial parent preferences and habits.

Millennial Parent Priorities

More than any other generation, millennial parents are laser-focused on making sure their two- and three-year-olds will be able to get into college. (Talk about planning ahead!) Being the [most educated](#) (and [most in debt](#) because of it) generation, millennials in particular believe in the importance of an excellent education, even at a young age.

Millennial parents also care about making the world a better place, saving the environment, and facilitating change. Schools who have programs that focus on earth sciences, community service, and leadership are likely to have messages that resonate with this compassionate and driven generation.

Millennial Parent Finances

Because millennial parents are more in debt than any other generation, the cost of investing in education will certainly impact their choices. The median income of a millennial is around [\\$40,000](#) — about 20% less than Generation X made at the same age. This is impacting their ability to purchase a home, send their kids to private school — or even have kids to begin with. Additionally, millennials have the highest number of households below the poverty line, and the highest number of single moms.

Millennial Moms vs. Millennial Dads

While together “Millennial Parents” share common traits, millennial moms and dads have different preferences and priorities as to how they spend their time online in comparison to previous generations. For example, millennial moms spend most of their time online on Pinterest and Instagram, while dads spend most of their time on Twitter and YouTube.

And while millennial moms still have the purchasing power in 85% of households, millennial parents blur the line between gender-specific roles, as millennial dads spend [three times more time](#) with their children than any other generation.

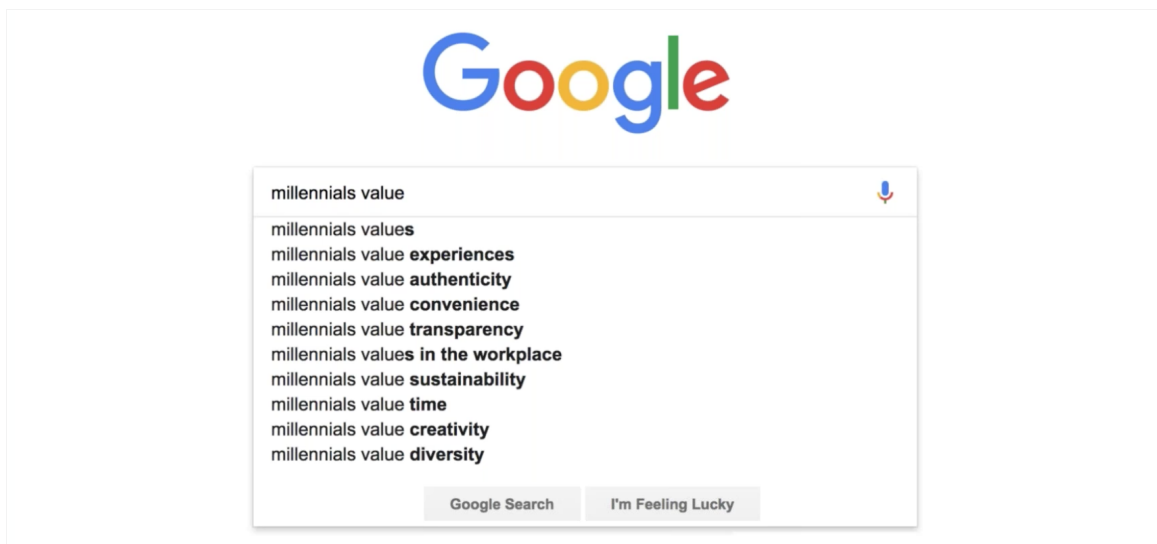
The Children of Millennial Parents

In 2018, selling the value of private school education is more important (and more difficult) than ever due to a much smaller applicant pool. In 2016, [56% of millennial parents](#) ages 25-35 were childless — which means that even though millennials may be the largest demographic (thanks, baby boomers), millennials are not adding to the population at the same rate. This means that competition is tighter across the board, as there are literally fewer students to fill your seats.

Marketing to Millennial Parents

Marketing to millennial parents isn't easy. This generation has always had access to, and been exposed to, an immense amount of information that in most cases was available right at their fingertips. They focus a critical eye on your photos and videos, on your content and social media, and, of course, on what your current and former families have to say about you.

One place to start is just with everyone's favorite homebase: Google. We typed in "millennials value" and found the suggested keywords as informative as any. Words like "authenticity," "transparency" and "convenience" all capture the essence (and no less, all the clichéd stereotypes) of the generation that has us all scratching our heads a bit. But having these core values helps us frame our marketing messages and strategies.



In this guide, we will share how the habits and preferences of millennial parents should influence your approach to:

- Branding
- Web Design
- Search Engine Marketing
- Social Media Marketing
- Video Marketing
- Copywriting
- Advancement

PART 1

Creating a Marketing Strategy for Millennial Parents



To successfully engage millennial parents, your school's online presence and brand has to adapt to the needs of these digital pioneers. Millennial parents lead hyperconnected lives — filled with Internet research from their phones, a healthy amount of skepticism, and the ability to recognize insincerity and misinformation quickly. In fact, [84% of millennials](#) don't trust traditional advertising!

Millennial parents require a new approach to engagement that hinges on **user-focused content** that answers the key questions these inquisitive and caring parents are asking.

Millennials and Brand Loyalty

Millennials get a bad rap for not being brand loyal. However, consumer research shows that millennials are [more brand loyal](#) than any other generation. The key for engaging millennials is earning that loyalty early (with helpful content), and engaging often (with authentic content).

Focus on Your Online Appearance

Because we know millennials search the web quickly, and with skepticism, your school's brand needs to meet their lofty expectations. Your school's website, emails, content, and even traditional advertising should be created with the goal of standing out from the crowd.

Investing in high-quality photography, professional videography, custom web design, and even a potential re-brand, is essential if you want your school to even be considered by a millennial parent.



Fuel Your Brand With User-Generated Content

By definition, user-generated content is content that is planned and created by individuals who know and experience your product. By nature this content is more authentic and believable, which explains why [84% of millennials](#) say that user-generated content influences what they buy. Once they've done research and have seen that others give something a positive rating, millennials are comfortable and confident with their decisions to use their limited dollars to make a purchase.


FOR SCHOOLS, SOME EXAMPLES OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT INCLUDES:

- Photos and videos that are taken and provided by parents and teachers, which are shared via social media using a unique hashtag. Schools who rely on user-generated content on social media can use a social media moderation and aggregation tool like [Finalsite Feeds](#) to streamline user-generated content into a single location.
- Conducting a social media takeover. Teachers, parents, and even students can share their experiences on your school's social media account — with some vetting done by

your marketing team, of course.

- Blogs and news articles that are written by your community, instead of your marketing team. When parents can read about school community, culture, and events through the words of someone like them, it becomes more relatable. If you use a tool like [Finalsite Posts](#), you can enable all members of your community to contribute content *without* giving them access to your entire website — and content will need to get approved by an admin before publishing.


Preschool Blog



Why Your Child Should Attend Kindergarten at Bear Creek

Kindergarten is a precious and important time! This might be the first time your child has been away from you for the whole day on a consistent basis.


[Read More](#)



Empathy: The Foundation of Effective Parenting Part Two

As a parent, empathy is perhaps the most critical skill you can develop in your child. It not only transforms us as adults, being in good connection with, and communication of, our own emotions, it also helps our children develop a good vocabulary associated with their emotions.

[Read More](#)



Empathy: The Foundation of Effective Parenting Part 1

We hear a lot of talk about empathy these days. “Kids need their feelings affirmed,” is a far cry from “Kids need to be seen and not heard,” the familiar mantra from days past.

[Read More](#)

Think your millennial parents don’t want to get involved? Think again. One study revealed that [42% of millennials](#) want to co-create content with the brands they are loyal to.

Use Influencers, and Reward Them

With 89% of millennials trusting recommendations from friends and family more than claims by the brand, (source) and nearly half (44%) of millennials saying they’re willing to promote products or services through social media in exchange for rewards ([source](#)), it’s clear that this group is comfortable spreading the word about products or brands they care about.

By identifying your top “cheerleaders” and influencers and inviting them to be ambassadors for your brand, you can incentivize them to spread the word about their child’s great experience. For example, you could offer parents school swag in exchange for a review.

Embrace “Edutainment” Across All Mediums

“Edutainment” is the term used to describe content that is both educational and entertaining. Since millennials are 44% more likely to trust experts who happen to be strangers than advertisements and 247% more likely to be influenced by blogs or social networking sites, ([source](#)), your school should embrace the use of experts sharing educational entertainment on your site or social channels.

FOR ENGAGING MILLENNIAL PARENTS, TRY THESE IDEAS:

- Answer questions that the parents have in an educational and entertaining way. Rather than list FAQs on your Admissions page, record a simple video of your admissions team giving the answers and post on Facebook.
- Create a YouTube channel with faculty and students sharing their thoughts on your curriculum and activities.
- Write a few blog posts answering the admissions teams top 50 questions with keywords and Google-friendly SEO.
- Make Pinterest boards with helpful resources for back to school shopping, classroom supply lists, or summer reading suggestions
- Create a short, entertaining video on your iPhone with young students sharing their experiences at your school, upload to social media, and share with your community by pulling [Finalsite Feeds](#) into key site pages.

Cultivate Emotional Engagement

Here’s a statistic that shows millennials’ dedication to brands that reach them on an emotional level: 82% of consumers always buy from a brand they have high emotional engagement with, and 86% of these engaged consumers want brands to reciprocate their loyalty in two-way interactions. And, as a result, 81% are willing to give back to the brand ([source](#)) .

How can your school benefit from all that brand loyalty? Consider the emotions that millennial parents feel throughout the year, and plan to produce content that appeals to those emotions. Then, **appeal to those emotion** in all mediums with **quality photo and video** that generates emotion on the website and in all content channels.

Investing in [inbound marketing software](#) that provides millennial parents with the right content at the right time ensures you are making the most of your efforts.

PART 2

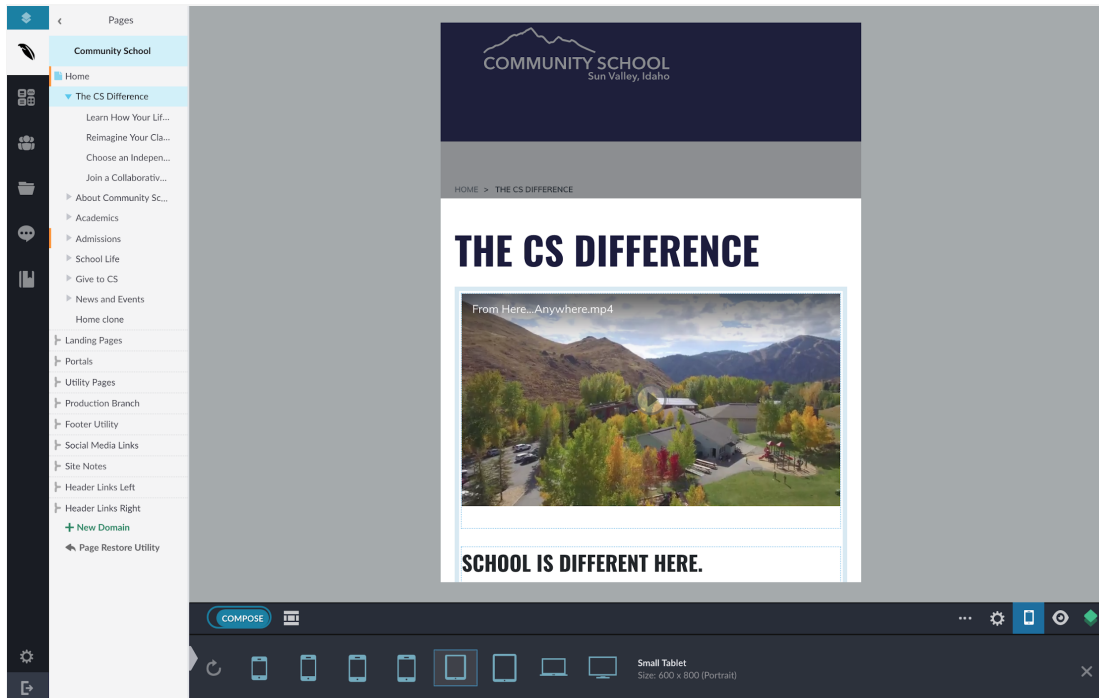
Designing Your Website for the Millennial Parent: Dos and Don'ts of Engaging Design and UX



We all have a love-hate relationship with our dos and don'ts, right? They keep us honest, but sometimes it's nice to color outside the lines. But, before you even start coloring, you need to ensure that the lines are clear as to what to do and not to do with regards to website design for the millennial generation. (And to be clear: many of these points are best practices in general; but they are also extremely relevant for millennials.)

#1 | DO have a responsive website.

Responsive website is also about *embracing* mobile more than just *being* mobile. This is an important distinction because many of us work on a desktop while everyone else is surfing the site from their phone. It's akin to cooking a large roast in a deep cast iron pan and then not considering how you'll serve it on the small appetizer plates you're using. That's why we love [our CMS, Composer](#), where you can preview the experience on the device at any time.

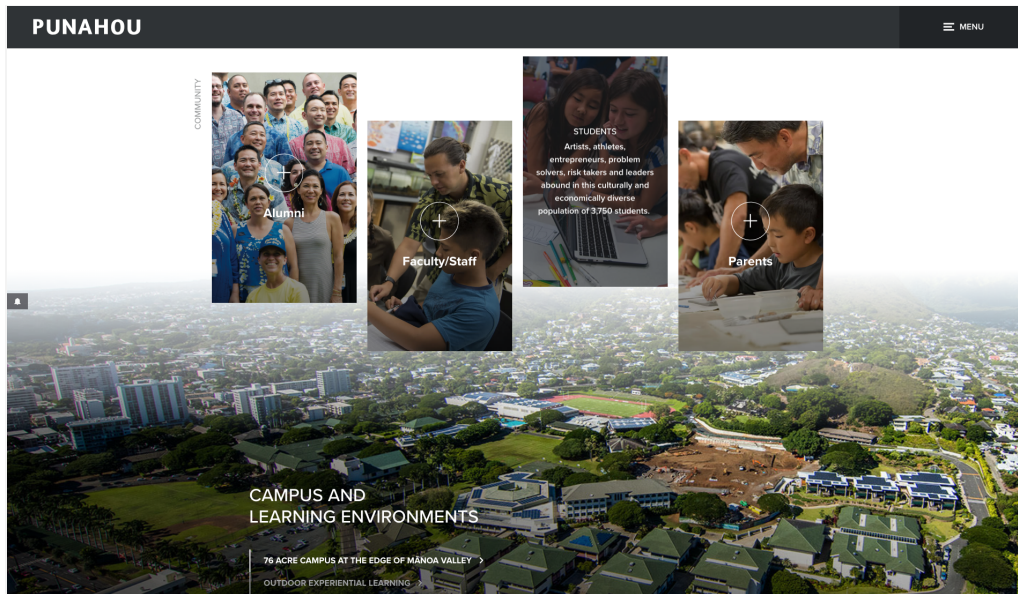


[The Community School's site](#) looks just as great on a small phone as a huge desktop. You won't get anywhere with any other topics if you don't have a site someone can browse on their phone in the morning while eating their avocado toast. If they go to use it on their phone and have a difficult and frustrating experience, their research just might end right there.

#2 | DON'T fill your responsive site with long blocks of dull, uninviting text.

Let's start with an example, [Punahou's interior pages](#) are just as gorgeous as their homepage. Because we know not everyone enters through your homepage, you want your interior pages to be just as engaging, inviting, and exciting to look through as your homepage.

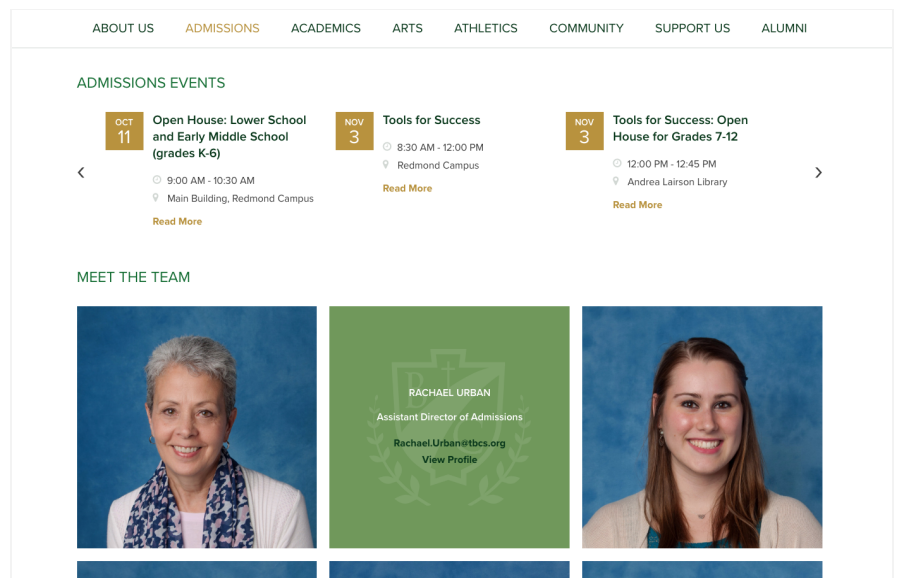
The millennial parent wants to skim— at least in the beginning of their website experience — while in a hurry. But then they may decide to make more of a commitment to dig deeper.



#3 | DO use headings, block quotes, images, videos, and other graphic treatments to break up content.

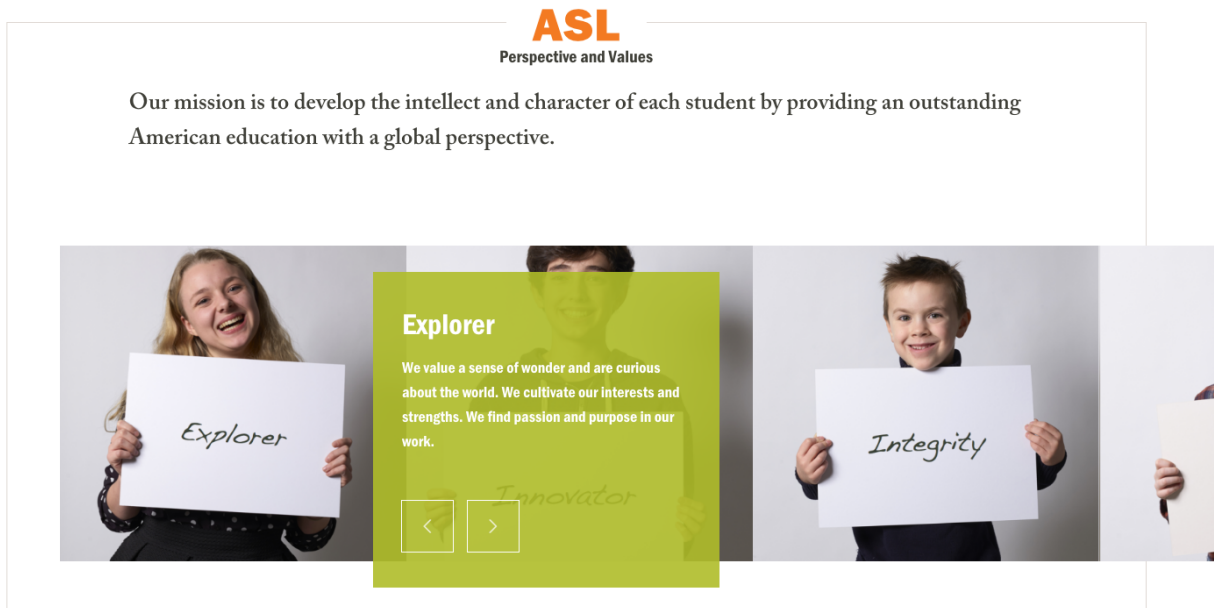
If your pages do need a lot of text, using other forms of content to break it up and make it more digestible is key. The [Bear Creek School's admissions page](#) uses images, buttons, a calendar slideshow, and directory to convey information; this is good!

If there is a video or image that could tell the same thing you were trying to express in a lot of words, you know what to do.



#4 | DO write short, mobile-friendly content.

[The American School in London](#) does a great job of capturing a lot with a few words. If you put your prospective family hat on for a minute contemplating a school for their children, ASL does a great job of showing the “kind” of student they nurture, such as “explorer” or “innovator.” Unique language that captures a lot. Who doesn’t want their child to be an innovator?



ASL demonstrates the power of being very succinct which means mobile friendly; but it also has well-placed interactivity, allowing you to navigate easily from one value to the next.

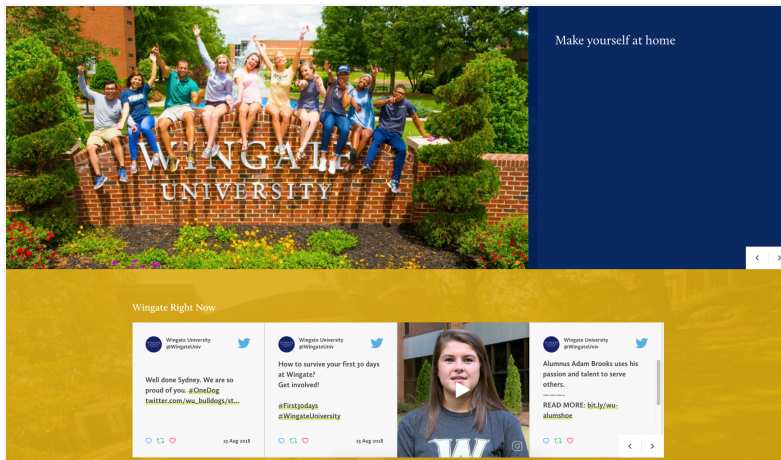
This website also conveys diversity without needing to say. A simple map shows how ASL brings students from all over the planet.

One quick test: if a user wouldn’t want to read it on a phone, is it really even necessary for your desktop? Or at all?

#5 | DO leverage social media, especially Instagram, the more popular channel among millennials.

[Wingate University](#) uses social media on their [Around Campus](#) landing page—a great example of how to leverage for your website what’s already being created elsewhere. Social media also doesn’t have to be on the homepage alone. For Wingate, including these feeds on the Around Campus landing page makes perfect sense because prospective students want to know what campus life is like—and what better way to show that than through their social media?

Additionally, while we tend to put so much of our focus on the homepage, the truth is that users spend very little of



their time there. Once a website visitor has established that they're in the right place, they're off to somewhere else on the site—or they've bypassed it altogether because they've done a google search directing them to somewhere on the interior.

If you feel like you've done a great job with your homepage, spend more time focused on interior

pages, and consider social media's relevance there, too. These are the pages that sell value and provide millennial parents and their children that next level of information.

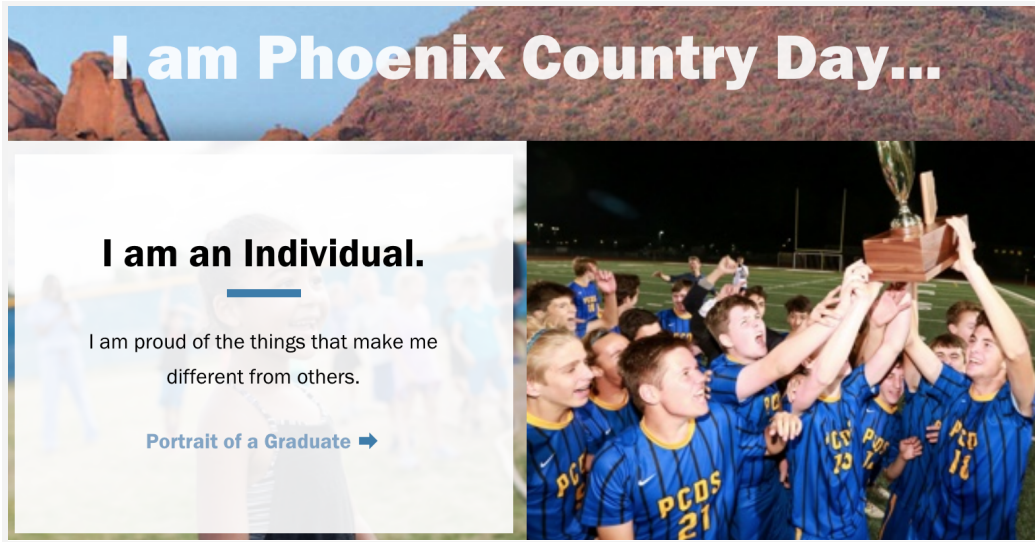
#6 | DON'T use stock photography and videos of students.

Millennials want to see **authentic content**. We like [Rawson Saunders](#) authentic and personal video that draws the user in -- the very opposite of a stock photography, which millennials see right through. This video tells an authentic story from the students; you don't feel like you're being marketed to — you just feel like you're being told this story.

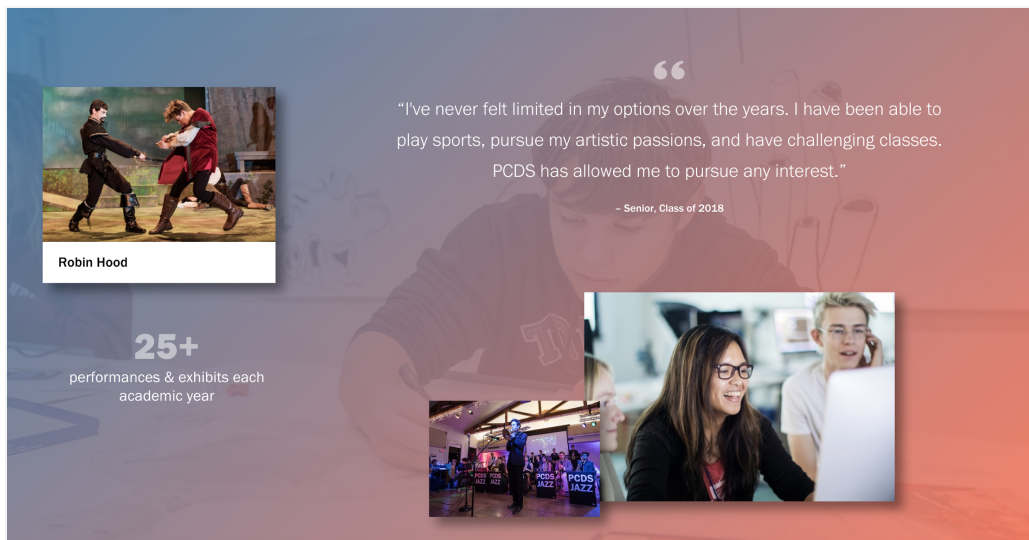


#7 | DON'T Expect them to take your word for it!

[Phoenix Country Day School](#) has a lovely website that offers stats, quotes, and examples to illustrate their offerings, and uses social proof to hammer home the point. Simple language with quick blocks of content that is highly visual and, most importantly, authentic.



A lot of school administrators love their marketing language; they spend a long of time crafting it or they've worked with a branding agency to come up with some really engaging statements. In most cases, these words belong on your website, but you still have to prove them out. **The millennial parent isn't going to trust that statement just because you said so.**



Phoenix Country Day backs up their big idea. When they say “innovation,” they don't just say “we are the most innovative school in the nation.” Instead, they back up with stories and testimonials and photos. This goes a long way with the millennial audience.

#8 | DO offer social proof

[St. Mark's Episcopal School](#) includes testimonials from their community on their homepage and interior pages. If you are not redesigning your website anytime soon, now can be a good time to spruce up your interior pages with testimonials.

A Community Engaged

St. Mark's is a place where each child is known and revered. As a result, our students experience an incredible sense of belonging and strong teacher-to-student relationships. We are a second home to families who strive to partner with their child's school, truly creating a community of engaged learners, engaged parents, and engaged teachers.

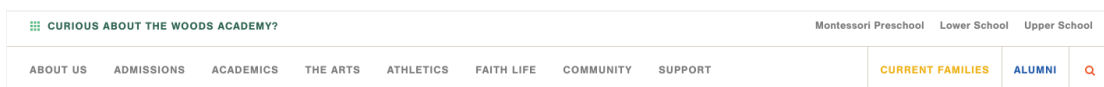


“ St. Mark's has such a welcoming environment! The children and their families as well as the wonderful staff create a community. A community that works together to achieve a happy, nurturing, academically stimulating environment where a student can grow and gain confidence while discovering their talents and strengths. I am so proud to be part of this community!

Gabriela Olivero
Faculty Member, St. Mark's Episcopal School

#9 | DON'T limit your message to just “rigorous academics”

[The Woods Academy](#) highlights a wealth of programs that round out their education. Millennials in general place a really high importance on work/life balance in their own lives, so it is not a stretch that they'd want the same for their child's education. This k-8 school knows that millennials are a critical audience and they put their emphasis on the their “Hallmarks” which cover a lot of non-academic and enrichment opportunities — helping students gain that balance.




And rather than leaning on your past to justify the present as many older institutions do, show that parent how you are forward-thinking and considering that holistic education.

These Hallmarks remind us that there's more to a good school website than creating a great design; what sets a school apart is how they identify their unique offerings.

#10 | DO focus on storytelling. Choose a design that places the experiences of your school front and center.

One of most recent examples we've been showcasing is [Fairfield Prep](#), which tells their story through a series of videos, and leverages a dramatic, black background that provides a modern and masculine punch to their messaging.

Beginning with a superb video, this site tells a story in 60 seconds or less by sequentially spelling out the things that make them special. The sticky calls to action give the user a place to go at all times.



PREP for Discovery

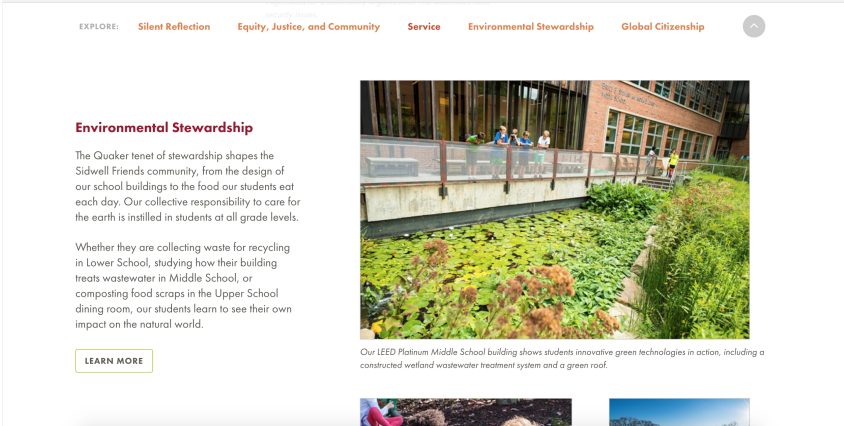
At Fairfield Prep, you are taught to think, to engage, to speak and to debate. Jesuit education goes beyond the classroom. Everyone at Prep is encouraged to discover what they are the most passionate about.

And despite the fact that Fairfield Prep is by all measures a very well-known school in the area, it is clear that they are not resting on a legacy reputation to fill seats by making sure the website and all the supporting materials show their value.

#11 |DO show off your values

[Sidwell Friends School](#)

does a great job of highlighting their core values, which is integral to who they in every way as a Quaker school in downtown Washington DC. By communicating your school's values to your prospects, you are simultaneously debunking the notion that you are a commodity — you are a place where their child is going to grow and be exposed to those values.



EXPLORE: [Silent Reflection](#) [Equity, Justice, and Community](#) [Service](#) [Environmental Stewardship](#) [Global Citizenship](#)

Environmental Stewardship

The Quaker tenet of stewardship shapes the Sidwell Friends community, from the design of our school buildings to the food our students eat each day. Our collective responsibility to care for the earth is instilled in students at all grade levels.

Whether they are collecting waste for recycling in Lower School, studying how their building treats wastewater in Middle School, or composting food scraps in the Upper School dining room, our students learn to see their own impact on the natural world.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Our LEED Platinum Middle School building shows students innovative green technologies in action, including a constructed wetland wastewater treatment system and a green roof.

While this notion of values is hardly unique to millennials, this generation has a higher expectation that the organizations they associate with also have those strong values. Hit

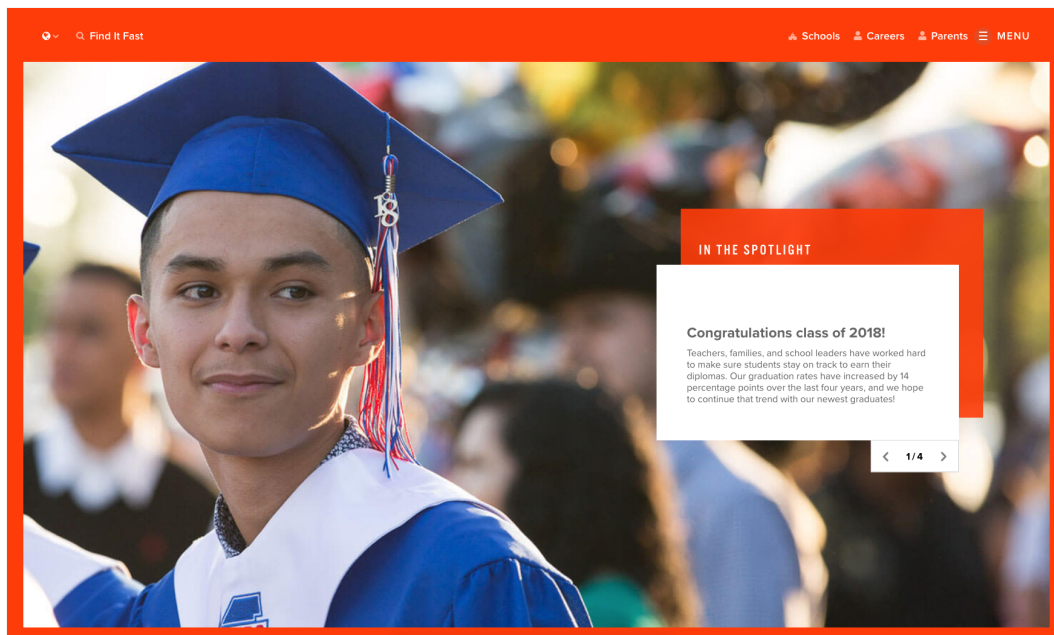
millennials in a heartfelt way with this in mind using concrete examples and evidence, such as hiring a diversity director, requiring service hours for students, or composting food waste. Then let the design and content communicate that.

We understand that not every parent is going to have the same set of values, but parents want to know what you stand for and will gravitate to the school that feels like a match for what they are looking for. So make sure you communicate it!

#12 | DON'T settle for a so-so design.

Bringing your best to the table for the first impression should always be a premium. While this may be obvious for independent schools, school districts also have a keen interest in making sure parents in their community understand who they are and that their website does a great job of communicating.

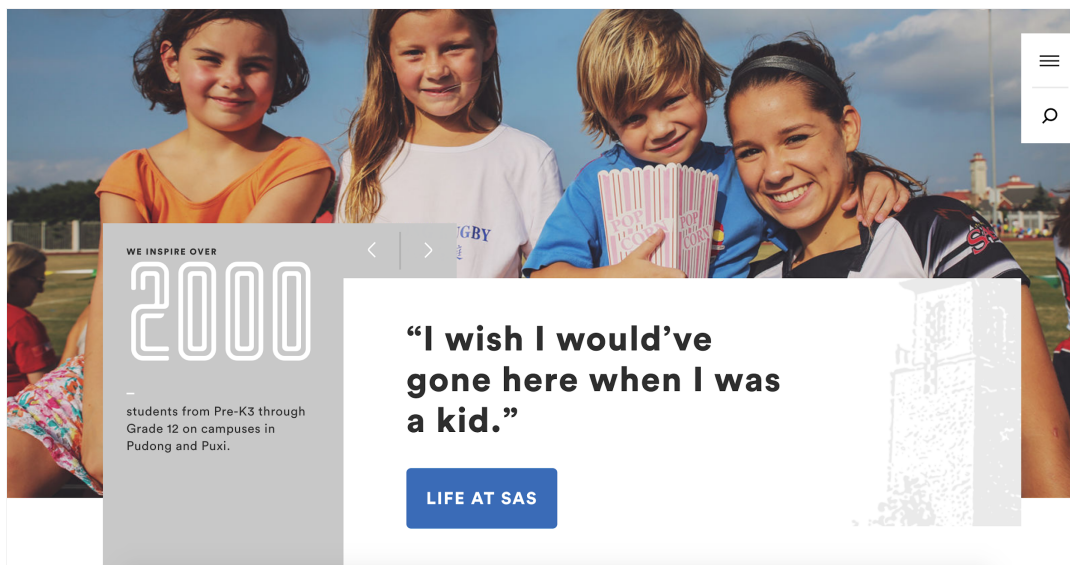
[Tulsa Public School's new site](#) offers a fresh look, custom search design, and a user-friendly school menu. The bright colors are fun, and the use of big type and bold colors, combined with infographics, animation and testimonials, all work together to create a fresh web presence that invites you in and communicates a commitment to the site as a valuable resource.



#13 | DO keep up with the latest design trends.

We don't expect you to know every last cutting-edge industry trend, but looking at schools outside of your radius is a good use of a few hours every now and then. [Shanghai American School](#) is just one example of a site that pushes the design envelope: subtle animation to

support the content; textures that rolled up from their print design; unique overlapping elements and illustrations; and an interesting use of a grid for the interior.



The good news with this short list of dos and don'ts is that by attending to them for millennials, you're also addressing some of the key best practices that are "generation independent." We all want to use a website that gives us what came there looking for as quickly and painlessly as possible. And remember that a website is always a work-in-progress, and Finalsite views itself as a long-term partner through this journey. Start with a few of these, and keep working your way down the list. Any step forward is a good one!

If you want to stay tuned in on the latest best practices, you can also [subscribe to our blog!](#) The weekly digest gives you all sorts of insights, best practices and ideas — lean on us who spend all of our time thinking about how our schools are using their website.

PART 3

How to Write Compelling Content for Millennials' Short Attention Spans



The fact is, most millennials don't want to read about your products. They don't trust traditional advertising, and won't click on something that looks like a sales pitch. **It doesn't matter if you got J.K. Rowling herself to write it**— they aren't going to read that long description of the things you offer.

At least not initially.

The key to marketing to this generation is to first focus on them, not you. What do they want? What do they value? Call them self-absorbed, but digital natives value the content that is relevant to them — and *them only*.

Once you have that in mind, you need to keep it mobile-friendly, brief, and authentic. Here are proven strategies for creating copy that gets read, and *is relevant and valuable* to millennial moms and dads.

Make Content Brief

With all this talk about shorter attention spans, you may be wondering if there's a magic number of words, or time, that would guarantee millennials read your content. Unfortunately, there isn't a magic number. But, there is a rule of thumb: **less is more**.

Because millennials are busy, using multiple devices, researching, reading, and watching — absorbing content any way they can — it is essential that you get to the point (and quickly).

Hudson Montessori School in particular does an excellent job with keeping content brief. Relying heavily on testimonials and images, each page on this school's site focuses on selling the value of the student experience to millennial parents.



Make Content Scannable

Length is not always a problem. There is a time and place for lengthy, informative content — especially in the world of “edutainment.” Long articles help millennials get the information they crave, and answers they seek, building that brand loyalty early and often. And for you, they perform much better for search engine rankings.

The problem comes when articles aren’t scannable. Use the following tips to structure content in a way that pleases millennials, whether they’re surfing the web on their smartphone, tablet, or desktop.

1. Use headers and subheaders. Headers (H1) confirm that a millennial parent is in the right place, while subheaders (H2) confirm that the content is worth reading.

Lower School

Our Lower School faculty are specialists in developing young learners’ academic and critical thinking skills while supporting their social and emotional growth.

2. Break up your big paragraphs into smaller chunks using bullets, images, dividers and images. While headers and subheaders are used to garner attention, the paragraph text of any article or web page is the meat. Even if they do feel it is worth their time, they aren't going to read large paragraphs of text. **Bolding text like this also helps!**

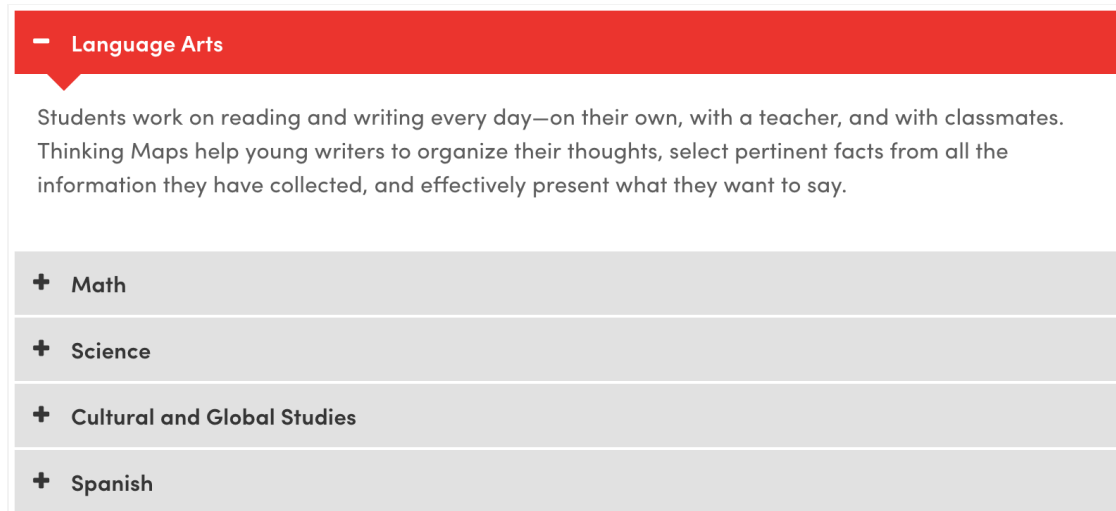
Kindergarten

Our youngest students ease into the world of learning, self-awareness, and friendship in the comfort of the stand-alone Kindergarten Cottage. Kindergarten typically has 18 -20 students working with two full time teachers.

At a Glance

- Approximately **130 students**, grades K-4
- First, second, and third grades each have two sections of **12-14 students**
- Fourth grade has two sections of approximately **18 students**
- The **school day** runs from 8am - 2:50pm with early dismissal at 1:20pm on Wednesdays
- Our **After School Program** runs daily until 6pm

3. **Use accordions to shorten pages.** If you feel you cannot break up those big paragraphs, try nesting the information by category using **an accordion feature** so that readers can decide which content to skip over and which content to read. Don't worry—accordions are still crawled by Google!



4. **If you've written other articles that explain some of your topics in full, include smart links to them instead of rewriting.** Smart links are hyperlinked text that link to relevant pages. This puts the reader in the driver's seat—making the information easily accessible to those who need it, without boring those who already know it. Added bonus: it helps with SEO.

5. **Make sure it's mobile first.** Many people use their phones more than their laptops to browse the internet. If the [images aren't optimized and aren't loading](#), or the content is poorly laid out, your visitor will leave. Simple as that. If you use Finalsite Composer, use the mobile device preview tool to ensure content is scannable across all devices.

"But what if they don't read the whole thing?" You ask.

If you've put a lot of thought into your headers and subheaders, so what if they don't read in more depth? You've still given them what they need—and proven to them that you have the content available should they later decide to read it.

Stop Writing Boring Headlines


On average, [80% of website visitors](#) will only read your headline. Another 20% will go on to read your entire page or article. Headlines provide you with the opportunity to both entice the reader, and let them know the information that they'll find on the page.

If you want to get your information across to millennials, you need to **master the art of the headline**. It's as important as the copy itself.

HEADLINES SHOULD BE:

- **Descriptive:** They should answer the question, what information will I find here?
- **Clear:** Avoid ambiguity at all times.
- **Compelling:** If a headline is the only thing most millennials are reading, it better be interesting!

A SCHOOL OF ACADEMIC RIGOR



“Through a classical and focused curriculum, St. Sebastian’s fosters a lifelong love of learning in our students. Unusually small classes and devoted faculty provide the structure and support each student needs to succeed in this intellectually challenging environment, preparing him well for college and beyond.”

Michael Nerbonne, Assistant Headmaster

TIPS FOR WRITING BETTER HEADLINES:

- 1.) **Use Keywords.** Ensuring headlines have certain keywords is not only good for your performance in search, but also reaffirms a millennial that they’re in the right place. Need a good example? Check out [this blog post](#) about affording private school written by [Avon Old Farms School](#). We see important keywords like “how to afford” and “private school,” which are keyword terms millennials are searching for — but they make it more engaging by adding “money doesn’t grow on trees.”
- 2.) **Write Value Propositions.** A [value proposition](#) is a statement that describes the benefits students and families can expect from attending your school, and why your school is a better choice than the alternatives. Value propositions can supplement keyword headlines that are important for SEO (like “Tuition and Financial Aid.”)
- 3.) **Keep them short but make them count.** Your headlines need to draw readers in. The words in H2 and H3 may be the only thing people read— they’ll keep scrolling and will only stop at the headers that pique their interest.
- 4.) **Use ethos, pathos and logos.** Aristotle’s three elements of persuasion still apply— especially for subheads. You can’t be creative with page titles for SEO purposes (example: “Admissions”) but for subheaders, tug on those heartstrings! For example, The Packer Collegiate Institute fuses emotion into almost every headline, straying away from the boring and generic — even in simple cases, such as exploring campus.



Find Yourself Here

We draw students from all over New York City, but we have always been a community school at heart. Take a closer look at our extraordinary campus and our fantastic location, just steps from Brooklyn Borough Hall.

» [Explore our Campus](#)

Focus on Authenticity

It is an absolute necessity to be completely honest about who you are, especially with this generation. Millennials are a highly cynical generation with a deep mistrust of traditional advertising. Don't think you can fool them— they see right through an inauthentic brand! Instead, make use of real-life examples and candid moments that capitalize on your 'product' (your students). This will resonate with them more than a marketing spiel.

CAPITALIZE ON MILLENNIALS' DESIRE TO SHARE

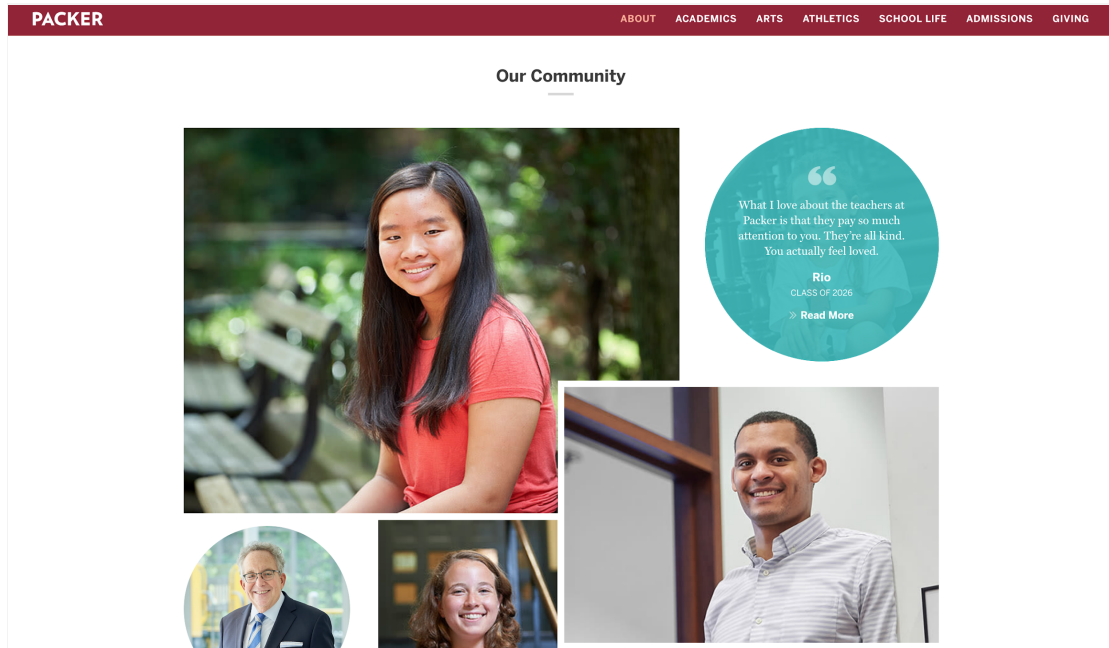
While millennials don't always trust marketers, they do trust strangers: 93% of millennials read reviews before they make a purchase. Additionally, this skeptical group is more likely than any other generation to provide positive feedback — so why not ask them for it?

STRATEGIES FOR CURATING AUTHENTIC CONTENT

Ask your core fan-base for testimonials, whether through Facebook, on video, or over the phone.

Reuse positive online reviews from Facebook and Google on your website (with permission, of course!) to highlight authentic voices. If your online reviews aren't stellar, FinalsSite's [online review management service](#) can help improve your ratings. [A review management process](#) can ensure you always put your best foot forward in search and on social, helping you reach new potential families, drive new website traffic, and increase enrollment and retention.

Include testimonials on interior pages, not just the homepage. Student testimonials are especially important for pages about campus life, college counseling, athletics, K-8, and the "Why Our School" section. If you visit the "Why Packer" page of The Packer Collegiate Institute's website, you'll find a testimonial-driven scrolling experience, with a diverse group of individuals sharing their answers to "why attend Packer?"



Let photos, images, and infographics drive your pages. The millennial audience would much prefer to come to conclusions on their own, rather than be “spoken to” by a school marketer whom they know is biased.

Don’t be afraid to be informal. Too many complicated words or concepts is simply bad marketing—you want your message to be easy to read and understand. Plus, millennials are wary of content solely written by marketers or advertisers. They’ll likely interpret a more conversational approach as more “real.”

Ask faculty and staff to post reviews, or give testimonials about what’s going on in the classroom. [The Pike School](#), for example, has a section on their homepage titled, “The secret to our students’ success” with faculty testimonials. Including faculty testimonials is critically important to engaging millennial parents, as this generation greatly cares about who is educating their child, not just where they are receiving their education.



Stray away from generic terms such as “3rd grade parent” or “student” in your testimonials. Of course your school’s privacy policy is important to follow, especially for schools that need to follow [GDPR guidelines](#) closely, but it will come across as fake to millennials if your testimonials don’t give either a name or a picture. Make the effort to get written permission from parents so that you can use testimonial content in full.

Adjust your tone to fit the platform. Newsletters and blogs should be more conversational, while website content should be a touch more formal.

Personalize Content When Appropriate

With [78% of Internet users](#) reporting that they are more likely to purchase from a brand that personalizes content, and [another 79% say](#) they are only likely to engage with a brand if content is personalized based on a previous engagement, it is clear that personalized content has become an expectation. When millennials see content that is clearly aimed at them and personalized for them, they are more likely to be engage with it.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR PERSONALIZING CONTENT FOR MILLENNIAL PARENTS:

Create personas. Understanding who you are talking to among millennial parents (mom vs. dads, single moms, single dads, families where both parents work, etc.) will help you choose the content you write and share. You can learn more about creating personas [in this blog post, which comes with a downloadable worksheet](#) to help you craft personas.

Personalize Email Subject Lines. Remember that on social media, online, and in millennial inboxes, you are competing with other subscriptions to clothing stores, newspapers, blogs, and more — so you need to prove to them that the content you have is valuable to them! You have about **50 characters** to stand out in an inbox, so make it count. If you are currently using Finalsite's email marketing tool, Messages (formerly called [eNotify](#)), you can personalize your subject lines with your recipient's name, child's name, and a variety of other merge tags. (In addition to personalizing the subject lines, you can also add emojis to help improve open rates.)

Personalize the web experience, too. Go beyond email personalization with website personalization. Finalsite's [new personalization element](#) allows you to serve up different website content based on web browser language and location. For boarding schools and international schools in particular, this element is useful, as you can personalize content for website visitors coming from different locations. Because we know millennials care deeply about authenticity, serving up content that is truly relevant to them will prove your school cares about getting them the right information.

Engaging Millennials with eMail Content

Because millennials are glued to their phones, they are also glued to their email — making it one of the most effective ways to reach them with important communications. However, this generation does absorb email content different than other generations, with the focus on shorter, more frequent, and more personalized email content.

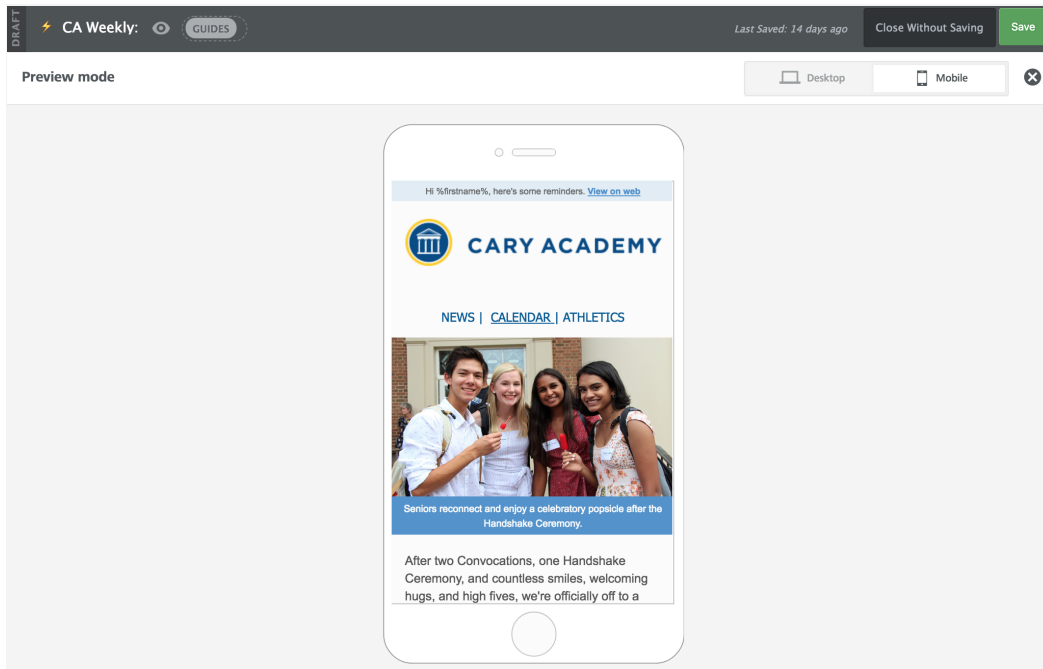
HERE ARE OUR TOP STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING MILLENNIAL PARENTS WITH EMAIL:

Put your best content at the top. If there's something you really need them to see and click on, it should get priority. Take it from us: In our Finalsite weekly and monthly blog digest, the majority of the clicks go to the top two blogs, and no one ever gets to the bottom.

Choose “more frequent” over “longer.” You are better off sending a weekly shorter newsletter than a long monthly email, because few people scroll all the way down. The day of the long newsletter email is over!

Use pictures, good headlines, and a video thumbnail for more engagement. Millennials like images—a link to a YouTube video is much more likely to be clicked on if there is a thumbnail included.

Continually test your emails across all device sizes. Make sure the effort that you are putting in to make a newsletter isn't wasted by unreliable hosting. Are your newsletters responsive? Will the parent checking his or her email on his phone see a mobile-first layout? Using Finalsite's email marketing tool, you can preview email newsletters before they go out.

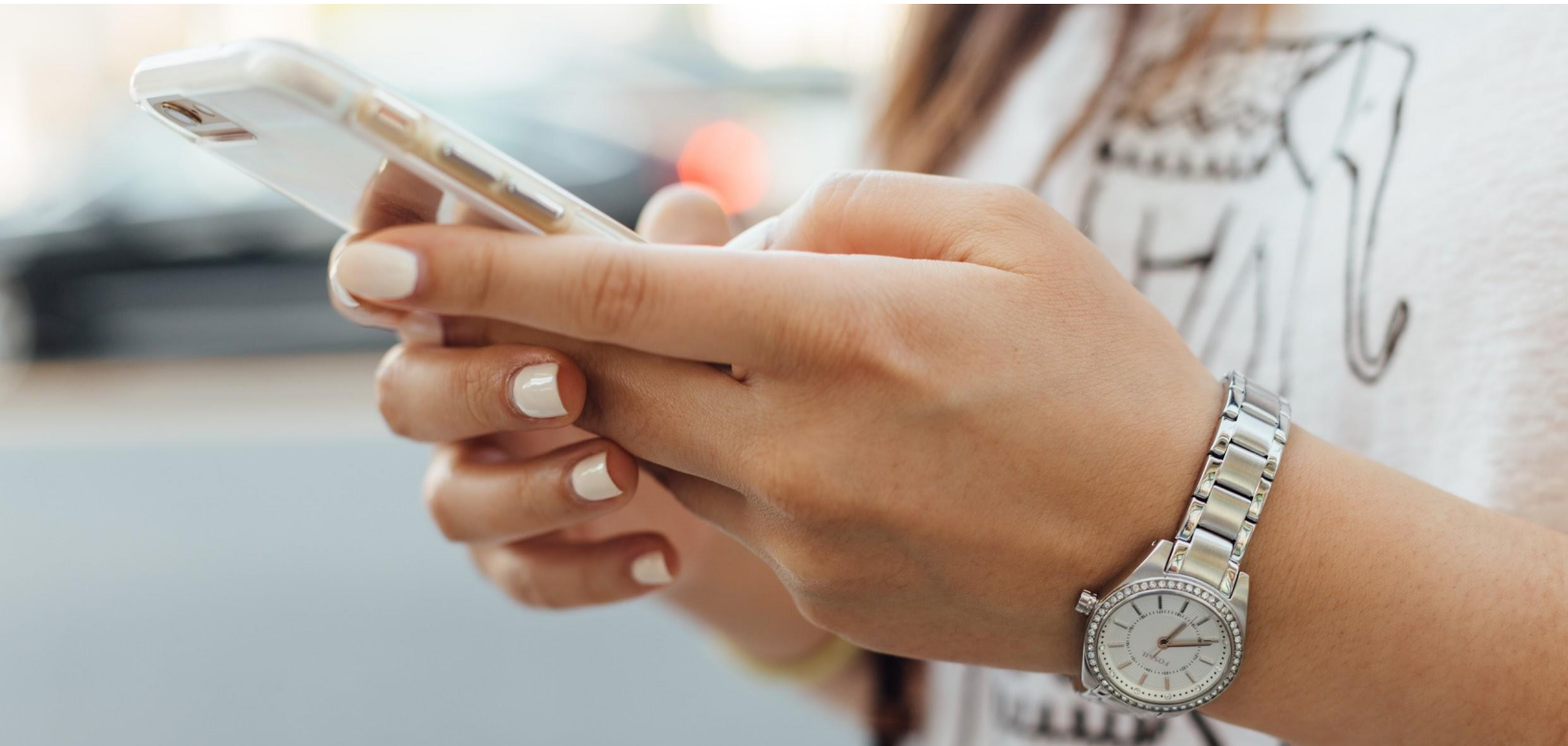


Don't forget to capitalize on FOMO — “Fear Of Missing Out”. Millennials are much more likely to read something that they think their peers are “in the know” about.

Millennials do care about the content and they will read it... eventually. It's a matter of packaging it the right way. Meet your audience where they are first, and then lead them down the funnel to your products.

PART 3

Getting Found in Search: Understanding Millennial Search Behaviors



When it comes to school research, most schools know that their websites make up a critical piece of the puzzle. It's why we've spent so much time educating schools about enhancing the user experience and telling an authentic story. But it's not the only piece. In order to truly optimize their website for millennial parents, schools need to consider ease of access. And that means thinking about Google.

It's no surprise that Google is stealing the show with millennials. It's presenting content about you on your behalf, before the viewers even get a chance to click on your site. Here are three things you need to know.

1. Google provides millennial parents with various online parenting resources.

There are a myriad of online resources catering to the “new parent” audience (especially to young millennial moms!) These range in relevance to your school, from:

- **Broad parenting content** such as parenting blogs, which mainly focus on general parenting tips but may have some school info. (Example: [MommyPoppins](#))
- **Local newspapers and magazines** which may have some mom-and-dad content. They often include information about schools in the area. (Example: This article from the [Detroit Free Press](#))
- **Online reviews**, which are very school-specific. (Example: [Niche, Private School Review](#))

Depending on the search terms, all of these sources can play a role in school research and aid in the decision-making process for parents. For example, on the right is a search for “[Best Schools in Annapolis](#),” which serves up a variety of articles beneath a map of some schools, but not all.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SCHOOLS

Even the sources that aren't school-specific still produce enough education-related content to gain traction in search and can play a factor in your market, competing with not only your school-specific material, but also content written by associations that represent the independent industry at large (NAIS,

Best Public Schools in Annapolis, Maryland - SchoolDigger.com

<https://www.schooldigger.com/go/MD/city/Annapolis/search.aspx> ▼
17 schools - Best Public Schools in Annapolis, MD. Annapolis Elementary. Germantown Elementary. Eastport Elementary. Walter S. Georgetown East Elementary. Tyler Heights Elementary. Anne Arundel County Public Schools. Mary Moss At Adams Academy. Anne Arundel County Public Schools. Phoenix Academy. Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Annapolis Schools - Annapolis Maryland School Ratings - Public and ...

<https://www.greatschools.org/maryland/annapolis/> ▼
Top rated schools in Annapolis. West Annapolis Elementary School. Annapolis, MD. Public. K-5. Cape St. Claire Elementary School. Annapolis, MD. Public. K-5. Windsor Farm Elementary School. Annapolis, MD. Public. K-5. Broadneck High School. Annapolis, MD. Public. 9-12.

Annapolis Schools, 1-26 - Annapolis, MD | GreatSchools

<https://www.greatschools.org/maryland/annapolis/> ▼
Schools 1 - 25 of 68 - View and map all Annapolis, MD schools. Plus, compare or save schools.

Annapolis schools - Zillow

<https://www.zillow.com/annapolis-md/schools/> ▼
34 schools - Get the facts on Annapolis' best schools and find the right school for your child by reading reviews and checking past test scores.

Public Elementary Schools in Annapolis, MD - Niche

<https://www.niche.com/k12/search/best-public...schools/t/annapolis-anne-arundel-md/> ▼
2019 Best Public Elementary Schools in Annapolis List. West Annapolis Elementary School. Anne Arundel County Public Schools, MD. Rolling Knolls Elementary School. Hillsmere Elementary School. Garrison Forest School. Annapolis Elementary School. Eastport Elementary School. Monarch Academy. Germantown Elementary School.

TABs, etc.) Sometimes even random message boards threads like [this one](#) will rank higher on Google's first page than branded websites.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

Try several searches that affect you so you can gain a better understanding of what parents are finding. Be sure to include superlatives in your search such as “best” or “most affordable” to better mimic millennial search habits. You won't know which sources are worth getting yourself visibility in if you don't do the research first.

2. Millennials worry about affording independent schools—and their searches reflect that.

When a millennial mom is first thinking about private school, your school may not even be on her radar. She may be thinking “how does this private school thing work?” or “how do people even afford this?”

UNBRANDED SEARCHES

For a search such as “private school tuition,” no single school is the target. But pay attention to how Google is addressing these searches.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "private schools in brooklyn". The search bar is at the top with the Google logo on the left and a search icon on the right. Below the search bar are navigation tabs for "All", "Maps", "Images", "News", "Shopping", "More", "Settings", and "Tools".

Below the navigation tabs is a section titled "Private elementary schools in Brooklyn mentioned on Wikipedia". This section contains a carousel of eight school logos: Berkeley Carroll School, Saint Ann's School, Brooklyn Friends School, Al-Noor School, Al-Madinah, Brooklyn Amity School, Big Apple Academy, and St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Academy.

Below the carousel is a list of search results:

- Fusion Academy Private School | One-to-One Private School**
learn.fusionacademy.com/private-school/ *
 One Student Classrooms, a Homework Cafe, Music & Art Classes. Learn More Today! No Homework. Fully Accredited. Completely Personalized. One-to-One Schooling. Highlights: Accredited Private Middle And High School, Customize Teaching And Curriculum.
 Anxiety In School - One-to-One Education - Tutoring - ASL Classes
 1 MetroTech Center #1004, Brooklyn, NY - Open today - 7:30 AM - 9:00 PM -
- Top Private Boarding School | Request an Admissions Packet**
admissions.episcopalhighschool.org/ * (703) 662-5399
 Episcopal High School. Go Beyond Your Comfort Zone & Broaden Your Horizons. 20 Minutes from D.C. 100% Boarding. Co-Ed. 42,000 SQ FT Arts Center. Courses: Advanced Honors, Independent Study, Technology, Arts, Athletics, The Washington Program, Advanced Global Energy, Advanced Engineering.
- Brooklyn Private School | BASIS Independent Brooklyn**
info.basisindependent.com/Private-School/ *
 When Students Love To Learn, They Excel. Attend An Event & Learn More. Unparalleled Outcomes.
 556 Columbia St, New York - Open today - 7:00 AM - 6:00 PM -
- Brooklyn, NY Private Schools | PrivateSchoolReview.com**
<https://www.privateschoolreview.com> - New York - Kings -
 Brooklyn, New York Private Schools. School Location Grades Students. Adelphi Academy of Brooklyn. 8515 Ridge Boulevard. BASIS Independent Brooklyn. 556 Columbia Street. Big Apple Academy. Special Program Emphasis. Fusion Academy Brooklyn. Great Oaks Elementary School. A Fantis Parochial School. Advent Day Care Center.
- Private Schools in Brooklyn, NY - Niche**
<https://www.niche.com/k12/search/best-private-schools/t/brooklyn-kings-ny/> *
 2019 Best Private Schools in Brooklyn List. Packer Collegiate Institute. Private School. Poly Prep Country Day School. Private School. Saint Ann's School. Private School. 2019 Best School Districts. Berkeley Carroll School. Private School. Grace Church School. Private School. Brooklyn Friends School. Green Meadow ...

Here are some features that may affect you.

- **An answer box** is often located at the top of the search, providing immediate answers to millennial's questions without them having to click through to a website. In the answer box in the image below, you can see that Google pulled information from *Time.com*.
- **Search filters** encourage users to get more specific in their search. In the image below, you can see the location buttons that, when clicked, will lead to another search (Private School Tuition "in NYC" or "in Hawaii"). Google may also suggest other specifications, such as "Catholic Schools" or "Preschools."
- **User profiling** via a computer's IP Address and/or recent search history enables Google to provide information that caters to the specific user. If your school isn't near the searcher's location at that time, Google may put a different school above yours on the page.

BRANDED SEARCHES

When it comes to searches specific to your school (for example, "[My School] + Tuition"), Google often provides a lot of information on the sidebar:

The screenshot shows a Google search for "austin preparatory school tuition". The search results include an answer box at the top with the text "Austin Preparatory School / Tuition" and "20,100 USD" for the "2017-2018" school year. Below the answer box are several search results, including "Austin Preparatory School: Tuition and Value", "Austin Preparatory School: Financial Aid", "Austin Preparatory School: Apply Now", "Austin Preparatory School in Reading, MA - Niche", "Austin Preparatory School Profile | Reading, Massachusetts (MA)", and "Austin Preparatory School - Wikipedia".

The right sidebar features a knowledge panel for "Austin Preparatory School" with the following information:

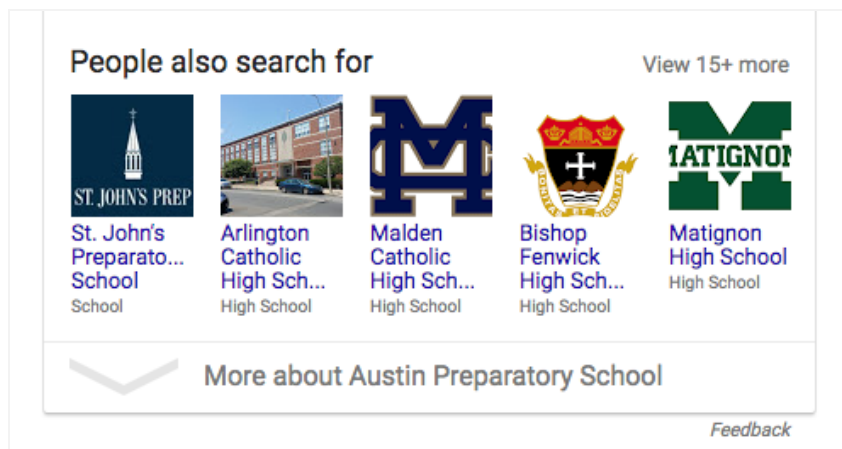
- Address:** 101 Willow St, Reading, MA 01867
- Grades:** 6-12
- Tuition:** 20,100 USD (2017-2018)
- Mascot:** Cougar
- Colors:** Black, White, Green

Below the knowledge panel, there is a "Summer Preview Open House" event scheduled for August 29, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM. The sidebar also includes a "Reviews from the web" section with the following data:

Niche	Private School Review	GreatSchools
3.5/5	5/5	3/5
61 reviews	2 reviews	31 votes

There's a lot to digest from the screenshot above. Here are a few important features:

- **Answer Box** is pulling information right from Austin Prep's website (this means that the website makes tuition information easily accessible).
- The **"Google My Business" Tool** allowed Austin Prep to take advantage of its online search presence— for free. In the feature section, you can see they are promoting their "Summer Preview Open House."
- **Description Feature Blurb** is pulling information from Wikipedia— a source schools don't have complete control of.
- **Reviews from the web display** is pulling ratings from a select few sites and setting them side-by-side. If your ratings from these sites are low, prospects may not bother clicking on the sites with high ratings.
- **"People also search for"** section pits you up against your competitors in one fell swoop:



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SCHOOLS

When someone searches your school, they are bombarded by so much content— a lot of which is brought in by algorithms you have no control over.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

Capitalize on user expectation by providing as much information as you can in your website:

- **Avoid “the jewelry-store model”** of tucking the price tag underneath the item. It was common in independent school markets 15 years ago, but *this tactic won’t work for millennials*. They don’t want to take that extra step to talk to a “salesperson”.
- **Take your tuition information off of those PDFs**. It takes time and effort to download a PDF and read through it. The easier it is for millennials to access your tuition for comparison purposes, the more likely you will stay on that whittled-down list.
- **Include data tables** with tuition information for Google to crawl. There’s no guarantee that your table will end up in Google’s answer box, but it’s a good start and a best practice for providing easy access.
- **Capitalize on the sticker price analogy** to ease parent’s concerns about price. Schools that tell a story about affordability are more likely to stay on a parent’s short list.
- **Use infographics** to continue to engage parents once they click on your site. This can be particularly effective in portraying the availability of financial aid for families.

One school mastering the branded tuition search is [Landon School](#), an independent boys school in Maryland. The table on their [tuition and financial aid page](#) feeds Google’s answer box in this search:

As you can see in the screenshot, Landon also invests in [paid ads](#) to directly target individuals searching for this branded search term with content they control.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "landon school tuition". The search results include a featured snippet for "Landon.net | Landon School Tuition | Greater DC Area Boys School". The snippet provides contact information and a brief description of the school's programs. Below the snippet, there are links for "FAQ", "Admissions Process", "Visit Landon", and "Ethics Scholarships". At the bottom of the snippet, there is a table titled "2018-19 Tuition" with the following data:

2018-19 Tuition	
Lower School (Grades 3-5)	\$39,220
Middle and Upper School (Grades 6-12)	\$42,110
Financial aid 2018-19	\$4.18 million
Students receiving financial aid 2017-18	26 percent
Average grant 2018-19	\$24,615

On the [tuition webpage](#) itself, Landon incorporates video testimonials, infographics, an accordion with FAQs, how-to videos, “helpful hints” from their financial aid director, and of course, call-to-action buttons to bring prospects further down the admissions funnel.

By including all of these components, Landon lessens the affordability angst that has become a major hurdle for independent school enrollment.

3. Google accommodates millennials with mobile-first content.

It is no longer an option to be mobile-friendly, and Google knows this. Here are some features that may affect your prospects' online experience:

Search Accordions make it easier for users to scroll through and select only the content they really want to see. But where is the content that fills these accordions coming from? Information that populates these boxes is pulled from many different sources. It's sometimes out of date or inaccurate, so make sure you monitor this to stay in-the-know.

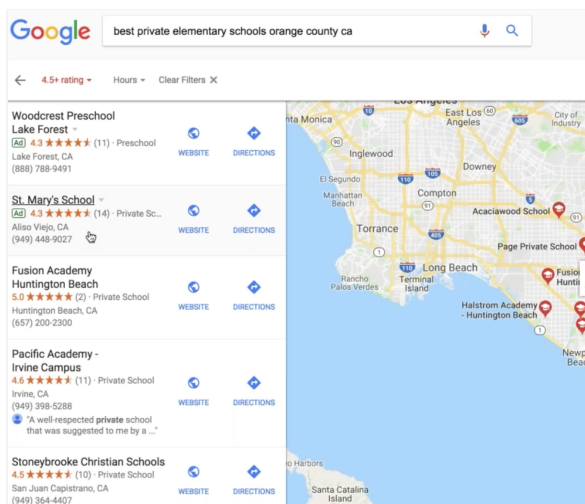
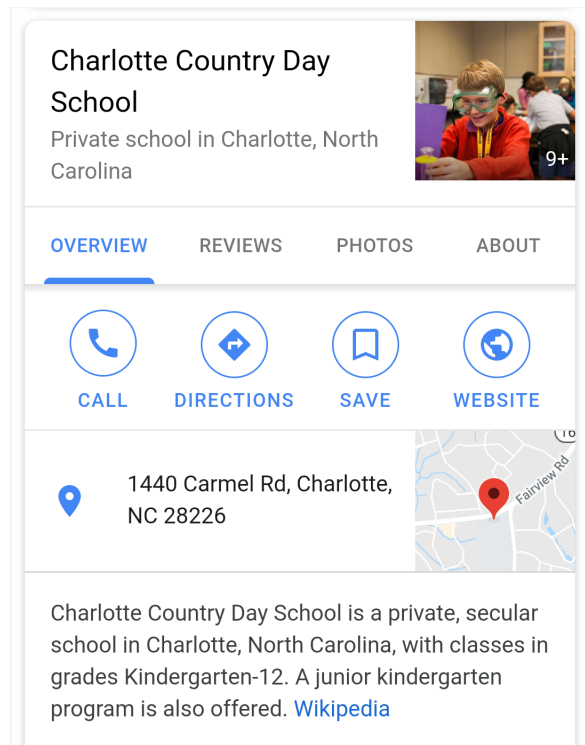
The Call Feature on a mobile device allows people to make very easy phone calls directly from Google. Make sure this feature is sending callers to a friendly admissions voice. You don't want to lose prospects to some sort of attendance list/excused absence voicemail purgatory.

Google Maps Filters can sort by rating. What if parents decide to check out a few schools near them? They can decide to only show the highly-rated schools, and yours might not make the cut:

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

Monitor your reviews frequently. Pay attention not only to the existence of reviews and the number of stars you are getting, but also the number of reviews. Because if there are only a few reviews, one bad rating tomorrow could dramatically change your overall rating.

Ask your fan base to rate you on websites that you know Google is pulling from. Reach out to parents who you know have positive experiences— they will probably be more than willing to share!



Seek professional guidance with [Finalsite's reputation management](#) experts, who can evaluate your online presence and implement a strategy to help you generate, manage and respond to reviews. A review management process can ensure you always put your best foot forward in search and on social, helping you reach new potential families, driving new website traffic, and increasing enrollment and retention. Our team of reputation management experts will evaluate your online presence and implement a strategy to help you.

A lot of millennials are going to be coming to your website through a search engine (most likely on their phones). You can increase that number if you pay attention to:

- Local SEO
- Keyword Research and Optimization of Language (in your site and metatags)
- Directory Optimization
- Branded Search Optimization

And never stop monitoring this content! Algorithms continue to change and it can be difficult to predict how your school will be represented in search. For more help with google analytics.

PART 4

Creating a Social Media Presence



that Reaches and Engages Millennial Parents

The importance of using [social media](#) to reach millennials is unquestionable. With [50% of millennials](#) using social media to research products and brands prior to purchase, and another [30% of millennials](#) engaging with brands at least once a month, social media is where millennials spend a lot of their time. And making the most of that time is critical to your success in attracting and engaging millennial parents.

Social Media Network Breakdown

In general, millennials are rather active across all social media. They are the generation that grew up with it, of course, which explains why [83% millennials](#) are still active on Facebook, and they account for some of the top usage on Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, too.

FACEBOOK

Millennials are still active on Facebook because, aside from Myspace, this was the generation's first real social networking platform. Today, brand engagement comes second to family and friend engagement with millennials, as millennial moms in particular use the platform to seek advice and guidance, especially when it comes to purchases and parenting.

Because millennials are active on this social media network, it is beneficial for sharing content with current families. If your goal is to reach new millennial parents, your need to become a part of the conversation and provide helpful, authentic content, rather than use a form of traditional advertising, is imperative.

For example, instead of investing in a paid ad to drive [open house attendance](#), you might invest in promoting a helpful guide, blog, or eBook that relates to parenting and education. Positioning yourself as a trustworthy expert is key to winning millennial engagement.

INSTAGRAM

In general, Instagram is an excellent social media network to engage current and prospective families with the use of high-resolution images and engaging videos.

With [40% of millennial women](#) saying that Instagram is the best platform to reach them and engage with them, this is one social media network you don't want to neglect — especially because [85% of millennial moms](#) control the buying power in their household.

Like Facebook, millennial moms use Instagram to seek advice. But, instead of soliciting that advice from family and friends, they [seek it from influencers they can relate to](#). Keeping in mind that millennials are 44% of millennials more likely to trust experts (who happen to be strangers) than advertisements, consider how your school can use the voices of your current community to influence the opinions of your prospective community.

TWITTER

Because millennials do like quick, engaging snippets of content, it is easy to see why Twitter is still extremely popular among this demographic. With nearly [40% of millennials](#) using Twitter,

and [81% of those millennials](#) checking their Twitter feeds at least once a day, this generation likes quick bites of content.

Most important to schools, however, is that Twitter itself says that the majority of its users are “affluent millennials” — a demographic most private schools are desperately trying to reach.

YOUTUBE & PINTEREST

While YouTube and Pinterest are often seen as social media networks, they are actually search engines. So when you are crafting a social media strategy, they are outliers in the sense that while they are important, they require a completely different approach than any other kind of network. Millennials — and millennial dads in particular — spend a lot of time on YouTube, while millennial moms spend a lot of their time on Pinterest.

The Value Proposition Equation

Value, trustworthiness and authenticity are key to winning engagement on social media and breaking through the noise with this quick-to-judge generation.

The Value Proposition Equation is a strategy that transcends all marketing efforts, but is particularly important on social media, as it is a place where your school has the opportunity to re-instill the value (and cost) of your education 24-7.

According to Pat Bassett, former NAIS president, “In the private school sector, price continues to rise, and inherently makes the value decrease. Unless the outcomes are better articulated or improved, the rise in price will always decrease the value.”

Social media can help address this by providing a platform to engage with those parents in a more fluid, conversational way. For example, [Ellington Public Schools](#) has an innovative approach to social media that many private schools are yet to adapt: ask teachers to share photos and videos as to what is happening in the classroom every day. Their strategy allows parents — working, millennial parents in particular — to get a glimpse into what their kids are learning every day. Imagine the power that this type of content would have in the private school world, as you need to sell value and justify costs.

Crafting a Social Media Strategy that Engages Millennial Parents

Social media plays a role in enrollment, retention, and advancement. Because of its role during different stages of the funnel, often schools lean towards creating numerous different accounts — like three or four Instagrams for one school.

Having so many account handles is confusing, splits engagement, and often leads to inconsistent branding and messaging. Millennial parents, who are already bombarded with the “noise” of social media, prefer a simplified, streamlined approach.

To engage millennial parents, your school really needs just three things:

1. A goal-oriented social media **plan**
2. **content** that breaks through the noise
3. good **reviews**

1. CREATE A GOAL-ORIENTED SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN

If your goal is recruiting new, full-pay millennial parents, your strategy is going to be completely different than engaging current millennial parents. We recommend following [this 10-step guide](#) to creating your school’s goal-oriented social media plan.

2. CREATE “CONTENT THAT BREAKS THROUGH THE NOISE”

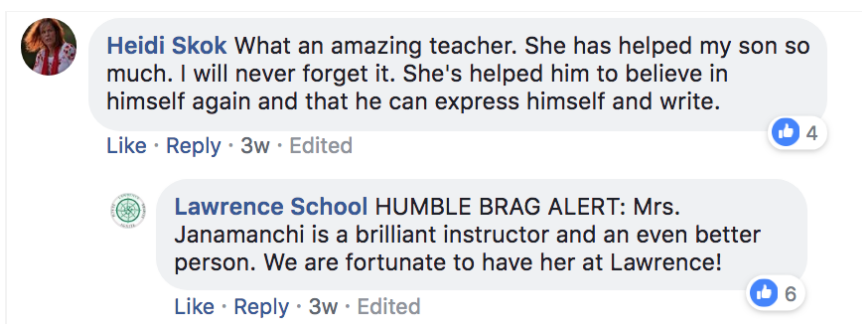
Creating content is without a doubt, the most difficult component. With millennials, the content you post has to be what we call, “**thumb-stopping good.**” It needs to be visually engaging, add value, and tell a story.

Remember that millennial parents are engaging with hundreds of brands and thousands of pieces of content every single day. In order for yours to be seen, you need to follow some rules of engagement:

Be Consistent: Social media algorithms favor brands who post consistently, which can work in your school’s advantage if you don’t have a big social ad spend. Being consistent with branding, colors, voice and tone across all social media platforms also strengthens your brand.

Respond in a Timely Fashion: Millennial parents in particular depend on social media for “customer service,” and expect a response to their comments and questions across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Lawrence School in particular always does an excellent job responding to comments in a personable and honest fashion on their social media accounts.



Get Visual: Millennial parents are a generation that prefers video and photos over text. If you're wondering how to incorporate visuals that get engagement, read this blog on the [three types of social content that always get engagement](#).

Don't Just Always "Ask": Don't only use social media when you need to ask for something. Because millennials depend on social media for advice and news, your strategy should adapt to that. Write helpful blogs for your millennial parents, and frequently post news events to keep them in the loop.

Don't Sell a Product, Sell Stories: While millennials care about authenticity above all else, they also have F.O.M.O (Fear of Missing Out). This means that when you show other children succeeding at your school, rather than telling, it is both more believable and impactful. For example, the [Independence School](#) recently did a social media campaign on Instagram where they promoted where their graduates were headed to for high school.



Use Paid Ads: While millennials can see through most ads, when it is a piece of content or brand they are interested in, they will engage. Paid ads are great for helping you reach new audiences, get their attention, and keep it.

Use Influencers and Get Your Community Involved: Because we know millennials depend on their friends, families, and complete strangers for advice and suggestions, your school can use this to their advantage. Enlist a group of millennial parents at your school who are happy with their child's experience, and ask them to share content on their personal pages that you're

sharing. These brand evangelists can also post in community groups to share their believable, authentic experiences with other parents your brand might not get in front of otherwise.

3. HAVE GOOD REVIEWS

Online reviews are becoming more and more important to schools, but are particularly important for engaging this millennial demographic who depends on online reviews for decision-making.

Having good reviews is particularly important on Facebook, as the social media giant serves up your competitors right on your Facebook page (as shown below). So, if you don't have good reviews (or no reviews at all) millennial parents can easily begin researching your competitors. (The same is true for Google!)



Having trouble getting reviews? Ask your community! Because [millennials are more likely to share positive feedback than negative feedback](#), you can reach out to your community to ensure your school's Facebook is filled with positive, authentic reviews, stories, and experiences.

Millennials are active on social media, and depend on it for news, advice, and conversations. If your school wants to attract, recruit, and retain millennial parents, having a consistent and authentic social media presence is key.

PART 5

Engaging Millennial Parents with Video



Industry-wide data shows that [millennials consume more videos](#) than any other generation. Despite this fact, most schools have yet to adapt to their desire to consume. In a survey of more than 100 school professionals that we conducted during our [“Writing Content for Compelling Short Attention Spans” webinar](#), **less than 1%** said that video was their primary form of marketing. In that same survey, **40%** responded that video is their biggest marketing pain point. Talk about a disconnect!

What makes video marketing so difficult for school professionals? In a second survey during our [“Marketing to Millennial Parents with Video” webinar](#), nearly 40% say **time**, twenty-percent say **skill**, 10% say **budget**, and 30% say **everything**.

Although video marketing is a notable pain point of small-staffed and small-budgeted school marketing offices, it is absolutely essential for engaging and informing the millennial parent community.

How does video marketing help schools reach millennial parents?

As a school, video marketing targets parents and students better than any other media, and the [stats prove it](#):

- Having a video on your website (or landing page) can increase visitor conversions (form submissions) by **80%**. So, if you’re struggling to get inquiries, applicants, or open house registrants, a video can help inform and engage website visitors who are on the fence about filling out a form.
- **90%** of people say that video is helpful in the decision-making process. Consider how a video could be helpful for parents making enrollment decisions for their young children. Because video is so important to this demographic, it’s becoming more of a priority to them in their search process for all major purchases and investments.
- Using video can boost your search performance, sometimes upwards of **50%** due to Google’s ownership of YouTube. Like Google, YouTube is a search engine — meaning if you treat your videos like a website page, complete with an SEO-friendly title and two to three paragraphs of optimized text, a video *could* rank in Google.

What Do Millennials Look for in Video Content?

We already know that [millennials have short attention spans](#), are judgemental, digital natives, and [likely can’t afford private school tuition](#). With a basic understanding of millennials, it is easy to say that **short, authentic** videos that can be enjoyed on a **mobile device** are likely a home-run.

HERE ARE TIPS TO MAXIMIZE ENGAGEMENT WITH MILLENNIAL PARENTS:

Make Content Short and Engaging: A simple Google search will yield dozens of research and surveys that provide inconclusive data on that “ideal length” for an engaging video. What we do

know, however, is that if you don't [catch their attention in the first 6-10 seconds](#), they likely won't watch the entire video.

Make Content Authentic: The video content that you produce needs to be *believable*. Millennials, more than any other generation, can see through ads and a “hard sell.” Don't script your testimonials.

Make Content Mobile-Friendly: Because millennials frequently access content on their mobile device, ensuring your videos are embedded on a responsive website is essential for ensuring they get watched.

Strategies for Video Distribution

Understanding **where** and **how** millennials engage with your video content is just as important as the video content itself.

Millennial parents will engage with your school's video marketing content (or, lack thereof) on your website, major social media platforms, YouTube, and Vimeo. Each of these offers a specific purpose, set of best practices, and use cases.

YOUR WEBSITE

Millennials will, by nature, seek video content to replace text content. While a lack of videos doesn't hurt your brand presence, it may negatively impact your ability to communicate key messages with this video-obsessed audience. For example, many FinalsSite clients understand the importance of video, and choose to have it incorporated into their design — such as [Westminster School](#) and [Tulsa Public Schools](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Millennials expect to engage with video content on Facebook, Instagram, and even Twitter. Producing video content in all forms — including live video, [ephemeral content](#), and even uploaded high-quality video in its native format, will help meet the expectations of millennial audiences.

YOUTUBE

YouTube is Google's second search engine, and a millennial favorite — especially among dads, with [86% of millennial dads](#) turning to the video search giant for parenting topics. That being said, YouTube offers your school the opportunity to connect with millennial parents (especially the dads!) at all stages of the admissions funnel, and once they enroll.

If you use Finalsite Composer, YouTube videos can easily be added using the “YouTube” drag-and-drop element.

VIMEO

While millennials are searching for content in YouTube, they enjoy engaging with the high-quality, ad-free content that Vimeo offers, especially when using your website. It is a good idea to have a Vimeo account in addition to your YouTube account for embedding videos on your site. We don't recommend embedding YouTube videos on your website, simply due to ads and the lack of control. As with YouTube, if you use Composer, you can easily add any Vimeo video to any page on your site using the “Vimeo” drag-and-drop element.

FINALSITE RESOURCES MODULE

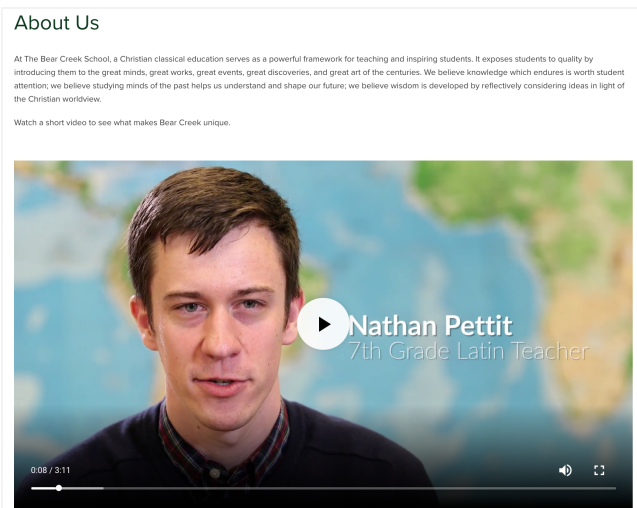
If you use Finalsite, you will be able to share videos using [Finalsite's Resources Module](#) on any page of your website. The Resources Module is free of charge if you use Finalsite, and offers the same promise of privacy and security as all Finalsite modules. This video hosting platform in particular helps improve site speed by automatically optimizing content based on device. Additionally, you can upload captions to ensure videos are accessible, have them seamlessly integrated into your design, display slideshows, and more.

Engaging Millennial Parents with Video on Your Website

As with all content, it is essential how and where it fits into the funnel. Ask yourself the oh-so-important question of: what is the ultimate goal? Who are we trying to reach? A parent of an enrolled student looks for different video content than a parent looking to enroll their child in an independent school for the first time.

In general, there are three main types of video content that can be used during the admissions process:

1. **Brand Video:** Likely the most helpful (and popular) video to engage millennials during the admissions process is the brand video. These two-to-five-minute videos showcases what makes your school unique by combining voiceover



narration, testimonials, and clips of your community and campus. These videos should be used on your school's homepage, as well as key admissions landing pages, such as "inquire" or "apply."

For Bear Creek School, when you visit the ["Why Bear Creek" section](#) of their site, you're greeted with a three-minute overview of what makes Bear Creek School special. This video replaces the need for text on the page, and engages millennial parents.

2. **Explainer Video:** Your brand video won't have the opportunity to touch on every single aspect of your school, and this is where explainer videos become essential. Explainer videos are shorter, one to two-minute videos that explain a particular program at your school that is special or unique. These videos should be used throughout your website on relevant pages to explain particular programs. [The Bear Creek School](#) has created explainer videos for each of its schools, that are completely driven by testimonials.

Lower School (K-4)

The Lower School years are full of energy and excitement as strong foundations are laid for life-long learning. Our Lower School curriculum is built upon proven brain-based and educational research, and we are consistently amazed by what our students can accomplish.

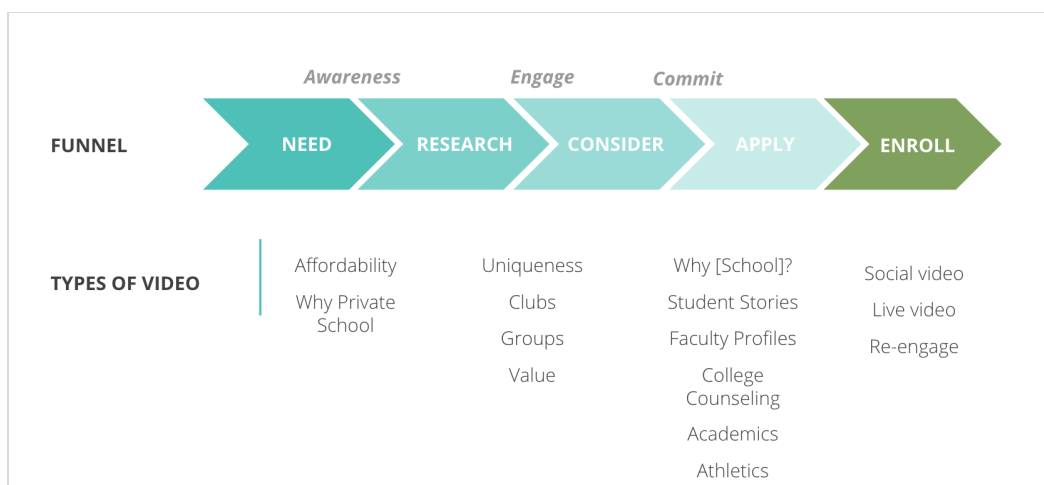


We asked a few lower school students what they love about Bear Creek.

3. **Testimonial Video:** Testimonial videos are key in helping parents make decisions about where to send their child, as it is important for them to hear from other parents, faculty, and students to help them confirm that they're making the right choice. This "social proof" is validating, reassuring, and builds credibility and trust. These videos should be no longer than 60-seconds each. Like explainer videos, testimonial videos should be used throughout your website.

Bear Creek School is one example of an independent school that understands its audience prefers video to text, and works to incorporate it into their content as much as possible.

Below is an infographic that shares how these videos map to the admissions funnel:



As you can see in the above graphic, video content moves from general topics like “why should my child attend a private school,” to “why should my child attend your school,” to “what makes your school special?”

After a parent enrolls their child, social video takes priority.

Engaging Millennial Parents with Video on Social Media

[Social video](#) engages parents where they already spend their time. If you fall into 20% of school professionals who say they lack the skill to produce videos for marketing, social media is the platform for you!

Social media provides your schools with a video marketing platform, where you don’t have to be a skilled expert. Unlike your website, where they expect video content to be professional, on social media, millennials are more forgiving of audio and video quality because they expect it to be authentic and real, not staged.

Because millennials are most active on Facebook and Instagram (in addition to YouTube), your strategies won’t have to vary too much.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING MILLENNIALS WITH VIDEO ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

Repurpose videos you already have: Social media doesn’t always have to have new content. You can splice longer-form video content and upload it natively to each platform, and then link back to your site to drive traffic.

Use Captions: Not only are captions important for web accessibility, but they also improve video engagement, as the [bulk of social video](#) is watched without sound.

Go Live: Across both Facebook and Instagram, live video is favored by algorithms and on average, receives higher engagement than non-live video.

Use Highlights and Stories: Both Instagram and Facebook offer the “stories” feature to share video content. These tools allow you to share quick, 15-second videos, add stickers, ask questions, and create an interactive video experience your millennials will find engaging. If you’re not sure how to incorporate video, these are typically a good place to start because they are simple, but get lots of engagement.

Plan Ahead: The best video content is a mix of planned and candid moments. Making a list of big events that happen throughout the year, then note **which** ones you want to make videos for, **how** you're going to make videos for them, and **what** social platforms you're going to use.

Bring it Back into Your Website: If you’re using video frequently on social media, using a social media integration tool like [Finalsite Feeds](#) ensures all that amazing video gets from social media back to your website.

Millennial parents crave and engage with video, more than any other form of content — and your school needs to make the time and financial investment in order to meet their demands.

PART 6

Getting Millennials to Give Back: Overcoming Their Top Three Objections



Fundraising and millennials are an interesting mix. Although on average millennials have more debt, lower incomes, they are more concerned with social justice, more charitable and [participate in social-media driven challenges](#) more than any other generation. Despite coming into the workforce at an uncertain time, the sheer number of individuals belonging to the millennial generation and their willingness to contribute money and time makes engaging them in philanthropy a high priority.

In this section, we will take a look at the **most common objections** millennials make to giving back to their child's school or alma mater, and how to overcome them with strategy and technology.

Objection 1: I can't afford it!

Knowing that millennials are as both financially strapped as they are philanthropic, it is easy to conclude that they want to give, but might not have the means. Therefore, making donations easy, incremental, affordable, is essential for earning donations from this large demographic.

The Solution: Monthly Giving Programs

The affordability objection is probably true. We know that millennial parents and alumni donors are stretched more than ever. There's big competition for their remaining charitable dollars, especially with political and social causes high on their list.

The solution may lie in making giving attainable with monthly giving programs. Millennials are used to paying varying amounts each month for Netflix, Birchbox or Blue Apron. Why not boost participation by making it simple for them to sign up to make monthly gifts on your site? As a young graduate of Pomfret School, an author of this eBook signed up for an early iteration of monthly giving in 2005, around \$10 a month at the time, and definitely gave more than she would have otherwise given in one swoop! And, statistics back this up: they show that recurring donors give 42% more per year than one-time donors ([source](#)).

It's simple to set up recurring gifts with Finalsite's [Forms Manager](#), as Choate's "Give Now" page shows, on the right. Donors can set up the parameters of their monthly gifts easily, selecting the frequency of donation, designate their gift to a certain area, and then "set it and forget it" for the year.

Tying in a young alum's graduation year or the year of your school's founding—likely a \$18-20 contribution—can make an impact, too. The Hill

School asks graduates to give a gift of \$18.51 a year, since they were founded in 1851, for the first five years after they graduate. Students can break this amount up into monthly payments if they wish. This gets students into the habit of giving, and the school has had success slowly increasing the amount they ask for by upping the suggested donation at each class' five year reunion.

Harnessing the power of authenticity and testimonials, George Washington University worked with Finals site partner eCity to construct content for a giving campaign that acknowledged the plight of millennials, but recognized they they do in fact want to give back. The campaign shows that the institution knows that young donors have student loans, entry-level salaries, and may be trying to save for a house, but that their gift still makes an impact.



"My GW experience is really special to me. I may not be able to invest in GW the way that I want to at this point in my life and my career, but that is something I really want to work toward. And there is a place I can start, by at least making it regular, making it consistent."

— Matthew Knouse, SEAS BA '09, MS '11

This empathy tells millennial donors: "They care about me, understand me and are working with me."

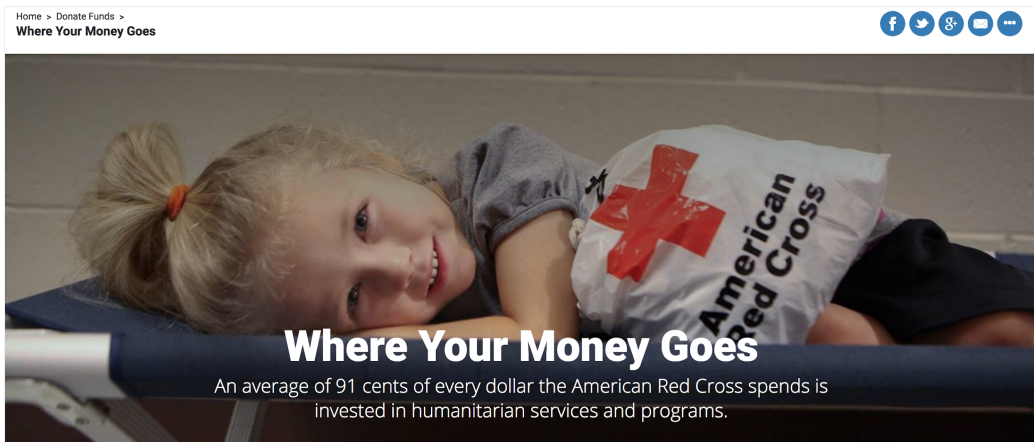
Objection 2: Why Should I Give to a Private School when "Real" Causes Need My Support?

This generation cares about everything from the environment to social justice, and have been the force behind movements like [Boxed Water](#) and the elimination of plastic straws. But millennials also value education more than any other generation, and as a school, you can work with that.

The solution: Resonate with millennial donors like other nonprofits do.

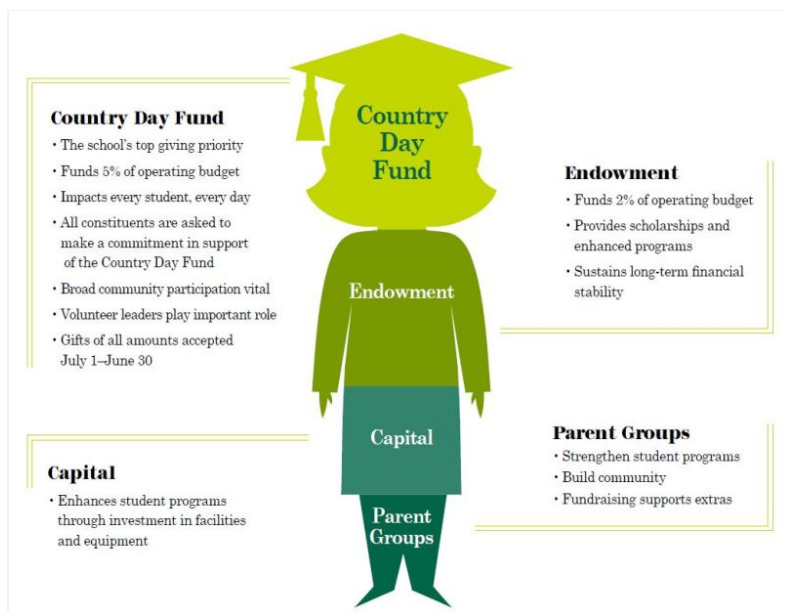
Of course natural disasters, political fundraisers and myriad races and charities demand millennial's financial support. In fact, [84% of millennials give to charities](#), particularly to events like the ice-bucket challenge, to text-based donation campaigns for hurricanes and floods, and to political causes like the Bernie Sanders campaign. What do these other causes do well?

They show impact. Take a look at the [American Red Cross](#)' site that immediately shares that \$0.91 of every dollar goes into their humanitarian causes and programs.



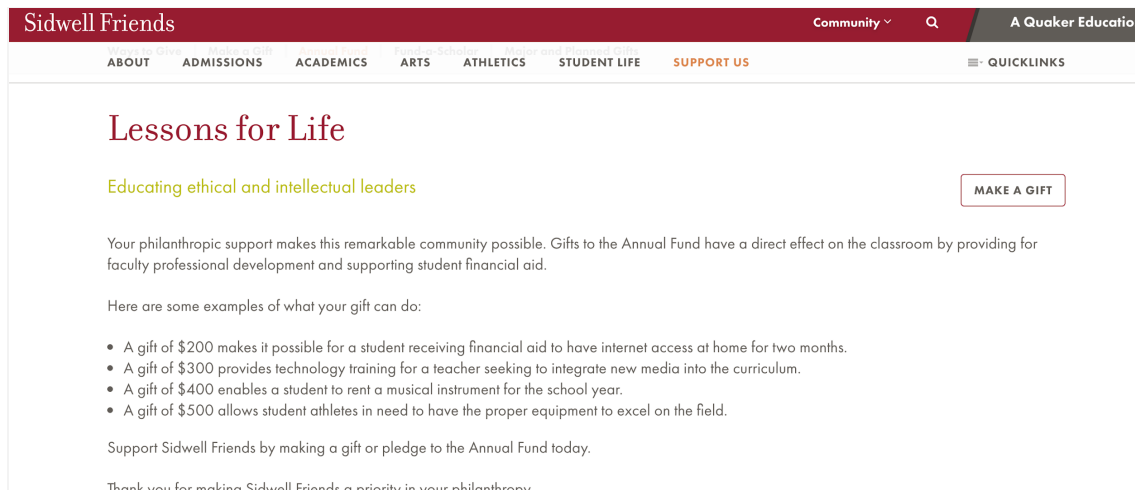
And while schools often don't wish to enumerate every donation in that way, sharing that gifts impact faculty development, classroom enrichment, or financial aid can go a long way.

An infographic is an easy way to get granular with impact instead of sharing that dollars reach a numerical goal that may feel detached from actual programs. Charlotte Country Day also has a great example of a scannable infographic, while still showing what the school is able to accomplish thanks to the gifts and support they receive. Millennials like easy, scannable information—no long letters from your director of advancement, please!



Because millennials have limited funds, explaining where their money goes is essential. Sites like Kiva.Org let donors know that \$25 or \$50 can help a refugee family purchase a tarp, or allow a woman start a small business. **Can you say the same for how small gifts make an impact at your school?** If not, it's time to do some research to let millennials know their donations matter.

Sidwell Friends does a great job showing impact with a simple page that demonstrates how sharing \$500 can provide athletics equipment or a gift of \$400 allows a student to rent an instrument. And while these donations in particular might be a bit high for millennial donors, these easy, round numbers resonate.



Using Finalsite’s [inbound marketing tools](#), like website personalization, to serve up content to donors based on location helps schools reach their donor base overseas. For example with geo-targeting that changes browser language, while the email marketing tools available with Finalsite inbound will soon allow schools to target their emails to donor segments and measure what works with a/b testing.

Objection 3: It’s too hard to give!

Millennials are busy, judgmental, and impatient — so if you make it difficult to give, that is likely an accurate objection. However, the perfect combination of strategy and tech can make donations easy.

Solution: Make it simple with payment gateways and mobile-friendly options


You may have heard the phone is the new millennial wallet; with simple payment apps like Venmo and built-in mobile wallets like ApplePay, it’s safe to say that millennials don’t carry around their checkbooks. So, if you site has a long, complex form that’s cumbersome to complete on a phone, you’re probably missing the chance to engage a millennial donor who’s ready to give now.

Take a look at Pomfret School’s site, for example, who understand millennials handle most (if not all) of their finances online — and probably don’t own a checkbook.


Your Gift Matters

When you give to Pomfret, you are directly supporting our mission to cultivate a healthy interdependence of mind, body, and spirit in our students.


Pomfret is supported by alumni, parents, grandparents, and friends in many ways. At whatever level, your generosity is essential to the Pomfret Experience. Today, research confirms what used to be common sense — that great teachers, supported by great facilities and resources, boosts student achievement, inspires promising career paths, and provides a basis for the kind of leadership we so desperately need in the 21st century. Your contribution makes it possible for Pomfret students to gain an exceptional education that will prepare them for college and life. Thank you!



PayPal



CREDIT CARD

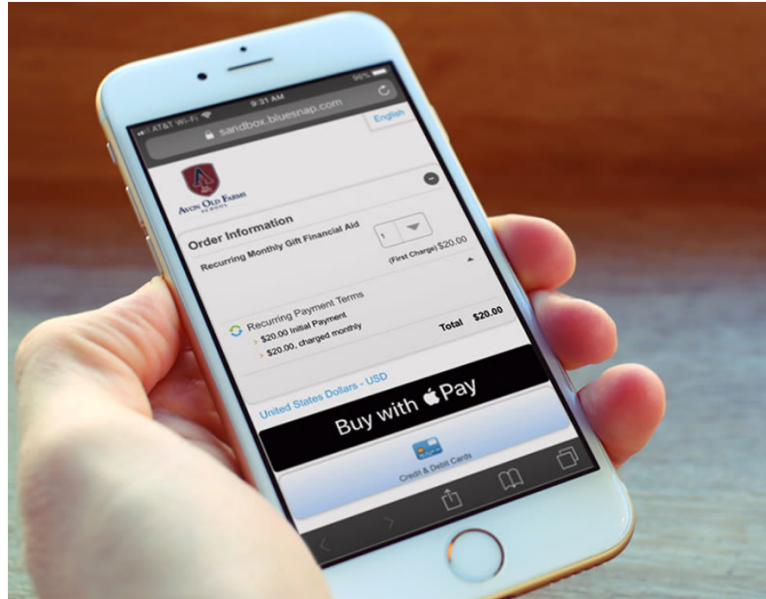


venmo

This school understands its audience and uses payment forms they're used to — including Venmo!

If your school wants to simplify online payments for donors and your development team, Finalsite Payments may be a good fit for you! [Finalsite Payments](#), powered by BlueSnap, is a new online payment tool that's integrated into the Finalsite platform that makes it easy for schools to receive donations in 133 currencies, online or on mobile devices, all in a payment gateway that matches the school's branding.

For schools hosting fall alumni gatherings, homecoming weekends, reunions, or those travelling internationally for donor events, Finalsite Payments will mean millennial donors simply need to use their phone to give via ApplePay, Paypal or more than 100 other eWallets and payment gateways. You can even set up recurring donations right from Finalsite Payments.



Millennials are changing the way schools communicate with donors and share their goals, but with the right stewardship and a great site and mobile experience, the results of engaging this loyal group means they'll make a lasting investment in your school.

Conclusion

From new social media channels and personalized website experiences to capitalizing on FOMO (“Fear of Missing Out”), providing edutainment, and the growing importance on online reviews, **it’s clear that the important millennial demographic is changing the way school marketers need to think about their strategy.**

In this eBook, we’ve provided tips for creating a marketing plan that resonates, how to engage millennials on social media and in search, the importance of sharing your value through the right copy, the increasing significance of video as millennials’ preferred communications tool, and how to tie everything back to an awesome, responsive website experience.

Should you care? Statistics and our work with client schools around the world show the answer is a resounding **yes**. With their numbers growing and expected to overtake baby boomers as the largest demographic in the country, every school needs to think about how to best interact with millennials.

Since this group is loyal, involved, interested in making an impact and concerned about providing the best education for their children, engaging millennials early and retaining them in your community as parents and alumni will reap big rewards for your school.

About Finalsite

Finalsite is the preferred website, communications, and marketing platform of 5,000+ schools and universities in 100 countries around the world. Based in Glastonbury, Connecticut with offices in the U.K., Germany, and Hong Kong, Finalsite's website, marketing and communications platform and consulting services transform how schools engage with community members, recruit students and staff, and fundraise; while managing the complex requirements around data privacy, accessibility, hosting and security.

For more information, please visit www.finalsite.com



How Can Finalsite Help Your School Connect with Millennials?

Start a conversation with us today to learn how Finalsite can help you attract, recruit, and retain more millennials with our expert consulting, award-winning design, and easy-to-use software:
www.finalsite.com/get-started

About the Authors



As Finalsite's Content Marketing Manager, Mia shares innovative and helpful content that helps schools and districts create captivating online experiences that increase brand awareness, student and faculty retention, and school-to-home communications. With more than five years experience in the industry, Mia has written more than 200 articles, eBooks, and reports about best practices for schools on a variety of topics from social media to web design. As a former TV and news reporter, and wedding photographer, Mia specializes in sharing how to use storytelling to power your school's admissions funnel.



Angelo graduated valedictorian from St. Paul's School in Baltimore, MD and from Princeton University. Despite getting his degree in creative writing and English Literature, it generally takes some doing to keep him from programming and breaking websites. Just after graduating, he started Silverpoint, and grew it to over 300 schools worldwide before merging with Finalsite in 2013.



Leah is a marketing enthusiast with a background in visual journalism. She's passionate about global communication, handwritten notes, and solo travel. When she's not exploring new places, she's either blogging, doodling, or dreaming about it.