National Association of Independent Schools
Jobs-to-Be-Done Study on Independent School Parents
New Landscape Demands New Research

Independent schools are facing a new educational landscape affected by rapid changes in the demographic, economic, and social composition of their student and parent populations. Simultaneously, new competition is emerging, providing alternative options for high-quality education. Technology continues to transform every aspect of human interactions, including education and the way students learn and are taught. How can independent schools evolve to best meet families’ needs? Research into the changing market is a crucial first step in the path to school transformation.
NAIS Studied Why Parents Choose Independent Schools

Previous research suggests that the new generation of parents may be more price-sensitive and may view public schools more favorably than earlier generations. A better understanding of what drives these families to consider independent education will help schools meet the demands of the market while maintaining their core values.

NAIS researched what parents are trying to accomplish by sending their children to independent schools. The study, which used the Jobs-to-Be-Done (JTBD) methodology, consisted of a series of interviews with parents whose children recently enrolled in, moved out of, or were accepted to but did not enroll in an independent school.
What Is a Job to Be Done?

A Job to Be Done (JTBD) is the *progress* that a person is trying to make in a particular circumstance.

This progress is defined by…

- **Context**: The context of the situation the consumer is in
- **Struggling Moment**: The moment of struggle that leads a consumer to begin looking for a new solution
- **Hiring/Firing Criteria**: The dimensions that tell consumers how well a product/service solves or doesn’t solve their problems
- **Forces of Progress**: The causal mechanisms that move people toward and hold them back from choosing a new solution to a struggling moment
- **Desired Outcome**: The metrics customers use to measure success when getting a job done
- **Trade-offs in Hiring Criteria**: What consumers are willing and not willing to give up when hiring a new product/service

It includes an *understanding of the functional, emotional, and social characteristics of the desired outcome* the consumer is trying to achieve.
How Does Jobs to Be Done Work?

The JTBD methodology is based on the belief that parents do not buy school products and brands, but rather they hire and fire schools to perform a “Job” for them.

The JTBD methodology begins with a series of interviews with parents who have recently “hired” or “fired” a particular school or its competition. The results of these interviews are analyzed in order to find common patterns of hiring and firing behavior that are observable, not aspirational.

Because JTBD interviews are based on actual behavior, include the true hiring and firing criteria, and are inclusive of the trade-offs parents made, the process can identify what is truly important to them and what influences how they behave, versus how they “say” they will behave.
The Jobs-to-Be-Done Method

Two Forces That Promote a New Choice

Business as Usual

- **PUSH**
  - Of the Situation

- **HABIT**
  - Of the Present

- **Struggling Moment**

- **PULL**
  - Of the New Solution

- **ANXIETY**
  - Of the New Solution

New Behavior

Two Forces That Block Change
Why Do Families Choose Independent Schools?

Job 1
Help me help my child overcome obstacles

Job 2
Help me fulfill my child’s potential in a values-aligned community

Job 3
Help me develop a well-rounded person who will impact the world

Job 4
Help me realize my plan for my talented child
Job 1: Help Me Help My Child Overcome Obstacles

JTBD Statement: When the school is failing my child, either academically or by not providing a safe learning environment, help me find a school that will address those obstacles so I can ensure that my child will not fall further behind and will eventually thrive in school.

What this Job is MORE about:
- Leaving the current school because it is not helping
- Reassuring the parents that the school has the capability to help their child thrive
- The child having had a bad experience in school before
- Solving a problem quickly or addressing the situation immediately
- Preventing the child from falling further behind or continuing to struggle to learn

What this Job is LESS about:
- Having a plan or knowing the plan for the child
- Having a school that is close to home (within reason)
- Finding the lowest price option
- Achieving academic excellence in the “traditional sense”
### Job 1: Help Me Help My Child Overcome Obstacles

#### WHEN...
- The school does not help with my child's unique learning needs or difficulties.
- My child is being bullied or teased at school.
- I am worried that my child is falling behind.
- I am concerned that my child does not like learning any more.
- I am worried about what will happen to my child if I do not take action now.

#### FUNCTIONAL:
- Assess and define my child’s problem/issue.
- Create a personalized learning plan.
- Demonstrate that the school can provide a safe learning environment.
- Achieve the basics of academic performance.

#### SOCIAL:
- Be a support resource for our family.
- Help my child not be singled out or feel alone.

#### EMOTIONAL:
- Help me be confident that I am making the best decision for my child.
- Help me feel less anxious about my child’s education.

#### SO...
- My child can thrive in a school that will cater to his or her unique learning needs.
- My child can have the attention he or she needs in order to be his or her best.
- My child will not be teased by classmates.
- My child will not fall further behind.

#### KEY TRADE-OFFS
- Parents are willing to pay for a school that can provide their child with the individual learning plan that works for him or her.
- Parents are willing to drive a longer distance or invest more travel time in schools that can deliver the individual learning plan.
- Parents will give up extremely rigorous academics in favor of a specialized learning plan.
- Parents will give up the “top colleges” for the individual learning plan.
Job 2: Help Me Fulfill My Child’s Potential in a Values-Aligned Community

**JTBD Statement:** When I have a child who is intelligent and emotionally mature, help me find a school that will ensure my child’s continued growth so he or she will fulfill his or her potential, mature, and be prepared for college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What this Job is <strong>MORE</strong> about:</th>
<th>What this Job is <strong>LESS</strong> about:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The child being in an environment that fosters his or her growth</td>
<td>• Getting the child into the best colleges (Ivy League, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing the child with a meaningful school experience</td>
<td>• Difficulties with learning or troubled situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing the child with a challenge academically and emotionally</td>
<td>• The parents’ desires for their child, regardless of what the child wants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preparing the child for college and helping him or her mature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Job 2: Help Me Fulfill My Child’s Potential in a Values-Aligned Community

WHEN...
- My child is intelligent and well-rounded.
- The current school does not challenge my child academically.

SO...
- My child can be in an environment that will help him or her focus and excel.
- My child can be challenged academically, athletically, etc.
- My child can get a good education.

FUNCTIONAL:
- Provide a challenging academic environment with life balance.
- Prepare my child for college.

SOCIAL:
- Offer a community with like-minded students and families.
- Help my child interact with others.

EMOTIONAL:
- Help my child mature.
- Give me confidence that my child is learning the values I want him or her to have.

KEY TRADE-OFFS
- Parents are willing to give up college savings to pay for the right school experience.
- Parents are willing to move to new neighborhoods and give up other lifestyle considerations to attend the right school.
- Parents are willing to invest money and time in travel to get to the right school.
- Parents are willing to give up academic reputation for an environment that fosters work/life balance.
Job 3: Help Me Develop a Well-Rounded Person Who Will Impact The World

**JTBD Statement:** When a school is focused almost solely on test scores and academic curriculum, help me find a school that will focus on my child’s social and emotional development so I can be sure that my child will be a well-rounded and productive member of society.

**What this Job is MORE about:**
- Helping the child be a “whole/better person”
- Helping the child integrate into society
- Teaching the child how to act and deal with others who might be different from him or her
- The application of knowledge in the real world through projects, etc.

**What this Job is LESS about:**
- Focusing solely on academic learning or academic pressures
- Traditional skill-and-drill educational methodology
- Reinforcement of a specific set of values, morals, ethics, etc.
**Job 3: Help Me Develop a Well-rounded Person Who Will Impact the World**

### WHEN...
- The school is not educating the whole child.
- The school is focused only on academics, test scores, etc., and not on how to function in the world.
- My child is living in a “bubble” with very little diversity of people, thought, experiences, etc.

### SO...
- My child won’t become a “smart jerk.”
- My child will be well-rounded.
- My child will understand how she or he fits into the world.

### FUNCTIONAL:
- Create real-life contexts in which my child can learn.
- Offer programs that focus on diversity.
- Focus on emotional development of the child.

### SOCIAL:
- Encourage interaction with the local community.
- Help my child understand his or her role in the world.
- Help my child understand that the world does not revolve around him or her.

### EMOTIONAL:
- Help my child grow academically and emotionally.
- Give me confidence that I’m raising a well-rounded child.

### KEY TRADE-OFFS
- Parents are willing to give up traditional academic rigor/reputation for a program that focuses on the emotional and social development of the child.
- Parents are willing to travel farther or invest time and money in transportation for the emotional and social development of their child.
- Diversity of people, thought, and culture is more important than academic reputation.
Job 4: Help Me Realize My Plan for My Talented Child

**JTBD Statement:** When my child has talents that must be cultivated and I have a select set of acceptable colleges, help me find a school with an excellent academic program and outstanding reputation so I can ensure that my child gets into one of the select set of schools and fulfills his or her potential.

**What this Job is MORE about:**
- Getting into the best colleges
- Highly educated and motivated parents who believe education is important for their child
- Schools that have top rankings on a national basis
- The reputation the school has in the local market
- Schools that can demonstrate high matriculation rates to the most selective colleges
- The school being part of the parents’ plans

**What this Job is LESS about:**
- Social and emotional well-being, unless that is required for success
- The child making his or her own decisions
- Having a diverse environment
Job 4: Help Me Realize My Plan for My Talented Child

WHEN:
- I need a school to challenge my child.
- The school cannot demonstrate a good enough matriculation rate to the Ivy League.
- The school does not have the reputation necessary to get my child into the Ivy League.
- I have a plan and want to get my child into the best college (Harvard, Yale, Stanford, etc.).

FUNCTIONAL:
- Prepare my child to attend the Ivy League.
- Ensure my child builds the right resume, test scores, extracurricular activities, etc.
- Make sure my child gets accepted.

SOCIAL:
- Ensure my child is with the appropriate set of peers.
- Prepare my child to deal with college life.

EMOTIONAL:
- Ensure that I will fulfill my plan.
- Help me show others that I am a good parent.
- Help me show others that my child is exceptional.

SO:
- My child can build his or her resume for the best college.
- My child will be ready for the rigors of college.
- My child will be mature enough to handle college.
- My child can continue the legacy.
- I can be sure that my child has the best opportunities available to him or her.

KEY TRADE-OFFS
- Parents will trade off the emotional and social well-being of the child in favor of the necessary academic rigors to get him or her into an Ivy League school.
- Diversity of thought, cultures, etc., is less important than getting into an Ivy League school.
Observations and Insights

- Parents expect that most private or independent schools meet some minimum level of academic rigor.
- Certain parents value academic rigor and school reputation more than the social and emotional development of the child.
- Certain parents value the social and emotional development of the child more than academic rigor.
- For some parents, the reputation of the school is determined by the test scores and matriculation rates to the most selective colleges or secondary schools.
- Some parents are willing to sacrifice convenience and proximity to the school if they recognize other elements of value that are more important to them, such as academic rigor, social and emotional development, or the ability to meet a child’s unique needs.
- Schools need to do a better job of acting as a partner to help parents make the right school choice and to set expectations properly.
Observations and Insights (cont.)

- A safe environment can mean “free from danger,” “a school with similar values,” or it can be code for “people like me.”
- Some parents view the school simply as a means to an end, and that end is getting the child into the absolute best college.
- Some parents want the school to prepare their child for life and college, with more emphasis on life and maturity.
Actions Steps and Strategic Questions

Below are some questions you can discuss with your board or your leadership team:

- Given the Jobs uncovered by this study, what JTBD do you think your school does? What JTBD does your board think you do? What JTBD do your teachers think you do? What JTBD do you think your parent body hires your school for?

- How can you measure how well you are delivering on the Jobs your school is hired to do? What are the Jobs of your competitors? How well are they delivering on their Jobs?

- When meeting with prospective families, how can you use your understanding of Jobs to inform your conversations? How can the Jobs help you in your admission efforts?

- How do the Jobs align with your school mission and vision? What conversations could you have with your board to make sure that your offerings match market demands?
Next Steps for NAIS

NAIS is developing a quantitative survey to determine how many parents fit into each segment, to assess if there are any demographic differences, and to validate the jobs in multiple markets.

NAIS is also working with five pilot schools to develop strategic planning frameworks that incorporate market data and Jobs insights. Through this project, schools will identify the particular Jobs the school best serves, assess the school’s unique capabilities, and align their offerings with market demands. NAIS will share this work and the resulting tools with all members through various channels during 2018 and 2019.
For more information or questions on the Jobs-to-Be-Done Study on Independent School Parents, please contact, Amada Torres, NAIS Vice President for Studies, Insights, and Research, at torres@nais.org.

To learn more about the pilot project to develop strategic planning frameworks, contact Jackie Wolking, NAIS Director of Innovation Programs, at wolking@nais.org.