

1. Examining Whether Vancouver-based Independent School Brochures Convey Their Intended Messages

**Jason Brett
Elisabeth Mansfield
Douglas Palm
and
Harley Rollins**

This abstract is based on the unpublished Graduating Paper, “Do Independent School Brochures Convey Their Intended Messages?” written by Jason Brett, Harley Rollins, Elisabeth Mansfield and Douglas Palm, students of the Educational Administration and Leadership Program, Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, 2005.

jason_mets@shaw.ca
lmansfield@wpga.ca
doug.palm@collingwood.org
hrollins@wpga.ca

Electronic copies of a short article on the study and of the complete graduate paper are available from any of the authors.

Abstract

This paper reports the results of a study conducted at two Independent Schools in the city of Vancouver, British Columbia. The purpose was to weigh the importance of school brochures that are used for marketing purposes. Significant funds are spent each year by Independent Schools to create these brochures, which attract parents as prospective clients. The effectiveness of these brochures has not been formally studied in the context of Canadian Independent Schools. This study's prime purpose was to determine whether intended messages in Independent School brochures were being received by those who viewed them, and, subsequently, whether schools should continue to print paper prospectuses.

The literature for this research encompassed the following areas: how school choice has affected marketing in schools, information regarding the components school brochures, and a background of Independent Schools in British Columbia. Research methods consisted of four interviews with those who had a first hand in creating the Independent School brochures studied, nine interviews with new parents to the two schools from which those brochures came, and surveys by twenty-four new parents of those two schools. Additionally, an interview with one school Headmaster who has deliberately abandoned the paper prospectus as a marketing tool was also interviewed. This was a significant addendum to the study, as changes in technology result in increased options for school marketers.

Findings that emerged from the collected data indicate that the intended messages are indeed being received; therefore, brochure creators should continue to use existing techniques in creating their brochures. However, the data also indicates that the importance of brochures is declining. Consequently, school marketers should consider the relative importance of websites as viable and complementary alternatives to printed prospectuses. Additionally, while brochures and web sites have an important role, they pale in comparison to 'word of mouth' advertising and school visits; therefore, schools should focus on these two aspects of school marketing in a major way. Lastly, it is the researchers' hope that these findings may be able to assist all schools in their marketing endeavours.