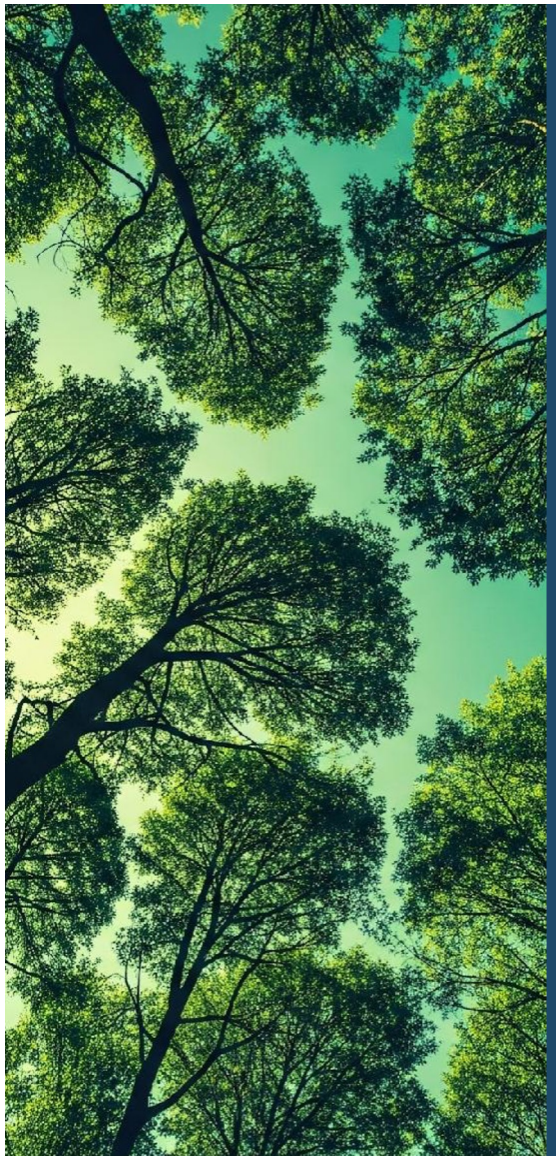


From Evidence to Enrollment Messaging:

Turning What You Know Into What Families Need to Hear

ACIS 38th Annual Leadership Conference

October 16, 2026

DNI Consulting
www.dniconsulting.biz
dana@dniconsulting.biz



ACIS Thanks ISU Insurance

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STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT AND MARKETING PLANNING

STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT AND MARKETING RESEARCH

STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT AND MARKETING OPTIMIZATION

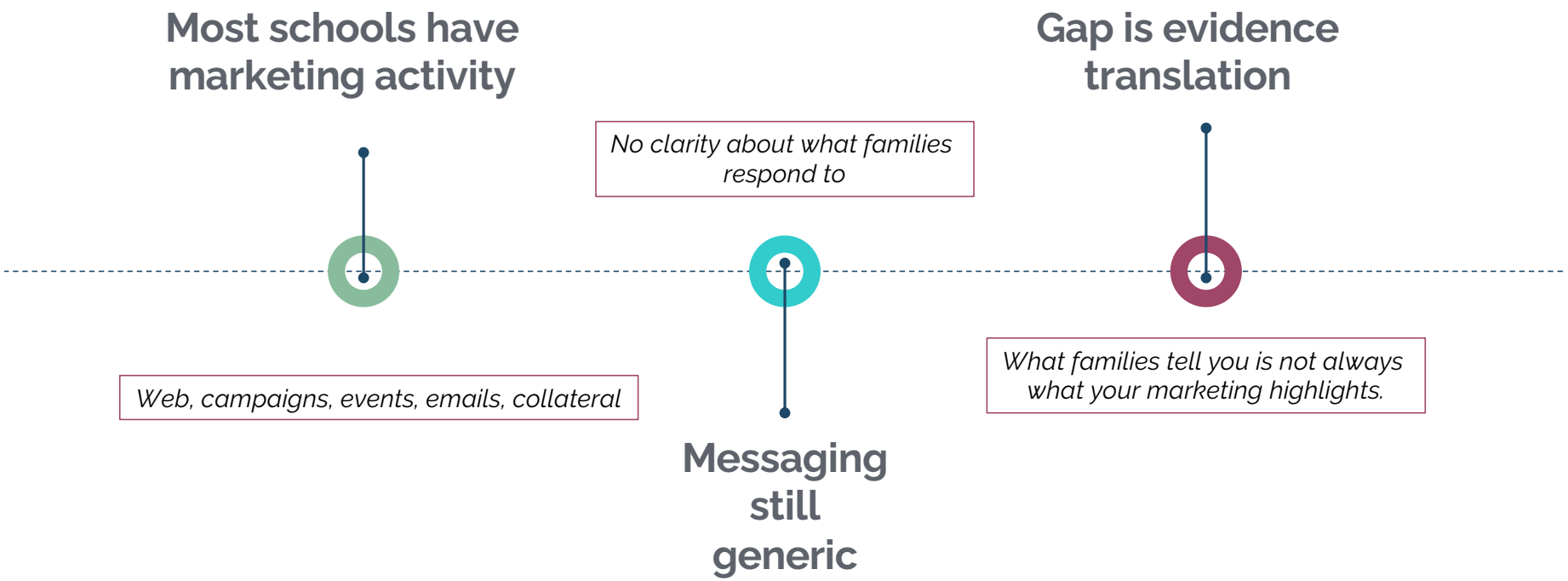
STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT AND MARKETING COACHING

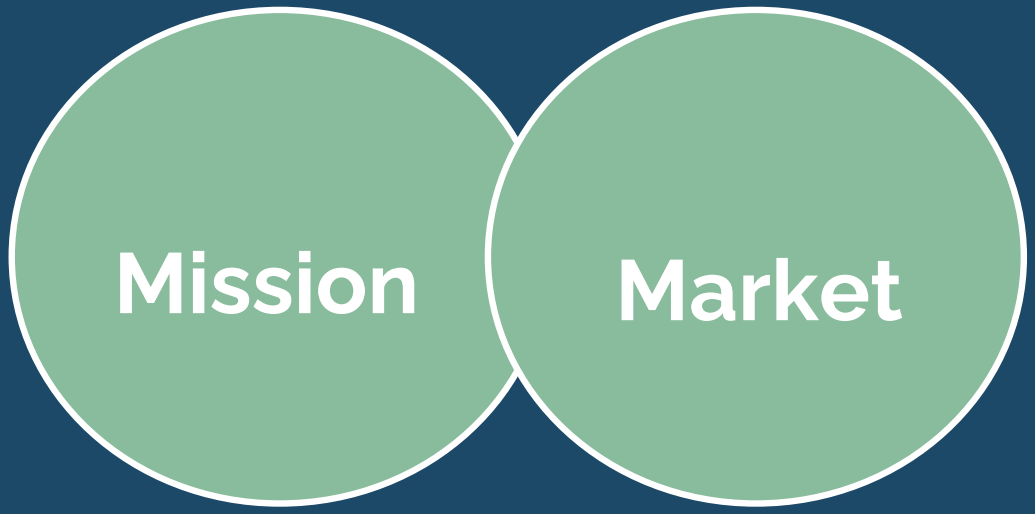
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Who is here?

Why This Session Exists





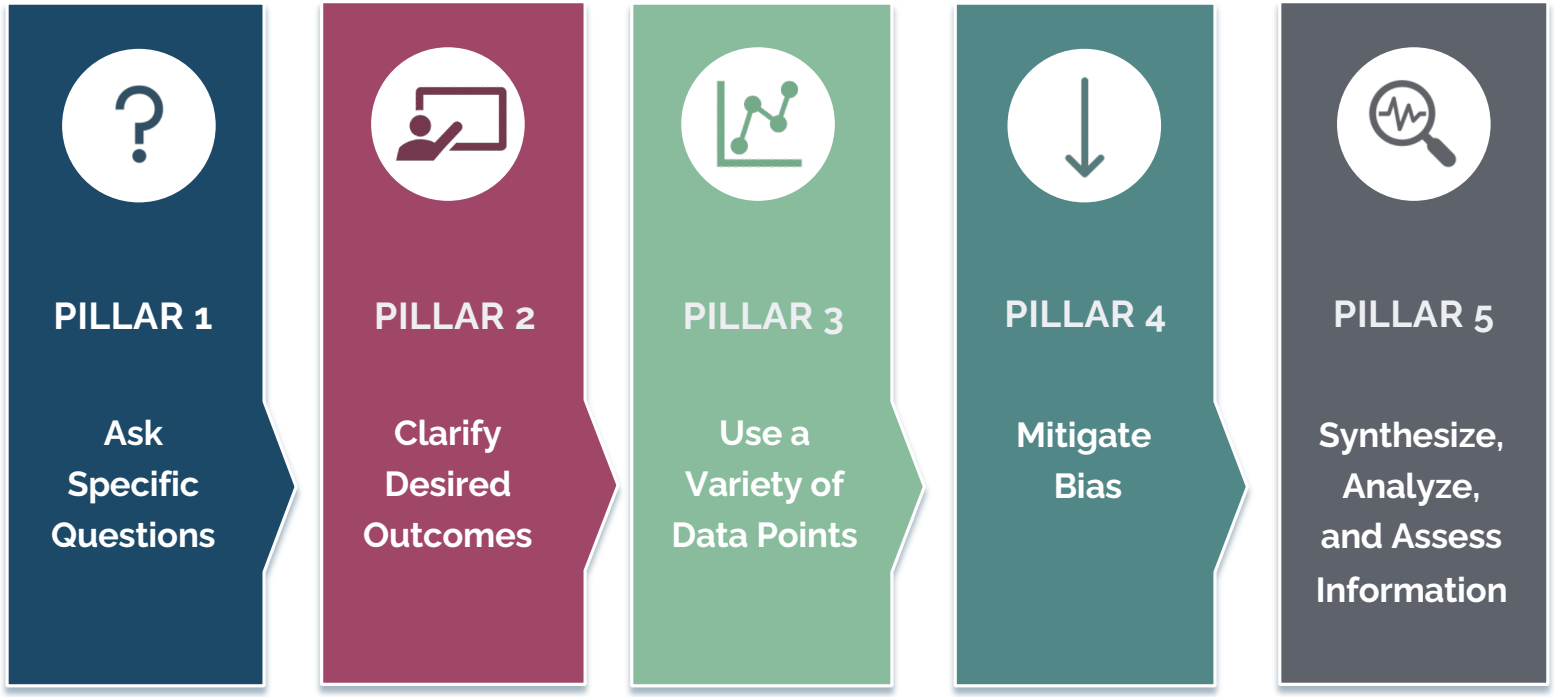
Claims match the strongest drivers in your data

Claims are backed by believable proof

Messaging anticipates friction that prevents action

What we'll do together

1. Set the stage
2. Two examples
3. Small group diagnosis and action
4. What's next


PILLAR 1
Ask Specific Questions
PILLAR 2
Clarify Desired Outcomes
PILLAR 3
Use a Variety of Data Points
PILLAR 4
Mitigate Bias
PILLAR 5
Synthesize, Analyze, and Assess Information

RESEARCH GUARDRAIL:

TRUST WHAT REPEATS

Tour / visit / interview notes

Early language + emotional cues

Application “Why Us” answers

More invested

Admit/Decline reasons

Where your story loses to another story

Each stream has bias. The power comes from what repeats across them.

Competitor Perceptions

What is the frame people are bringing in?

Market psychographics

What different segments value and fear

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Purpose-Driven Creators	This persona reflects affluent, intellectually curious families who value progressive education, artistic expression, and environmental consciousness. They seek schools that balance rigor with purpose and creativity with community. Messaging that centers on ethical leadership, student voice, and global stewardship will resonate strongly.	Emphasize student-led inquiry and interdisciplinary, project-based learning that encourages independent thinking and real-world problem solving. Highlight the school's commitment to environmental leadership through marine science, sustainability initiatives, and nature-based learning experiences.	Interactive events featuring student projects in robotics, app development, or digital media production. Host art exhibitions, musical performances, or theater productions that showcase student creativity. Host workshops or talks on college admissions, innovation in education, or global citizenship. Organize activities like international food festivals, sustainability fairs, or outdoor learning showcases.	Highly targeted campaigns on Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook to reach tech-savvy families and professionals. Sponsor or create podcasts focusing on parenting, education trends, or global citizenship. Publish blog posts or videos on topics like STEM programs, the arts, or sustainability in education. Advertise in luxury lifestyle magazines and local community publications.

Case: Riverview School (composite)

Profile

- PreK–8
- ~320 students
- Tuition ~$40K
- Suburban/near-city market

Challenge

- Flat inquiries
- Softer middle-school yield
- Retention softening in grades 6–7

Competitive set

- Strong local public option
- Independent A: rigor/outcomes
- Independent B: warm progressive

Case: Harbor Day School (composite)

Profile

- 9–12
- ~450 students
- Tuition~$55K
- Urban market

Challenge

- Applications steady
- Yield on 9th graders down
- Families ask about cost and outcomes

Competitive set

- Strong local public schools
- Independent A: brand / placement / pressure
- Independent B: small, creative

Harbor composite

In your group: read the evidence, then jot notes

DRIVERS

→ What pulls families toward us?

FRICTIONS

→ What makes them hesitate?

COMPARISON FRAME

→ What are they weighing us against?

For each of the 5 streams, jot drivers, frictions, and comparison frame. Star what repeats in 2+ streams – at least one from a "group"

Lead with (*Our main claim. One sentence a family could repeat)*

Prove it with (*One specific thing we do or show. Not "excellent teachers.")*

Say (*The worry to answer before they ask.)*

Stream 1: Tour Notes. What families say while they're first learning

We want a place where she is really known.

She's bright but she shuts down under pressure.

We're also considering the public school because of the advanced math track.

How much homework is there in 6th grade?

How do you help new kids make friends?

We want warmth, but don't want to sacrifice academics.

Riverview composite

Stream 2: Application "why us?" answers

- Teachers really know the students
- Challenge with support
- Community and belonging
- Strong foundation for high school
- Support for executive function/learning needs

Stream 3: Admitted, not-enrolled reasons

- Public: value + perceived academics — 31%
- Competitor A: Stronger outcomes— 24%
- Logistics/commute — 17%
- Aid gap — 14%
- Uncertain about fit in middle school — 14%

Riverview composite

Stream 4: Competitor perceptions

Public	Free, strong academics, bigger classes, less personal
Competitor A	More rigorous, more homework, outcomes, status
Competitor B	Warm, progressive, but less structured

Stream 5: Psychographic Segments

Striving & Structured

Values rigor, outcomes, clarity. Fears “soft” or “not competitive.”

Belonging & Whole-Child

Values community, supportive adults, balance. Fears pressure or being overlooked.

Riverview composite

What did we learn about Riverview?

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Stream 1: Tour Notes. What families say while they're first learning

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She's bright but she shuts down under pressure.

We're also considering the public school because of the advanced math track.

How much homework is there in 6th grade?

How do you help new kids make friends?

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Riverview composite

Stream 2: Application "why us?" answers

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Riverview composite

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Riverview composite

What might come next for Riverview?

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Synthesis: what repeats across streams?

Known / belonging

- Known / belonging: tour notes + applications + Belonging & Whole-Child segment

Challenge without pressure

- Tour notes + applications + competitor losses + psychographics

Middle school fit is a pain point

- Tour notes + admitted-not-enrolled

Next: translate signals into a messaging architecture

Riverview composite

From Signal To Message

Known deeply. Supported proactively.

Rigorous but not intense.

Middle School that feels steady, connected, and confident.

Riverview composite

Homepage audit: Responding to Big Pattern

Before

Academic Excellence.
Global Citizens.
Innovative Learning.

Preparing students for the future.

Tiles:
STEM • Leadership • Whole Child

Issue: this could be almost any school.

After

Known deeply and steadily challenged.

A community where students belong, expectations are clear, and support is proactive.

Tiles:
Challenge without pressure • Support that's proactive • Middle school that feels steady

Proof line: Advisory + transparent academic expectations + coordinated support when a student is stuck.

Riverview composite

Email audit: Responding to individual information

Before

Subject:
Thanks for Visiting!

Dear Name,

Thanks for coming to the tour.
It was great to meet you! Let us know if you have questions, we're always here to help!

Best,
Name

Riverview composite

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Friction Bridges

- “If you’re weighing rigor, here’s what ‘challenge’ looks like here…”
- “If you’re worried about pressure, here’s how support actually shows up…”
- “If social fit in middle school is on your mind, here’s how we build a steady culture…”



Riverview composite

Email audit

After

Subject:
What being known looks like

1. Reinforce the lead claim.
2. Add one proofpoint.
3. Bridge one friction
   ("if you're weighing rigor…").
4. Offer a concrete next step.

Riverview composite

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Dear Marcy and Jon,

It was great to meet you yesterday! Thanks for coming to campus.

I was thinking about our conversation regarding Maisie and how you mentioned she can shut down sometimes if she feels like she is under pressure. Attached are a few examples of advisory program activities so you could get a sense of how we approach this type of concern. I also wanted to introduce you to Susie Jones (cc:d here) who runs our advisory program. She can jump in with some thoughts, or feel free to reach out to her directly.

Next Saturday, we have an open house where you and Maisie can talk more with teachers and meet students in an informal way. It would be great to see you there!

In the meantime, I hope you have a wonderful weekend and I look forward to connecting again soon.

Warmly,
[Name]

Riverview composite

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What did we learn about Harbor?

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Stream 1: Tour Notes. What families say while they're first learning

"When does college counseling begin?"

"He's smart but he's coasting at his current school."

"Do students have a real say in what they study?"

"What kind of prep do you offer for the SAT or ACT?"

"The public school has an excellent swimming team, and he's excited about that."

"What percentage of new applicants receive tuition assistance? Is that process separate from the application for admission?"

Application "why us?" answers

- Teachers know my child's goals
- Real discussion, independent thinking
- College counseling starts early
- Treated like a young adult
- Serious community, intellectual peers

Admitted-not-enrolled reasons

- Public: free + strong academics — 29%
- Aid gap / cost — 23%
- Independent A: placement + brand — 22%
- Workload and pace — 14%
- Stayed at current school — 12%

Harbor composite

Stream 4: Competitor perceptions

Public	Free, strong academics, larger, admission by lottery, good swimming
Competitor A	Strong brand, long placement list, high pressure
Competitor B	Small, creative, close-knit, less college-focused

Stream 5: Psychographic Segments

Outcomes-Driven Planners

Values placement, rigor, clarity.
Fears no visible edge over free.

Ambitious Self-Starters

Values peers, depth, a high bar.
Fears coasting or being under-challenged.

Harbor composite

What might come next for Harbor?

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dana@dniconsulting.biz

Synthesis: what repeats across streams?

- **Serious students, intellectual peers**
  - Tour notes + applications + segments
- **College readiness, proven**
  - Tour notes + decline reasons + segments
- **Is it worth $55K?**
  - Tour notes (aid question) + aid gap + free public

Next: translate signals into a messaging architecture

Harbor composite

From Signal To Message

Serious students. Serious preparation.

Surrounded by students who care as much as you.

A high bar, and a plan to meet it.

Harbor composite

Homepage audit: Responding to a Big Pattern

Before

Excellence in Education.
Inspire. Innovate.
Lead.

Preparing tomorrow's leaders.

Tiles: Academics · Arts · Athletics

Issue: this could be almost any high school.

After

Serious students.
Serious preparation.

A school for students who want to be pushed.

Tiles: High expectations · College counseling from 9th grade · Outcomes

Proof line: Advisory + capstone + college counseling from day one.

Harbor composite

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Email audit

Before

Subject: Thanks for Visiting!

Dear xxx,

Thanks for coming to our open house. It was great to meet you! Let us know if you have questions, we're always here to help!

Best,
Xxx

PS: Our spring play is April 12. Please join us!

Harbor composite

Friction Bridges

- "If you're comparing us to the public schools, here's what a class of 14 looks like…"
- "If cost is the question, here's how aid works and what the investment includes…"
- "If pace is on your mind, here's what a typical week looks like…"



Harbor composite

After:

1. Reinforce the lead claim.
2. Add one proof point.
3. Bridge one friction (“if cost is the question…”).
4. Offer a concrete next step.

Harbor composite

DNI CONSULTING

Dear Priya and Dan,

It was great to meet you and Theo yesterday! Thanks for coming to campus. I kept thinking about what you said, that Theo is smart but coasting at his current school, and that you're also in the public school lottery. Attached are a sample 9th-grade schedule and a one-page look at how college counseling starts in 9th grade, so you can see what a challenge looks like here. I also wanted to introduce you to Marcus Lee (cc'd here), who runs our college counseling office. He can talk through where our graduates end up, or feel free to reach out to him directly. If cost is part of the decision, our financial aid director can walk you through the picture before you commit to anything.

Next Saturday, we have a visit day where Theo can sit in on a class and meet students. It would be great to see you there!

In the meantime, I hope you have a wonderful weekend and I look forward to connecting again soon.

Warmly,

[Name]

Harbor composite

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Before your next board or leadership meeting

- → Ask your team: which of the five evidence streams do we actually collect? Which do we ignore? What else might we have?
- → Gather the last 10 admit/decline reasons, verbatim, not summarized
- → Pick one asset — homepage, viewbook opener, one admission email — and run the "could this describe any school?" test together
- → Before approving marketing spend, ask for 2–3 claims with named proof points, not adjectives


HOME
REGISTER
LOGIN TO EVENT HUB
Is It Really the Enrollment Cliff?
October 19–November 6, 2026
3-4 p.m. ET
Three weeks of live instruction (one hour, Mondays) plus office hours (one hour, Fridays)

Keep in Touch!

DANA NELSON-ISAACS

dana@dniconsulting.biz

If you are reviewing these slides after the event, please send an email to receive the workbook.