

Board Meeting Minutes Mays Community Academy

July 12, 2016
5:30 PM at MCA

Board Members:

Present: Nansi Custer, Deanna Disney, Shannon Dawson, Marcia Schwering

Absent: Greg Jarman

Others Present: Shannon New, Krissi Williams, Nick LeRoy, Sara Booth

Proceedings:

Meeting called to order at 5:39 PM by Nansi Custer, Board President

Nick LeRoy with Bright Minds Marketing presented his findings after analyzing Mays Community Academy's demographics, marketing strategy, and recruitment efforts. There was a great deal of discussion and dialogue surrounding these topics, including the school's web presence.

Shannon Dawson MOTIONS to provide Sara Booth with a stipend to facilitate design enhancements to the website in accordance with funds currently available in Year 1 of the Implementation grant. Marcia Schwering seconded; all approved; MOTION CARRIED.

Shannon Dawson MOTIONS to adjourn the meeting; Marcia Schwering seconded; all approved; MOTION CARRIED.

Meeting adjourned at 7:36 PM by Nansi Custer
Minutes submitted by Sara Booth, Administrative Assistant

Enclosures: Bright Minds Presentation Slides
Bright Minds Focus Group Report

MINUTES APPROVAL

Nansi Custer

Shannon Dawson

Deanna Disney

Greg Jarman

Marcia Schwering



MAYS COMMUNITY ACADEMY

JULY 12, 2016

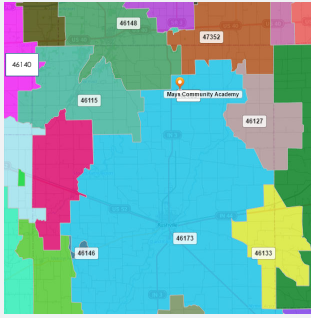
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SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS
Demographics

9 zip codes were used as the primary location analysis for Mays Community Academy

- These are low population, rural areas, with school age population ranging from 18 children age 5-14 in zip code 46155 to 5,400 in zip code 46140


These zip codes were based upon Mays student distributions



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AGENDA

- Demographic analysis
- Competitive environment
- Feeder opportunities
- Student population
- School operations
- Qualitative feedback from customers
- SWOT analysis



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SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS: DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS
There are areas of students available, with most students in the more urban zip codes

Zip code	Total Population	Total Households	Households with children under 18	Average Family Size	Children 5-9	Children 10-14	# of Mays Students	% of Mays Students	% of total students available
46173	11,190	4,430	1,434	2.97	763	828	56	49%	4%
46115	1,933	732	253	3.03	126	146	15	13%	6%
46148	5,097	1,971	683	3.01	344	367	13	11%	2%
46155	103	38	18	3.14	9	9	13	11%	72%
46127	416	154	56	3.01	35	24	10	9%	37%
47352	965	369	112	2.94	36	60	3	3%	3%
46146	117	52	14	2.75	6	6	2	2%	17%
46133	816	322	112	2.98	55	52	1	1%	1%
46140	38,543	14,916	5,173	2.99	2,684	2,863	1	1%	0%

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Source: US Census

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

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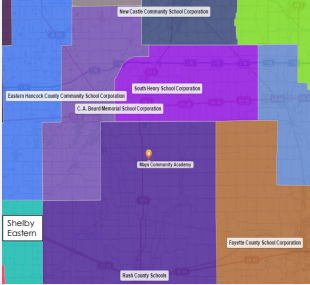
SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS
Situational Analysis: School Districts

7 public school districts form the landscape

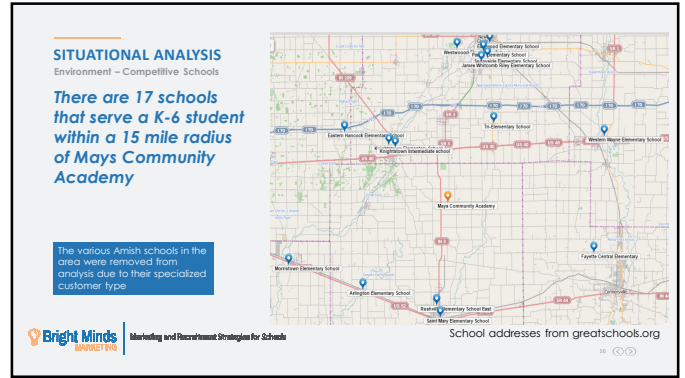
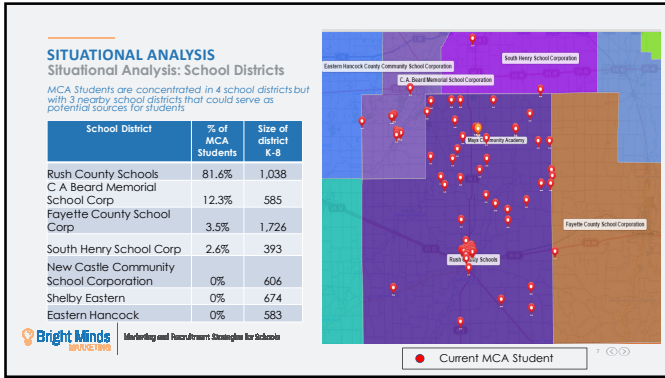
Based upon analysis of the MCA student population, the following school districts were used for analysis:

- Rush County School Corporation
- CA Beard Memorial School Corporation
- Fayette County School Corporation
- South Henry School Corporation
- New Castle Community School Corporation
- Shelby Eastern
- Eastern Hancock
- Due to distance - Western Wayne and Nettle Creek were not included

MCA is the only public charter school in Eastern Indiana with the closest charter school being the Excel Center in Richmond.



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SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS:

DEMOGRAPHICS TRENDS - SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The majority of the school districts around Mays are experiencing declining enrollment that is mainly based upon population shifts, not competitive school pressure.

	% of Mays Students	# of Mays Students	Enrollment 2015-2016	Enrollment 2014-2015	Enrollment 2013-2014	Total Change
Rush County Schools	81.6%	93	1038	1200	1247	(17%)
C A Beard Memorial School Corp	12.3%	14	585	612	660	(12%)
Fayette County	3.5%	4	1726	1826	1874	(8%)
South Henry	2.6%	3	393	387	392	0%
New Castle Community School Corporation	0	0	606	564	582	4%
Shelby Eastern	0	0	674	686	685	(2%)
Eastern Hancock	0	0	583	560	568	3%
St. Mary's	0	0	89	79	86	3%

Note: Enrollment is K-6 only
Source: Indiana Department of Education

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Situational Analysis: Competitive Schools

Primary competitors are public schools

- Mays is located in a rural area with schools primarily based in the major population centers of Knightstown, Rushville and New Castle
- There are a total of 17 schools within a 15 mile radius of the school who serve a K-6 student:

Public School Competition	Public School Competition	Private School Competition
Knightstown Elementary School	Knightstown Intermediate School	Saint Mary Elementary School
Tri-Elementary School	Rushville Elementary School East	
Rushville Elementary School West	Arlington Elementary School	
Eastern Hancock Elementary School	James Whitcomb Riley Elementary School	
Sunnyside Elementary School	Westwood Elementary School	
Parker Elementary School	Eastwood Elementary School	
Fayette Central Elementary	Wilbur Wight Elementary School	
Morristown Elementary School	Western Wayne Elementary School	

Note: Mikroy Elementary was excluded due to distance (17 miles from Mays)

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Situational Analysis: Public School Districts Academic Trends

CA Beard, South Henry, and New Castle have the lowest academic performance in the area

	% of Mays' Students	District Enrollment 2015-2016	State Grade 2014-2015	State Grade 2013-2014	State Grade 2012-2013	IREAD 2014	IREAD 2015	IREAD 2012-2013	ISTEP 2014	ISTEP 2013	ISTEP 2012-2013
Rush County Schools	81.6%	1038	B	B	B	88.30%	92.60%	92.00%	56.60%	74.80%	73.40%
C A Beard Memorial School Corp (3455)	12.3%	585	C	C	C	92.00%	92.40%	91.60%	41.60%	71.10%	70.50%
Fayette County (2395)	3.5%	1726	A	A	A	88.10%	91.40%	87.90%	52.10%	76.20%	75.10%
South Henry (3415)	2.6%	393	A	A	B	91.20%	88.50%	90.90%	41.60%	72.40%	73.30%
New Castle Community School Corporation	0	606	B	B	B	85.60%	88.80%	90.50%	51.00%	76.20%	77.30%
Shelby Eastern	0	674	C	C	B	90.30%	97.80%	99.20%	49.80%	72.40%	75.30%
Eastern Hancock	0	583	A	A	A	89.50%	97.30%	94.00%	56.60%	75.30%	75.60%

Red = Below state average

Indiana Department of Education
Note that 2014-2015 had a revised ISTEP test - lower scores are to be expected

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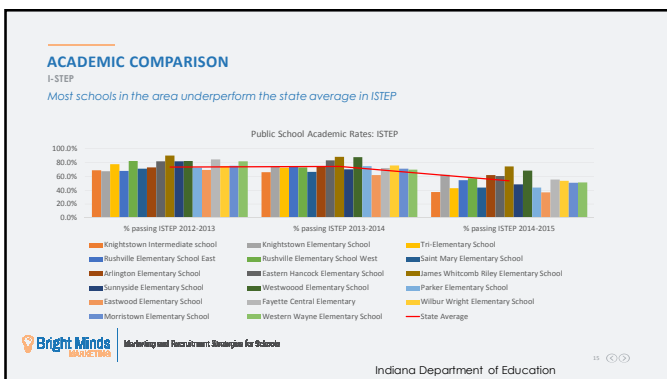
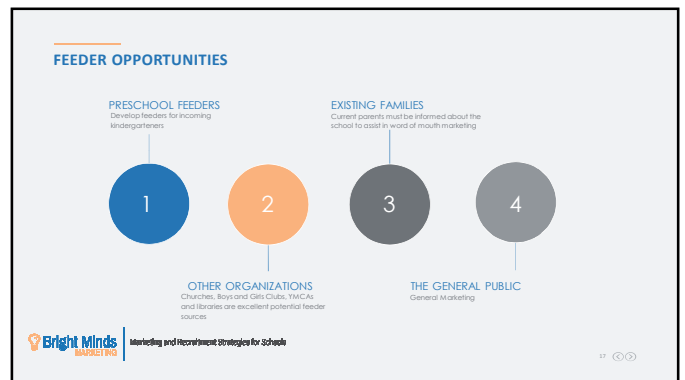
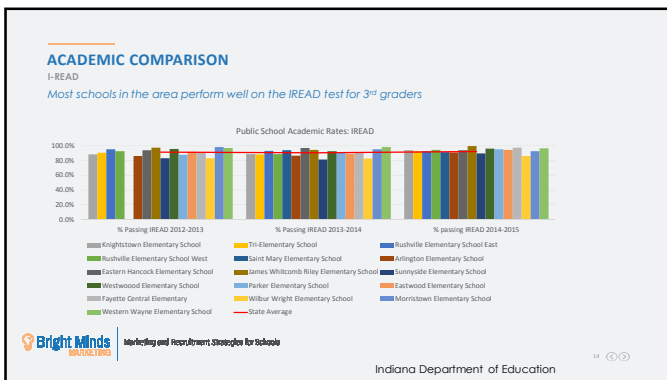
ACADEMIC COMPARISON

Mixed academic performance in the public school system

School Name	ISTEP grade 2012-2013	ISTEP grade 2013-2014	ISTEP grade 2014-2015
Knightstown Intermediate school	D	D	C
Knightstown Elementary School	A	A	A
Tri-Elementary School	A	A	A
Rushville Elementary School East	A	A	C
Rushville Elementary School West	A	A	A
Saint Mary Elementary School	A	A	C
Arlington Elementary School	A	A	A
Eastern Hancock Elementary School	A	A	A
James Whitcomb Riley Elementary School	A	A	B
Sunnyside Elementary School	C	C	A
Westwood Elementary School	A	A	A
Parker Elementary School	B	B	C
Eastwood Elementary School	D	D	D
Fayette Central Elementary	A	A	A
Wilbur Wright Elementary School	C	C	C
Morristown Elementary School	B	B	A
Western Wayne Elementary School	C	C	A

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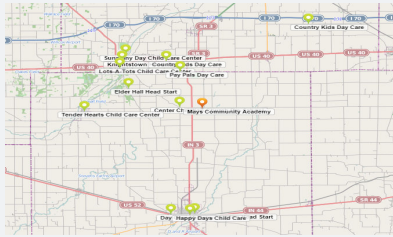
Indiana Department of Education



- ### PRESCHOOLS
- 12 Preschools in the area could serve as potential feeders
- Mays Community Academy recently made the decision to open and operate a pre-school for the 2016-2017 school year.
 - Though this places the school in direct competition with private pre-schools there still might be opportunities to work with these preschools in a feeder relationship
 - There are 12 preschools within a 10 mile radius of the school and 59 within a 20 mile radius of the school
 - However, of the private preschools, only 9 have a PTQ rating and the nearest is 9 miles from the school in the city of Rushville
- Being a preschool with a high PTQ rating would serve as a strong point of differentiation for the Mays Preschool*
- Bright Minds Marketing and Recruitment Strategies for Schools

FEEDER PRE-SCHOOLS

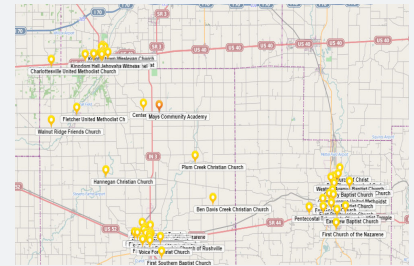
There are 12 Pre-K programs within a 10 mile radius of Mays



School addresses from greatschools.org

CHURCHES

There are 53 churches that could be areas to recruit students



School addresses from Google.com

For full listing, see data sheet

FEEDER PRE-SCHOOLS

Private Pre-K within 10 miles

Schools without a PTQ Rating

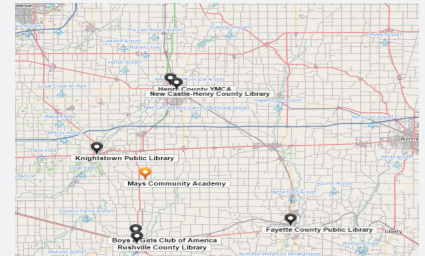
Name	Street	City
Center Christian Church	3132 North 5th West	Knightstown
Pho School	2/2 West County Line Road	Lawrence
Day Park Day Care	4800 Old National Road	Knightstown
Country Kids Day Care	10602 North State Road 140	Knightstown
Elder Hill Head Start	100 West 4th Street	Kristin
Lot's A Lots Child Care	100 West 4th Street	Kristin
Knightstown Head Start	933 North Washington Street	Knightstown
Sunshine Day Child Care	7075 Mike County Road B50	South
Tender Heart Child Care Center	109 North Walnut Street	Lawrence
Robbie T Washington Head Start	325 East 7th Street	Rushville
Day Care Ministry	1700 IRL St	Rushville
Country Kids Day Care	1385 East County Road 600	Stoughton

Schools with a PTQ Rating

Name	Street	City
Happy Days Child Care	117 East 6th Street	Rushville

OTHER

6 Ancillary sources of students



For full listing, see data sheet

CHURCHES AND OTHER FEEDERS

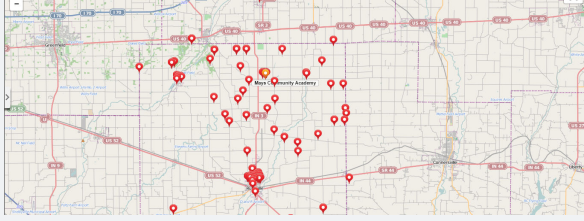
Mays does not currently have any formal feeder relationships with churches

- Churches, libraries, Boys & Girls Clubs and YMCAs serves as excellent potential feeders for the school to deliver its message and to recruit students.
- Analysis of the market in which Mays operates in shows the following potential recruiting venues:
 - o Churches: 53
 - o Libraries: 4
 - o Boys and Girls Club: 1
 - o YMCA: 1



SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS: MAYS STUDENTS

Students are primarily concentrated in northern Rush county with a small number in southern Henry County and Fayette County.



BRAND VISION

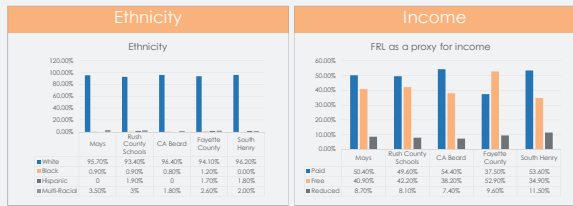
Sourced through interviews of board members

- Leverage the brand and tradition of Mays Elementary**
 - *The school has a rich tradition and a strong academic history
 - *There are a considerable amount of alumni in the area. The school must continue to solidify relationships with the alumni of the school
- A community school that reflects well upon our area**
 - *It is critical that the community understands the value of the school and that they feel that they are benefitting from having the school in their area
- A school that views parents as partners in the child's education**
 - *Though this is generally shaped by 1:1 interactions, it is critical that the school continues to survey parents to understand if this brand tenant is being achieved
- A school that allows freedom and individuality in educational approach**
 - *Though this was accomplished in year 1, there were comments of a digitized approach to education. Individual approach under a master plan will allow the school to accomplish this.
- A school where children feel like they belong**
 - *This can be challenging due to the small size of the school.
 - *The organization must continue to communicate with parents to ensure this is being accomplished

An interesting observation is that no board member mentioned strong academics in their top of mind brand identity. A couple of board members struggled to explain place based learning. It is critical that this is addressed

MAYS STUDENTS – COMPARISON TO OTHER SCHOOL CORPORATIONS

Mays students are very similar to the other school corporations in the area



DIFFERENTIATION FROM NEARBY SCHOOL CORPORATIONS

Mays has a different service offering than the traditional public school systems, but this is poorly communicated to potential parents

- Interviews with stakeholders showed that Mays maintains some differentiation from their competition:
 - Place based curriculum
 - Technology infrastructure in the classroom and 1:1 Chrome book provision
 - Additional recess (2X / day)
 - Arts and Music program
 - Higher quality school lunch program
 - Flexibility by the teachers to craft their own lesson plans under a master curriculum
 - A more collaborative environment between parents and faculty
- This information was gained from interviews only. **The website lacked information on these key points of differentiation.**

BRAND IDENTITY

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS: ACADEMICS

Mays does not currently have an academic record

- Even though Mays was traditionally the highest performing school in the school corporation, they can no longer point to superior academics as a key point of differentiation
- In 2016 the school experienced significant changes in their ability to provide superior instruction
 - Moving to a place based education methodology
 - Teacher turn over
 - Principal turn over
 - Losing the district curriculum and infrastructure
 - No longer having an educational professional as the principal
- Anecdotally, it was expressed that some teachers are struggling to properly implement place based learning
- **It is critical for the organization to demonstrate a strong academic story to potential customers with appropriate reasons to believe**

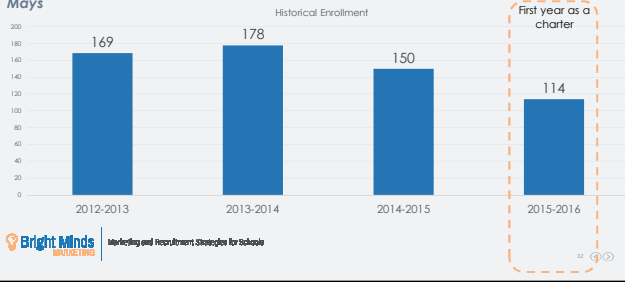
RETENTION

Poor record keeping limited retention analysis

- The school does not maintain good records regarding retention
- Anecdotally, the school lost 22 students when the transition to charter was completed
- Stakeholder interviews suggest that the school has not lost students for reasons within the school's control during the 2015-2016 school year
- The school does not maintain a formal exit interview process or a process to re-engage students who have left the school.
- The school also does not employ customer satisfaction surveys to understand potential loyalty issues

ENROLLMENT

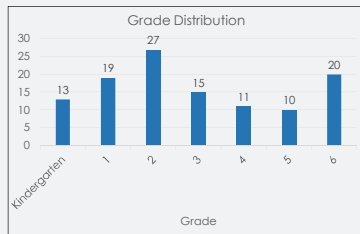
With the transition to a charter, a number of families chose to pull their children from Mays



ENROLLMENT

The school has an uneven distribution in enrollment due to challenges of first year

"Smoothing" out the enrollment pattern will help the school to ensure appropriate staffing and instructional resources



Client supplied data

Digital Presence

3 components that work in concert and need to be maximized



DIGITAL PROFILE: WEBSITE

Website lacks key information

- The Mays website <http://www.mayscommunityacademy.org/> is well organized and is very clean. However, there are significant areas of improvement.
- SEO is adequate with the following search terms:
 - Mays, Academy, Kindergarten, Elementary, School, Rush County, Rushville, Sexton, Milroy, New Castle, Knightstown, Carthage, Raleigh, Henry County.
 - No names of competitive schools shows up.
- Website lacks critical information
 - Explanation of what makes Mays truly unique against competition
 - Nothing describing place based learning
 - Critical misperception issues are not covered in the website
 - Transportation, academic profile, explanation of place based curriculum, technology, teacher quality, teacher bias, day in the life of a student, art and music availability, lunch program, second recess, aides in the classroom.
 - Meeting minutes of board meetings are not posted (**legal requirement**)
- Google analytics is not enabled for the website preventing the school from knowing the effectiveness of this channel

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RECRUITMENT

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DIGITAL PROFILE: SOCIAL MEDIA

Good communication channel – not leveraged effectively

- The school seems to utilize Facebook as the primary communication vehicle
 - There are two Facebook pages for Mays which could lead to customer confusion
 - There does not seem to be a Facebook posting strategy with much of the postings reflective of pictures of the children or of the cafeteria
 - Very little official communication seems to be placed upon the Facebook page
- The postings on Facebook give a good picture into the warm community feel of the school, but neglect to provide concrete information about the school's differentiation or academic mission
- The school has not done any Facebook advertising

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SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS: MARKETING

The school does not take a formalized approach to marketing

- The school does not have a formalized marketing plan
 - Enrollment goals have been established, but stakeholders indicated that these have not been communicated throughout the staff
 - There is not a single person who has responsibility and **accountability** for student recruitment which can lead to misalignment
 - The school does not maintain a prospect database and has not formally reached back out to the students that left the school
 - The school has struggled to track attendance at tours and open houses to identify closure rates or areas of leakage
 - The school does not collect marketing source to understand channel effectiveness for new students
- The school has conducted limited community events designed to raise awareness (booth at the fair)
 - There is no consistent preschool outreach program or formalized outreach program to faith based organizations

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DIGITAL PROFILE: ONLINE REVIEWS

No online reviews and inaccurate information online

Website	Listed	Information accurate	Number of reviews
www.schooljigger.com	Yes	No	0
www.greatschools.org	Yes*	No	2 (2006)
www.google.com	Yes	No	0
https://k12.niche.com	Yes	No	0
www.noodle.com	yes	No	0
http://cityofrushville.in.gov/living-and-visiting/schools/	Yes	No	N/A

- Outside of the strong Facebook presence, the school has a comparatively weak digital profile.
 - Many listings still consider MCA a part of Rush County schools
- Online real estate sites link to online reviews (Greatschools.org) making this an important channel if parents are moving into the area

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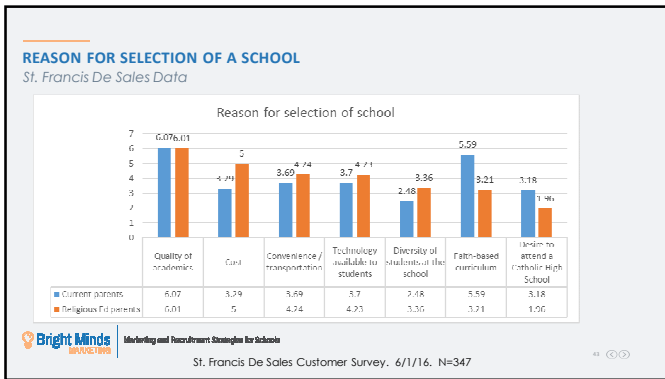
"PARENT JOURNEY" WITH MOMENTS OF TRUTH

Understanding the shopping journey is the first critical step

Options	Awareness	Consideration	Engagement	Enrollment Process	Retention
Parents are aware that they have a choice in where they send their kid to school	Parents are aware of Mays Community Academy	The attributes and selling proposition of Mays fits within their buying criteria	The formal engagement (tour/questions, etc.) the parent has with the school is positive	Enrollment process is positive	The parent believes that the school is still the best option

Size of market →

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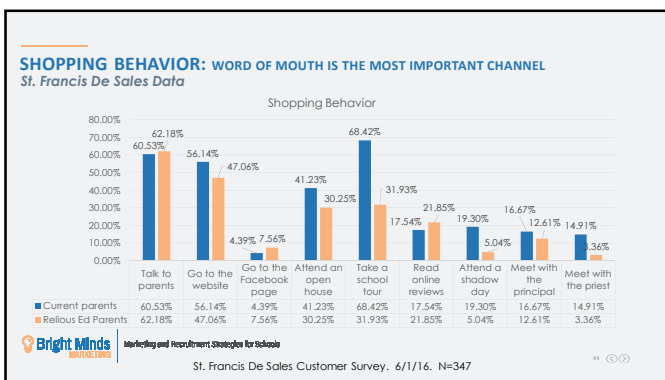


Summary of customer feedback

Customers positive towards the school

Dimension	Ranking	Comment
Community feel / supportive environment	High	Customers had very positive responses regarding the feel of the school towards them. Many parents cited this as the number one reason why they preferred MCA to other schools in the area
Quality of academics	Med / High	Parents stated that MCA uses a place based approach in their education. Many cited the legacy of Mays with the quality of academics. Some parents struggled to define if MCA was a better school academically for their students, but this could be due to the relative time that the school has been open.
Operational aspects of the school	High	Parents spoke highly of the technology and the quality of teachers at the school. They appreciated the ability to truly be partners at the school. A couple of parents cited the lack of administrative experience by the former principal.
MCA's reputation in the community	Med	All of the parents interviewed indicated that they try to spread the word about Mays throughout the community. However, many did indicate that this is an ongoing process that will require more attention.

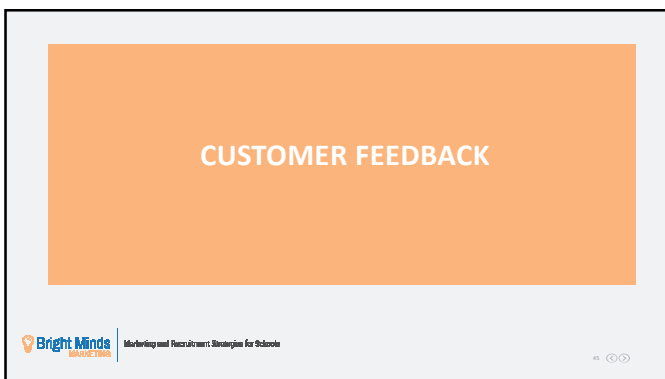
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SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective first year of operations Growing reputation as a truly unique school in the northern Rush county area Ability to recruit across multiple school districts Engaged and passionate board members Strong social media presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor data gathering Lack of an academic record Perceived weaknesses in establishing a place based curriculum Ability to communicate in a consistent manner to customers
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New principal brings academic quality to the school New Prep program can serve as an effective feeder to the school Numerous preschools in the area to being to establish feeders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declining available student numbers available in the area will increase competition for students Ability of the local school corporation to outpend the organization in marketing efforts

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SUMMARY

School is heading in the right direction

- Mays has the opportunity to truly differentiate itself from the traditional school options available to parents in the Rush County area
- To be successful, the school must communicate its' unique value proposition to customers in a consistent manner
 - The organization must first align on its own brand in order to be able to communicate this externally
- Marketing efforts need to be tracked and analyzed to understand effectiveness
 - In person communication is the best way to combat misinformation being spread in the community
- The organization has already taken some strong steps, but there are a number of areas highlighted in this presentation which if implemented will set the school up for future success

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Focus Groups Summary

Mays Community Academy

On May 23rd, Bright Minds Marketing conducted focus groups at Mays Community Academy (MCA). Due to some scheduling challenges, only 6 parents participated. This meant that one focus group was conducted (5 parents) and one individual interview was held. This group contained:

- 2 parents had previously attended Mays when it was under the Rushville school system,
- 2 who had transferred in from Arlington Elementary and
- 2 who had kindergarteners at MCA.

This group represented a good mix of the various types of parents that MCA seeks to attract. Additionally, one of the respondents currently has a child in both the public school system and MCA allowing for a comparison of the two systems.

The intent of the research was to probe further upon some of the areas uncovered during the qualitative interviews of the school board members and staff of the school. These included:

- Perception of the surrounding (Competitive) school choices.
- Perception of MCA / Why they chose to attend Mays (Brand).
- How parents heard about Mays (Marketing vehicles).
- Qualitative observations about the operations of the school.

Perceptions of other school options:

The majority of schools that MCA competes with are traditional public schools. Although there is one private school in the area (St. Mary), that school is in decline and most respondents did not consider it a competitor. Therefore, the discussion centered mainly around the public school options available to parents.

When asked for their opinion of the public school options in the area, participants cited the relative large size of the other schools as a key reason for not sending their child those schools. All cited larger classroom sizes and indicated that they believed that due to the size of the classes, they felt that their child would not or did not get the attention that he/she needed in the classroom.

“The schools in Fayette county have very large classes. I think that you get a better education in a smaller system” – Meghan

Respondents also felt that the traditional school system takes a very static and rigid approach to teaching. There were a number of comments given about the inability or unwillingness of the traditional school system to customize its approach to learning.

“[In Rushville], it is all about learning from the book” – Brandy

“[Not every] child is on the college track. They aren’t able to give the children the 1:1 attention that some of them need” – Mikka

Participants also felt that these other schools maintain a very strict and rigid environment. One participant even likened Arlington to a “prison like atmosphere”. All of the respondents who had experienced other schools perceived a certain antagonistic relationship between staff and parents. There was the perception that staff in those systems did not view parents as collaborators in their children’s education.

Participants stated that they felt that staff at those schools treated them more as bothersome irritants rather than as customers. One respondent even went so far as to state that she felt that there was inappropriate behavior towards her child by a school administrator.

“[I felt] that the principal was engaging in bullying behavior towards my child” – Brandy.

Though not universally expressed, one respondent also mentioned that the social dynamics of the traditional school system was troubling to her. She felt that a number of parents of students at Rushville were disinterested parents who cared little for instilling proper values and respect in their children.

“Rushville has a very challenging social environment. My children were picking up behaviors that I didn’t want to see.” – Viviana

There were also some comments regarding the different socio-economic dynamic between the southern part of the county where a number of Rushville students are and the northern part which is more MCA dominated.

The parents in this group did not feel that they had other options for their children in the nearby community. There was an almost universal opinion that the traditional school systems are too focused on exerting control and achieving strong scores in standardized tests vs. taking a holistic approach to education.

Many parents talked about “escaping” a bad situation by coming to Mays. It is critical that the organization understand that many early adopters to charter schools are only looking for an alternative to what they feel is a bad situation. Different = better in their minds.

Though this desire for something different is a perfectly valid reason for changing schools, it is important, and should be watched over time, to ensure that parents believe that MCA is a superior academic environment in addition to be a more welcoming social environment.

Perceptions of MCA

Respondents universally used words like “friendly” and “personal” to describe the relationship that they have with MCA. They feel that the teachers have created a welcoming environment that helps to make learning fun for the children, and they appreciate that MCA seems to have kept true to the legacy of the original school while still moving forward into the future. They like that the faculty and staff see the parents as equal partners in the education of the students.

“[I like] that I can pop into the school at any time” – Brandy

“Parents are always welcomed here. Come to class, come to lunch, come to recess. Parents are partners. It is like having a huge family” – Meghan

“It still feels like Mays, but with more technology” - Leah

Parents offered that the teachers are constantly available and willing to find a solution to any educational or behavioral challenge that a student might be facing. This was of particular importance to the two respondents who had children that had special needs or behavioral issues. They felt that the positive social environment that MCA has created had made a significant impact in their child’s perception towards education.

*“My kid hated school, but having Ms. Hamilton was a blessing. He now loves school” -
Viviana*

Respondents also liked the place based curriculum in use at MCA. They were all able to correctly identify the name of “place based” and were able to cite specific examples of bringing agricultural concepts into the curriculum, but when asked if they could cite if this was a stronger educational methodology than others, they struggled a bit in their answer. ***Parents like that their children have a varied learning environments, but the organization must continue to watch the progress students make academically to prove that this approach to teaching is superior.***

Respondents were favorable in their perception that there seemed to be a lower emphasis on standardized tests at MCA. But one respondent wondered if the school is truly pushing her child hard enough.

When asked if they felt that their children were getting a superior educational experience at MCA, all respondents said yes. When pressed to explain why, many cited anecdotal experiences

of their children describing lessons. ***It will be important for the organization to provide demonstrated academic parity or superiority with the competitive school options.***

Marketing vehicles

Northern Rush county is a small community and so the majority of parents were exposed to MCA through word of mouth, coverage in the local media, or by attending community meetings that the school held in preparation for opening. Additionally, many responded that the Facebook page that the school maintains is a strong communication vehicle. However, that is not without its own challenges:

“It seems like Facebook has become the only communication vehicle. I can’t check it at work and I wish they had other ways to provide information” – Leah

All of the participants in the focus group mentioned that they had seen the billboards. Anecdotally, they mentioned that other community members had mentioned the billboards to them.

Respondents stated that there was, and still is, a significant amount of misinformation regarding the school in the local area. Though many respondents stated that finishing a successful first year is an accomplishment in of itself, they stated that there are still large levels of misinformation in the community. They claim that they express their positive experiences to family and friends and many indicated that they knew new families who were planning on attending MCA in the fall.

The organization must tell their story better. They also cannot solely rely on Facebook postings that reflect the culture of MCA – they must demonstrate success.

Qualitative observations of the school

Though the participants indicated that they have a strong affinity towards the teachers and the board, one respondent cited discomfort in the current administrative structure of the school.

“I have a bit of a problem with the fact that there is no principal” - Viviana

This was the school’s first year and with only 2 months to bring it online, there were some significant challenges. Parents recognized this but the organization must understand that there is a finite amount of patients that parents have. A couple of the parents mentioned that the

organization is still struggling with basic processes and organizational infrastructure that was standard in public schools.

“This was a challenging first year. They are still trying to get the curriculum down” – Leah

In qualitative interviews with the board members and staff, items like a better quality school lunch and an additional recess were mentioned as key differentiating factors for MCA. But it should be noted that no customer mentioned these as key benefits to the school. Rather they highlighted the more collaborative communication and curriculum as key components to why they chose to attend MCA. ***It is important that the leadership of the school recognize what their customers value and need and highlight how the school is meeting those needs.***

A key issue that MCA to be aware of is their potential negative impact that the school may have in the community. MCA strives to be part of the community and be a net positive, but the presence of MCA is having some negative repercussions in the community. One respondent who currently attends Center Christian Church mentioned that the presence of Mays impacted both the after school program and wondered how the pre-school would impact the church’s operations.

Finally, though MCA prides itself on being customer-centric and responsive, a couple of respondents wondered if they were doing things just because people were asking for them. There was a fear that the school is trying too hard to please everyone versus having a consistent growth and development strategy.

Summary

Universally the respondents were very happy to have MCA as part of their community. They felt that it offered a compelling alternative to a public school system that they felt was cold, impersonal and not responsive to their needs. Though respondents cited some challenges that the school has faced in its first year and cited some specific things that the school needs to address, the positives definitely outweighed the negatives.

All respondents indicated that if only more people in the community could experience Mays and understand the truth about the school, then more people would support and eventually attend the school.