



WINNING THE FUTURE:

How IMG Academy
Created a World-Class
Student Experience



“

Our vision from the outset was to lead a culture shift in education by putting the experience of our students at the center of every decision. We knew that with the right strategy, and enough heart and patience, **we would see rewards not just for our students but for our entire community on campus, not just today but for years to come.**”

MIKE MILLIRON

Chief Operating Officer, IMG Academy

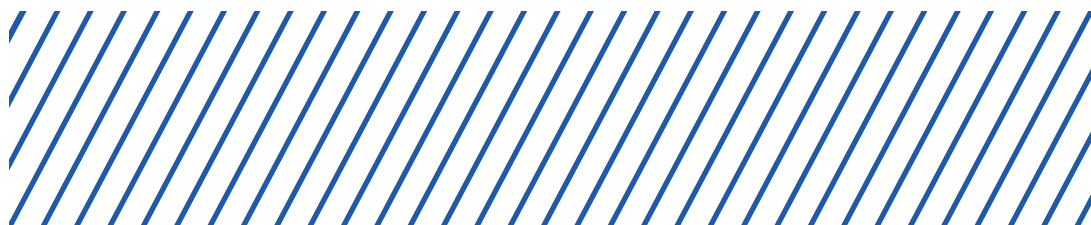
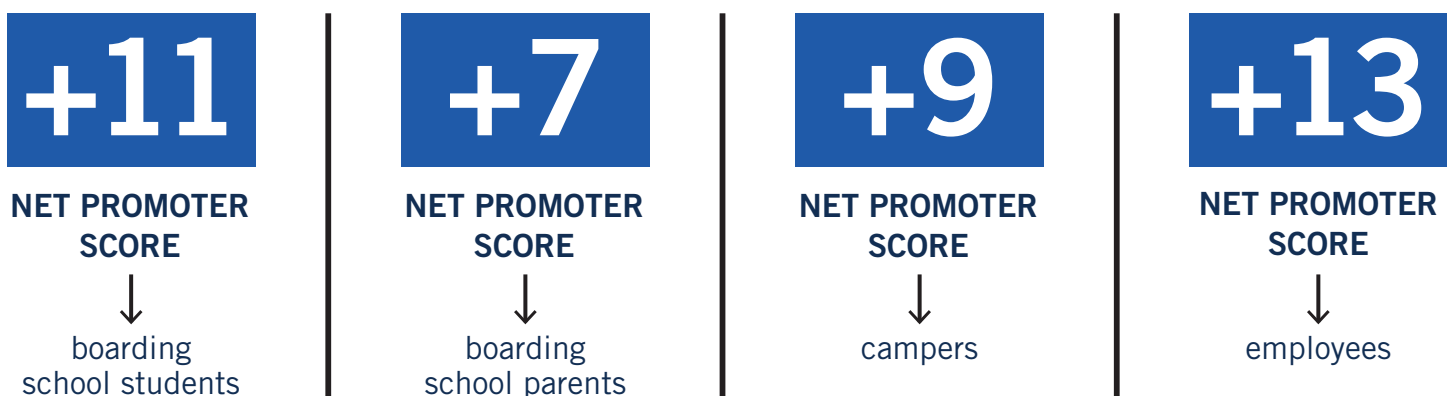
GOING ALL IN⁷

In 2022, leaders at IMG Academy took stock of their operation. Over the span of almost 50 years, they had built a premier sports education brand known for its accolades and distinguished alumni, but their internal audit revealed something less familiar, more uncomfortable – room for improvement. In particular, IMG Academy saw a need to reimagine how it would adapt to the journeys, fulfill the preferences, and further promote the goals of students and their families.

Determined to show the same strong character they impress on the students going to class and attending their sports camps, IMG Academy took action, assembling a team dedicated to preserving and elevating the experience of everyone on campus, from employees to students and campers.

This moment offered a unique opportunity to align the goals of IMG Academy, both as a center of education and as a business. With the expectation that each student request met, need anticipated, and fond memory formed would lead to returns on strategic investments the school made, the leadership team chose to go all in. They hired consultants from Bain & Company to advise this seismic shift and set to work reshaping the culture, procedures, facilities, and relationships across campus.

This is the story of how IMG Academy created a world-class and innovative experience program unlike anything else in education, the changes that followed, and the lessons learned.



A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE

Founded in 1978 by renowned tennis coach Nick Bollettieri, IMG Academy has evolved from a tennis training facility into a multi-sport and academic institution with an unprecedented focus on holistic personal development. Located in Bradenton, Florida, the academy features a boarding school, year-round sports camps, and hosted tournaments and events. Notable alumni include countless professional athletes. In the 2023-24 academic year alone, IMG Academy saw 18 former students drafted by professional sports organizations. Each year, approximately 25% of college freshmen roster spots are filled by students who attended IMG Academy's boarding school or camps, or used its digital products NCSA College Recruiting and IMG Academy+.



The school has built a reputation for blending athletic training with strong personal development and academic instruction, preparing its international student body not only for collegiate and professional sports careers but also for life beyond athletics. At the core of IMG Academy's mission is the commitment to developing the holistic student, fostering excellence in sports, academics, leadership, and personal growth.



1,000



campus staff members



100%



graduate college acceptance rate

A source of great pride, IMG Academy’s legacy of excellence nonetheless presented a challenge when the time came to implement the student experience program: With so much won, there was much to lose. School leaders and stakeholders had to take a leap of faith to divert funds toward transforming the student experience. The hope was that this shift would lead to higher re-enrollment rates, an increase in promoters and brand loyalty, and ultimately new growth.

In the end, that faith was rewarded with greater student, parent, and employee loyalty and satisfaction, enrollment boosts, and an energized, unified school community.



STUDENTS

1,500/YEAR



CAMPERS

15,000/YEAR



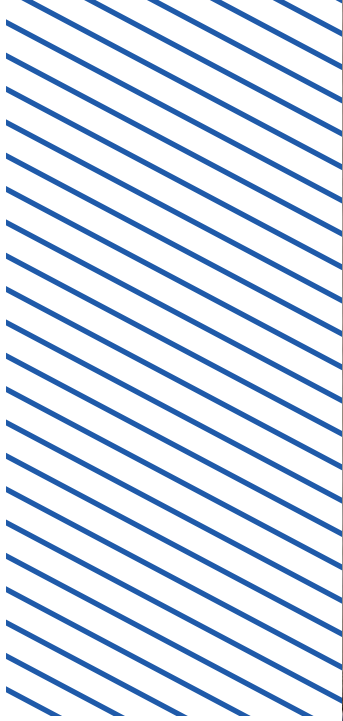
PARENTS/GUARDIANS

33,000/YEAR



OTHER GUESTS

273,000/YEAR



“

We wanted a program built to last.
Achieving that began with identifying our core commitments, so that we had a north star to reference during the rest of the work.”

LAUREN BURKLE

Senior Director of Experience, IMG Academy



**WE PLAY
TILL THE BUZZER**

**WE MAKE
IT PERSONAL**

**WE REVIEW
THE PLAY**

**WE RAISE
THE BAR**

PRIORITIES & NON-NEGOTIABLES

The student experience at a large institution like IMG Academy touches a multitude of activities, events, spaces, processes, and people. **Before starting this initiative, IMG Academy's newly formed experience team took time to identify six fundamental priorities that they would return to repeatedly as they began to address the sprawling work in front of them:**



LEARN FROM THE BEST

By working with Bain & Company, IMG Academy leaders sought to tap into a deep vein of knowledge gained during comparable initiatives at organizations large and small across industries. The partnership showed IMG Academy what best-in-class looked like and gave them models to emulate why still customizing to their unique needs.



INTEGRATE CX AND EX

IMG Academy recognized that the student (or customer) experience (CX) and the employee experience (EX) were intertwined to such a degree that it would be wise to improve both at once to achieve exponential success.



INTENTIONAL DECISIONS

Rather than making haphazard, reactive improvements on campus, the IMG Academy team wanted each effort to conform to a holistic strategy for maximum impact and visibility. Each step of the project would be thought out beforehand to avoid redundancies, save time, and solve the biggest challenges in order.



ALIGN THE DISJOINTED

Seeing that IMG Academy staff were doing great work for students and campers in their various departments but coming up against obstacles that could be solved by cross-campus coordination, the experience team worked to align priorities, open communication channels and provide more big-picture guidance to staff.



CHANGE CULTURE, BUILD COMMUNITY

Since the effort to transform student experience would involve so many different individuals, changing routines and attitudes while promoting a strong sense of community rose to the top of the priority list.



ALL IN, TOGETHER, FROM LEADERSHIP DOWN

Knowing the example leaders set can make or break a culture-shifting initiative, IMG Academy created formal executive commitments for the leadership team in order to demonstrate to staff their own commitment to change.

HEAR, HEAR⁷

“

You take the time to read surveys and take action.
That means something.”

IMG ACADEMY STUDENT

The engine of all experience improvements at IMG Academy is now a multi-pronged listening program designed to collect feedback from students, parents, and staff. Using a variety of channels for real-time and retrospective data, IMG Academy began to gather the information it would use throughout the larger initiative to find out what was working and what needed to change.



8



different “always on” surveys for various customer segments



100+



employees with access to real-time insights



12,500+



survey responses annually



200+



follow up calls to parents from survey challenges



150+



1:1 interviews with students and parents annually



12



student focus groups

The listening program was spread across campus and digital spaces, with ongoing opportunities for students, parents, and staff to share their thoughts about what would make IMG Academy even better.



CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING

To understand the needs of students and their families at the outset, IMG Academy gathered more than 100 participants for a customer journey exercise, identifying seven key needs and mapping around 48 distinct journeys. By intentionally designing those journeys, alignment across campus occurred which allowed the school to provide consistent unrivaled experiences for students.



DIGITAL SUGGESTION BOX

IMG Academy created an online portal where employees could suggest ways to improve the student or employee experience. Knowing that the team members delivering on the IMG Academy promise were the true experts, the experience team created this channel to ensure their voices were heard and make improvements at the same time.



120+

submissions to digital suggestion box



1 YEAR



34

submissions box requests implemented



1 YEAR



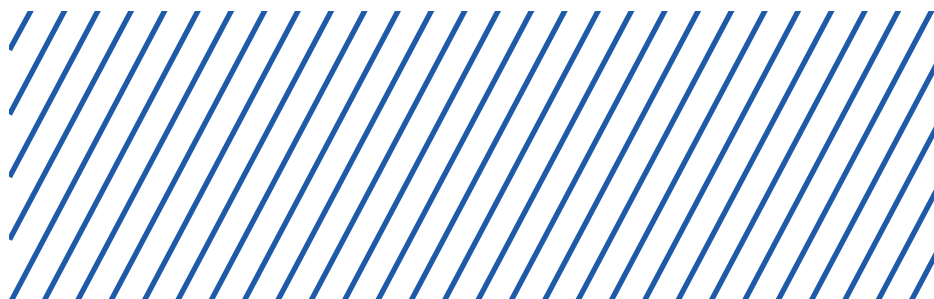
LOST CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

The experience team gathered responses from parents of students and campers who declined to re-enroll, in order to identify important factors that might be holding the school back.



KEY DRIVER ANALYSES

For insight into critical outcomes such as re-enrollment and student loyalty, IMG Academy performed a key driver analysis and identified correlations between what people experienced and if they decided to return or not.





STUDENT AND PARENT FOCUS GROUPS

Focusing on pain points and potential areas of focus, IMG Academy hosted guided discussions with students and their families about specific parts of school life.



CUSTOMER CALL-BACKS

Closing the loop with unsatisfied students and parents who reported challenges with their experience was critical not only to learning what could go better, but also to changing an unsatisfied customer to one who would consider returning.



HAPPY OR NOT MACHINES

Placing one-touch survey machines at busy locations around campus lets IMG Academy see data about specific sites both by the hour and over time, providing clues about where improvement was needed.

Without the listening program, none of the other elements of the student experience initiative could succeed. Once it was in place, IMG Academy was nearly ready to put feedback into action.



THE BEST IN BUY-IN⁷

Quickly realizing that the student experience initiative would require mass buy-in from students, parents, and staff — IMG Academy launched several creative sub-initiatives to do two jobs at once: **boost awareness of and enthusiasm for its new vision and enhance employee satisfaction.**



MISSION UCX

Mission UCX, or Mission for an Unrivaled Campus Experience, was developed to help IMG Academy employees understand the new vision and expectation. It included team and culture scaffolds such as a High Five program where staff could share peer-to-peer recognition for those that were going above and beyond in creating unrivaled experiences. Those that were recognized received a Mission UCX t-shirt, which quickly became sought after by staff. Hoping that employees would share 500 of these accolades in the first year, IMG Academy saw over 2,000 come in, and the High Five program's popularity has only grown with staff since.



JOB SHADOWING

IMG Academy began sending executives to key sites around school to spend time in employees' shoes, create empathy for their pain points, and offer solutions. Programs such as "IMG After Dark" challenged executives to stay late on campus to appreciate the experience of staff who provide after-hours support for IMG Academy's boarding school students.



WAYS OF WINNING

Knowing leadership was asking staff to create unrivaled experiences, there was a clear need for resources and training on how to do that. This spurred the creation of the Ways of Winning program, which identifies four key behaviors that staff can demonstrate to ensure a successful connection with a student and their family.

With the feedback engine of the listening program running at full speed, and campus culture shifting, IMG Academy was poised to make bigger changes to meet student preferences.



ACADEMIC¹ OVERHAUL

Part of IMG Academy's journey to transform the campus experience involved revisiting its academic services to ensure they aligned adhered to the customer journeys the experience team had identified. Notable projects included developing college planning and recruiting resource guides that showed a yearly checklist for each grade, creating templates and expectations for communication between academic advisors and college recruiters, hiring faculty for specific challenges, launching new and timely curriculum around NIL and financial literacy education, and aligning attendance policy between school and sports programs to reduce confusion for families.

6

Major initiatives completed, 2024
(based on direct feedback from
students and parents)

10

Record number of Ivy League
commitments in 2024

31

Students graduated with a perfect
unweighted 4.0 GPA in 2024

1

New and timely NIL and financial
literacy education curriculum

CAMPUS SPACES⁷ REIMAGINED

Surveys from the listening program brought in a wealth of insights about how students used campus facilities. Using this feedback, IMG Academy designed a new student center, complete with a private upstairs study space, a board room for club meetings, communal space to support organic gatherings, and a coffee-shop atmosphere that students repeatedly mentioned in their responses.

The new building was an instant hit, especially with the hundreds of IMG Academy boarding school students who were eager to enrich their time on campus and stay connected to each other.



Students use the Campus Center a combined **6,000 times/month** as communal space



30+ events a month hosted in the Campus Center



55,000 coffee drinks consumed annually



SPORTS & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

IMG Academy made several changes to its renowned sports programs as well, offering individual development plans for each student, setting communication standards with parents for coaches, expanding access to facilities after hours for those who wanted extra training, and motivating staff to align work with student goals across departments.



1,500



development plans reconfigured through new template



12



major initiatives implemented in 2024



1,300+



parent meetings on student personal development plans

AND DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE FOOD!

One of the top requests revealed in student surveys was for greater variety and quality of food options. IMG Academy took this to heart by expanding their food and beverage offerings, as well as opening up a convenient-store style shop on campus to meet the needs of students after hours. Not only was that feedback put into action, but students were able to vote on the most-desired culinary options for menus and food outlets. (The overwhelming winner? Fresh Mex.)



8

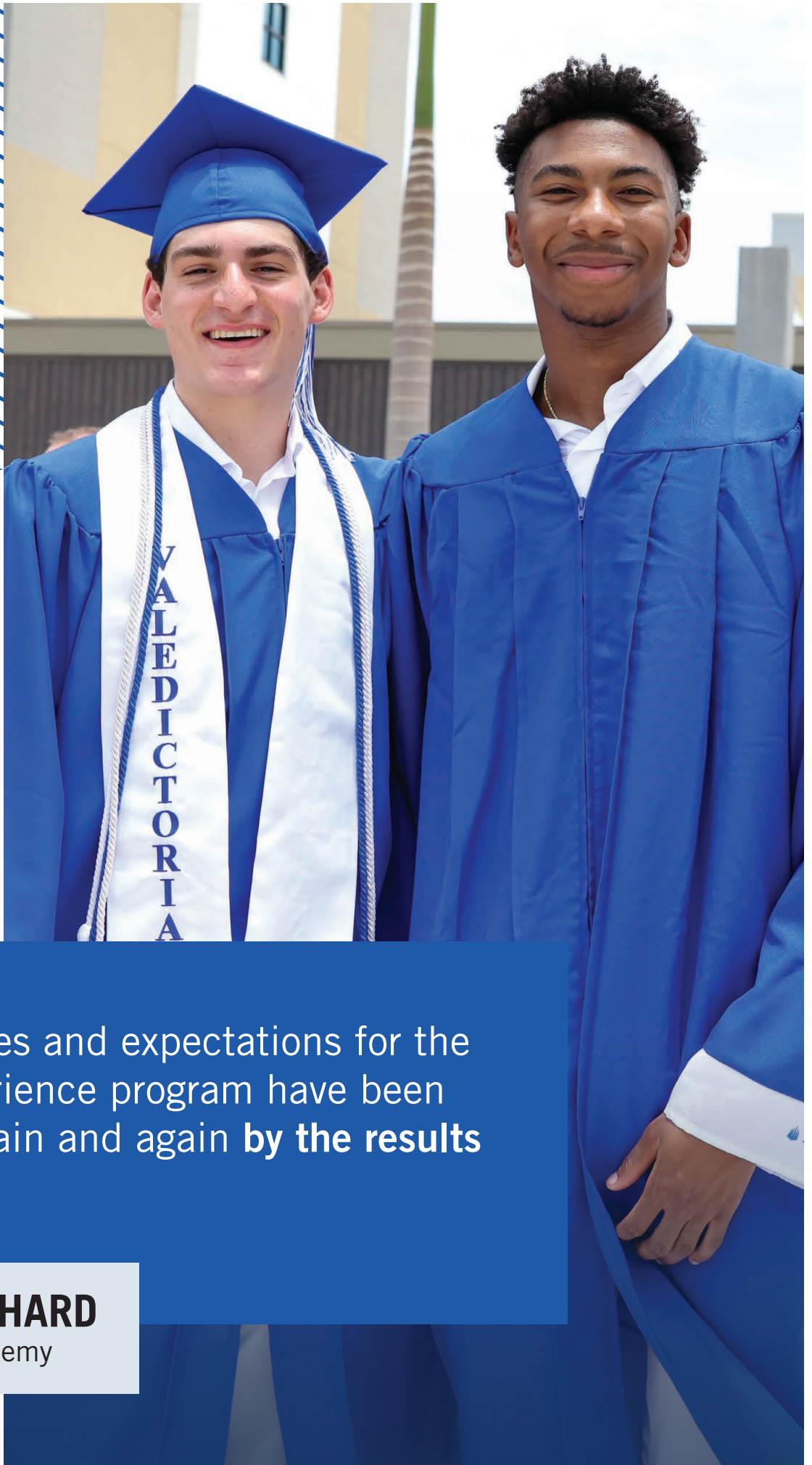
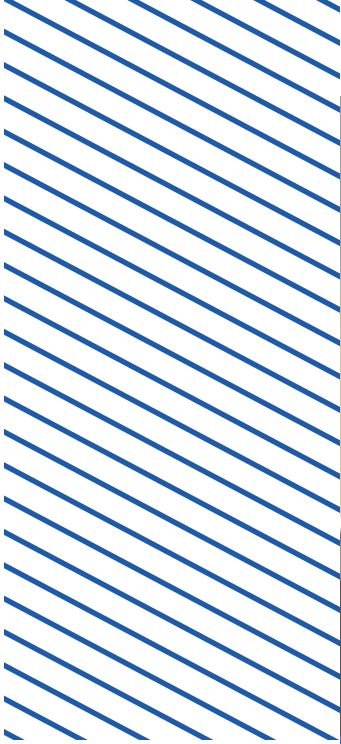
MAJOR INITIATIVES → accomplished in 2024



1M+

MEALS → served annually

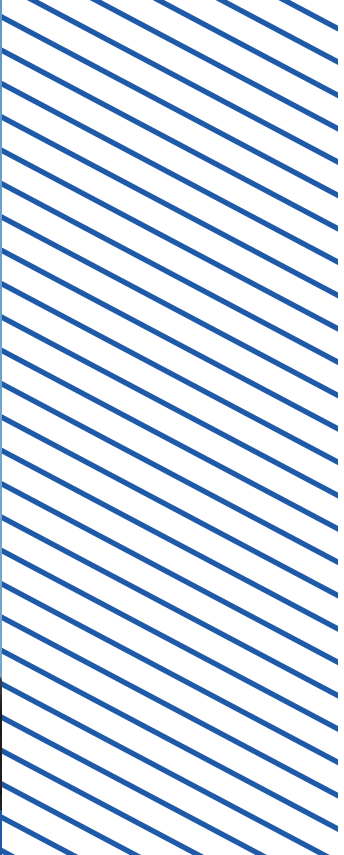
Together, all these changes added up to a completely different student experience. Fittingly, this mirrors a process that IMG Academy encourages students to trust during personal development — the way that thousands of small positive efforts can create radical transformation over time.



“

Our high hopes and expectations for the student experience program have been confirmed again and again **by the results we've seen.**”

BRENT RICHARD
CEO, IMG Academy



IMG ACADEMY⁷

The results of the student experience initiative so far show IMG Academy moving in the right direction by every standard. Student satisfaction — as expressed by Net Promoter Score (NPS), the gold-standard metric for measuring customer loyalty — has improved for both boarding school students, campers and their parents. Employee satisfaction has also jumped since the initiative began. Meanwhile, the wider IMG Academy community is growing stronger, with parent satisfaction rising, engagement on school communication channels and at school events increasing, and positive messages about the initiative coming in every day from student families.

Those “soft” measures of success are reflected as well in quantifiable returns on the investment IMG Academy has made. Projected re-enrollment data shows a five-point increase, and IMG Academy leaders attribute much of that improvement to the experience initiative.



CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

+11

NPS YOY



boarding
school students

+7

NPS YOY



boarding
school parents

+9

NPS YOY



campers



ENROLLMENT AND REVENUE

5PT



Projected increase
to re-enrollment

\$4M



Increase in
revenue YoY



EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION



13+



NPS YOY



160+



employees
volunteered for
experience-related
work in 2025



2000+



high fives given



PARENT SATISFACTION



76%



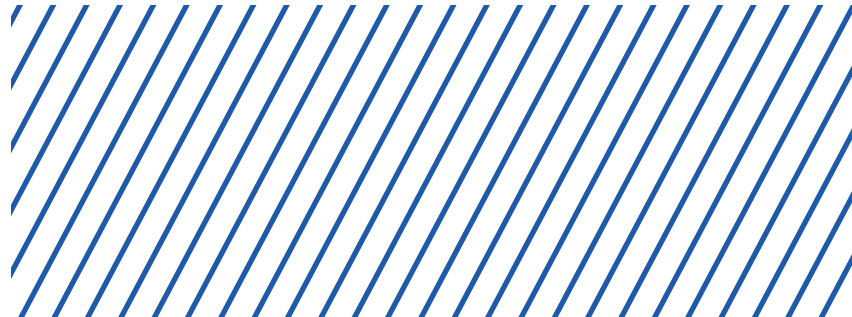
gave an NPS of 7
or higher at the
semester break



200+ MORE



families attended
Spring Parents Weekend
compared to 2024



TAKEAWAYS FOR OTHER SCHOOL LEADERS

Educators can take away valuable lessons from IMG Academy's approach to enhancing the student experience, particularly through its emphasis on building trust and relationships, seeking feedback, and breaking away from what has been done before.



BUILD TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS

IMG Academy coaches, teachers, and staff understand that student success is deeply rooted in strong, supportive relationships. By fostering open communication, mentorship, and individualized attention, the experience initiative created an environment where students feel valued and motivated.

Traditional schools can adopt this model by prioritizing student-teacher connections, and ensuring that every student has access to guidance and support. When students trust their educators and feel a sense of belonging, they are more likely to engage actively in their learning and personal development.



LEVERAGE FEEDBACK

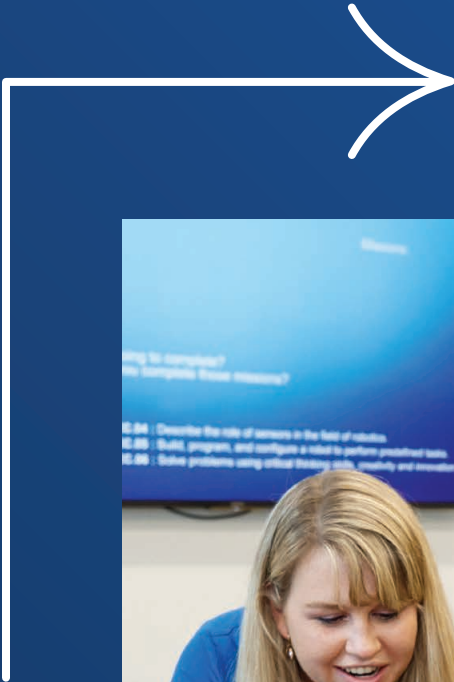
Much of IMG Academy's success with focusing on the student experience rests on its commitment to leveraging feedback. The Academy has built systems, like the surveys, focus groups, and digital suggestion box, to continuously gather insights from students, parents, and staff. Changes are not only made based on the insights, but more importantly, they are communicated on a regular basis to parents and students in order to build trust around the surveys.

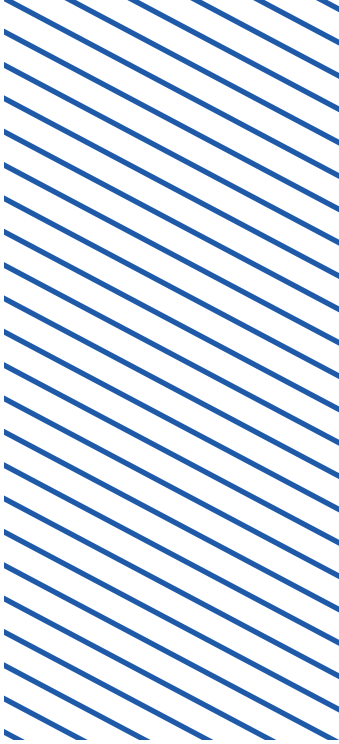
Educators elsewhere can apply this principle by actively seeking student and parent feedback, analyzing performance metrics to ensure that student needs are met effectively, and letting their families know when changes are being made.



GET CREATIVE

Perhaps most importantly, schools should not be afraid to work in new ways, whether that means integrating technology, rethinking traditional teaching methods, or developing interdisciplinary programs. By adopting a mindset of continuous improvement and adaptability, educators can create more engaging, personalized, and effective learning experiences for their students.





“

IMG Academy’s leadership recognized that world-class experiences don’t happen by chance—they require intentional strategy, structure, and accountability. It was our team’s pleasure to work closely with them to define a customer experience strategy, establish the right processes to listen, learn and act, and cultivate leadership behaviors that reinforce a student-first culture. **This work has set a new standard for excellence in education and athletics.”**

ERIN WALLACE

Director Client Engagement, Bain & Company



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT⁷

IMG Academy engaged two trusted partners to bring the student experience initiative to life.

The management consulting firm Bain & Company provided recommendations in the early stages of the project, drawing on their knowledge of global organizations to advise what goals were realistic and how to organize the work needed to achieve them.

IMG Academy is now the first school to achieve Bain & Company MyCX Accreditation, certifying that the school has established foundational capabilities in all seven global CX best practice pillars.

Once the listening program was underway, IMG Academy quickly realized momentum was building and they needed to adapt their survey platform in order to meet the level of sophistication required to make change. They partnered with Qualtrics, a leading provider of customer and employee experience management technology. Qualtrics allowed IMG Academy to design the surveys and research that will inform the bulk of the experience initiative and provided helpful analytics and action plans as answers came in.



BAIN & COMPANY 



qualtrics^{XM}[®]



We appreciate that this survey is being offered and **love how IMG Academy listens and cares about what students and parents have to say — thank you for that.**”

IMG ACADEMY PARENT

As schools and districts look for new ways to respect individual preferences, accommodate different learning styles, and otherwise give students opportunities to direct their own learning, the student experience initiative at IMG Academy presents a groundbreaking approach to student centricity, a lesson in team building, and a model of business strategy.

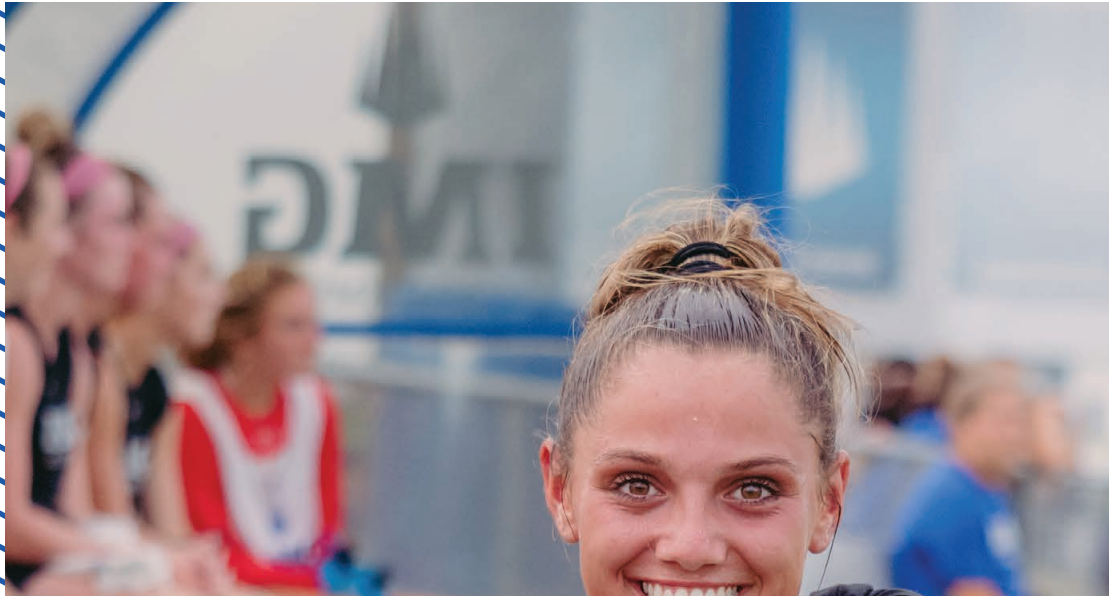
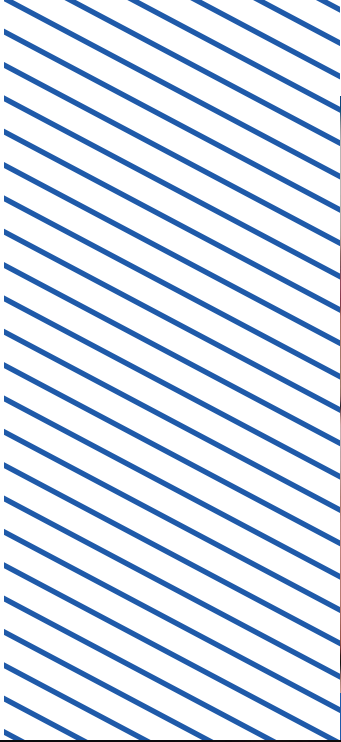
The student experience initiative at IMG Academy is ongoing. The school has a number of plans underway to expand the project:

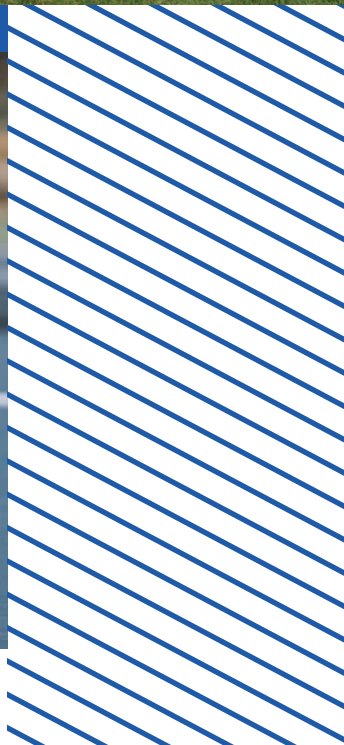
- Building a dedicated employee listening program through Qualtrics
- Integrating financial, operational, and experiential data for a 360° view of each customer’s relationship with the school
- Applying predictive analytics to an evergreen re-enrollment strategy
- Creating a referral program to boost enrollment and spread awareness of IMG Academy’s services

Using learnings from the student experience program as a foundation, IMG Academy is now ready to make any other adjustments it needs to give its employees a fulfilling workplace, its community strong roots, and its students and campers the best education possible, so that they can continue to win their futures both on and off the field.



To learn more about IMG Academy,
visit imgacademy.com







IMG
ACADEMY

