

# First Impression Scorecard for your School

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Factors of First Impression	Grade
<p><b>1. Website</b> – <i>what is your online presence and what impression does it give:</i>            Ease of navigation            Visual appeal            Personal stories            Accurate and updated</p>	
<p><b>2. Exterior</b> – <i>what is seen of your property and physical appearance:</i>            Cleanliness            Well landscaped            Maintenance of buildings &amp; signs (painted, clean)            Lobby / School Office (welcoming, warm, hospitable)</p>	
<p><b>3. Publications</b> – <i>how is the communication and marketing of your school:</i>            Online newsletters            Printed newsletters            Promotional brochures            Promotional Videos            Availability &amp; perceived transparency of school (budgets, records, etc)</p>	
<p><b>4. Community Involvement &amp; Visibility</b> – <i>what are others seeing of your school:</i>            Church affiliations            Variety of church involvement            Sponsorship / Involvement in community projects            Humanitarian aid projects            Frequency &amp; Tone of local media            Community “attitude” towards school</p>	
<p><b>5. Extracurricular Activities</b> – <i>what impression is your school giving others:</i>            Sports            Academia            Music</p>	
<p><b>6. Parental Word of Mouth</b> – <i>what is being said by your best recruiters:</i>            Communicated to teachers            Communicated through students            Communicated to administration            Communicated to friends / community</p>	

Report cards cause a vast array of emotions to well-up inside of us. For many, it is a proud moment of proving ourselves or perhaps even nervous anticipation of gauging our own personal success in relation to those around us. The value of the report card comes from the ability it has to refocus our efforts, and to prove that though we may love only one subject, we must fully engage in all six which stare back at us in anticipation of our efforts and action. So it is with your Christian schools.

We often flood our marketing and strategic growth efforts for creating a great first impression in only one of the categories on the First Impression Factors (FIF) report. Instead, the goal should be to take an honest reflection at all areas, finding where you excel, and where you lack.

Some may find the challenge of the above too vague, desiring detailed metrics and scientific methodology. I am a firm believer in statistics and analyzing trends, culture, and environmental factors, of blending in financial statements, P&L reports, and proper forecasting. However, on the other side of complexity lies simplicity. Complexity often bogs us down, paralyzing any potential action. Instead, find if the overarching combination of friendliness, professionalism, and academia lace your report card.

Hand this simple grading opportunity to a beautiful collage of people. Include people who have been ingrained with your school for years; include those who have nothing to do with your school. Ask church members, teachers, competitors, and even students to help in evaluating your FIF. Try to find people who are new to town, or newly searching for a Christian school home.

And then, in the quiet of your office and with the honesty of one who desires fruit, growth, and excellence-- grade yourself.

Compare your grades to others. Find potential gaps, potential positive surprises, and potential blindspots.

And then prayerfully make one shift. Write one goal. Create one strategy.

And manage the change you desire.

When you complete one, celebrate your growth and development. And only then move on.

The idea of the first impression always takes us back to the first date, and for too many of us, it is linked to insecurities and failures. Take the report card and find out your school's identity. Knowing how to put your best foot forward will make a first impression which warrants a second date.

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