

2021

PK-12 Education Website Benchmarks

SUMMARY

- * Similar to what occurred in [higher education](#), overall, K-12 schools brought less traffic to their sites in 2021 than in 2020, but a higher share of new users.
- * While there were differences in traffic volumes, more similarities occurred between public and private schools regarding website engagement. With the exception of school networks/dioceses, users spent less time on K-12 websites in 2021 and sessions per user declined. Bounce rates also increased slightly across the K-12 segment.
- * Organic traffic from social channels declined across K-12 segments in 2021, but all channels yielded a higher share of new users. Facebook traffic declined 59%, and given ongoing challenges with organic reach on Facebook, this is a data point for schools to watch given the heavy dependence on this channel for constituent outreach.
- * Overall paid traffic volume decreased for K-12, with only private K-12, private elementary, public K-12, and public elementary schools seeing gains in this area. New sessions increased in every segment, but engagement was inconsistent.
- * With respect to Google Ads specifically, all K-12 segments except for school districts increased spending in 2021, some significantly. Average spending on Google Ads increased the most in the public K-12 segment, by nearly 2,600%.

METHODOLOGY

The metrics are based on website traffic data for the 2021 calendar year aggregated across 1,042 PK-12 schools. All institutions use Google Analytics to track and report on website traffic, and all granted Niche read-only access to their Google Analytics accounts. To calculate industry benchmarks for key traffic metrics, the data across all institutions was pulled using the Google Analytics API and the average value among all institutions was calculated for each metric.

For schools using Google Ads, Niche also benchmarked 2021 ad spend, Cost per Click (CPC), and Clicks.

Benchmarks were determined for traffic on a site-wide level and for traffic across various search engines, social networks, and paid sources. Not all institutions had traffic from every source. The benchmark for traffic from a specific source is the average among all schools with traffic from that source.



The key traffic metrics benchmarked are:

- * **Total sessions**
- * **Percent New Sessions**
- * **Bounce Rate**
- * **Average Session Duration**
- * **Pageviews per Session**
- * **Sessions per User**
- * **Average Page Load Time**

RESULTS

Overall Website Traffic

Similar to what occurred in higher education, K-12 schools drew less traffic to their sites in 2021 than in 2020, but a higher share of new users. School networks/dioceses, school districts, public K-12 schools, and public high schools all saw decreases in traffic, while traffic increased for private K-12 schools, private elementary schools, and private high schools. This is consistent with ongoing changes in K-12 parent behavior as they consider and research more school options for their families.

While there were differences in traffic volumes, more similarities occurred between public and private schools regarding website engagement: performance for average session duration, sessions per user, and pageviews per session were consistent across segments. With the exception of school networks/dioceses, users spent less time on K-12 websites in 2021 and sessions per user declined. Bounce rates increased slightly across the K-12 segment, with public middle and high schools and public K-12 schools pulling down the average. Page load times decreased slightly in 2021, with public middle and high schools and school districts having the longest page load times. Given the correlation between high page load times and users exiting websites without taking action, it wasn't surprising that public middle and high schools had both the highest bounce rates and the highest page load times. In spite of the decrease in page load times overall, only preschools met the three-second threshold that is considered to be a best practice.

International traffic increased for all segments except for school districts and public K-12 schools, with private high schools and public elementary schools seeing the most significant increases. This is encouraging for schools that experienced a decline in interest from international families during the pandemic and will be worth watching at a time of ever-evolving travel restrictions, policy changes, and economic fluctuations.

Organic Search Traffic

Search traffic increased for K-12 schools in 2021, with public schools having the largest share of search traffic. The most significant increase came from Google, with an average of more than 12,000 additional sessions. This is consistent with ongoing movement in the K-12 education sector as parents continuously research school options and underscores the importance of investing in SEO. Sessions per user declined slightly and bounce rates increased; however, pageviews per session nearly doubled in 2021.



Organic Social Media Traffic

Organic traffic from social channels declined significantly across K-12 segments in 2021, but all channels yielded a higher share of new users. Facebook traffic declined 59%, and in light of ongoing challenges with organic reach on Facebook, this is a data point for schools to watch given the heavy reliance on this channel for constituent outreach. Facebook is still the biggest traffic driver for K-12 schools, but schools will need to rethink their current engagement strategies for that platform in 2022. Average session duration and sessions per user both decreased for Facebook, while bounce rate increased. Even though traffic from Instagram declined, users from that channel spent more time on school websites in 2021, and bounce rates declined slightly, with the caveat that sessions per user also declined.

Paid Traffic

Overall paid traffic volume decreased for K-12, with only private K-12, private elementary, public K-12, and public elementary schools seeing gains in this area. New sessions increased in every segment, but engagement was inconsistent. Public K-12 schools received the most paid traffic, while private middle schools received the least.

Looking at Google Ads specifically, all K-12 segments except for school districts increased spending in 2021, some significantly. Average spending on Google Ads increased the most in the public K-12 segment, by nearly 2,600%, which pulled the average spend across segments up to nearly \$250,000. Private schools spent the least on Google Ads (averaging just over \$22,000), while public schools spent the most (averaging more than \$500,000). Clicks were highest for public K-12 schools and cost per click was highest for school districts. In spite of significantly increasing spending, and a high number of clicks and new sessions, engagement from Google Ads traffic was relatively flat compared to 2020.

PK-12 Site Metrics



Benchmarking type	Average Sessions	Average New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)	Avg. Sessions per User	Average Bounce Rate	Avg. Pageviews per Session	Average Page Load Times
Preschool	13,121	62%	113	1.6	26%	3.2	3
School network/Diocese	281,079 ▼	55% ▲	114 ▲	2.3 ▲	55% ▲	2.2 ▼	5 -
School district	1,487,195 ▼	40% ▲	113 ▼	2.7 ▼	54% ▲	2.0 ▼	6 ▲
Private: K-12	191,125 ▲	54% ▲	119 ▼	1.9 ▼	49% -	2.4 -	4 ▼
Private: Elementary	55,711 ▲	63% ▲	104 ▼	1.6 ▼	53% ▲	2.4 ▼	4 -
Private: Elementary and Middle school	49,901	62%	101	1.7	53%	2.3	4
Private: Middle school only	53,592	64%	112	1.6	54%	2.3	5
Private: Middle and High school	154,498	57%	122	1.8	51%	2.5	4
Private: High school only	213,293 ▲	54% ▲	124 ▼	2.0 -	49% ▼	2.4 -	4 ▼
Public: K-12	251,640 ▼	52% ▲	107 ▼	2.4 -	57% ▲	2.1 ▲	4 ▼
Public: Elementary school only	72,800 ▲	59% ▲	95 ▼	1.8 ▼	54% ▼	2.3 ▼	4 -
Public: Elementary and Middle school	58,408	60%	154	1.7	54%	2.6	4
Public: Middle school only	14,051	54%	102	2.0	64%	1.9	4
Public: Middle and High school	200,022	60%	100	1.7	66%	2.1	6
Public: High school only	66,137 ▼	52% ▲	111 ▼	2.2 ▼	57% ▼	2.3 -	5 -
Overall	210,838	57%	113	1.9	53%	2.3	4

PK-12 Social Media Traffic



Social Network	Average Sessions	Average New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)*	Avg. Sessions per User	Average Bounce Rate	Avg. Pageviews per Session
Facebook	2,445 ▼	81% ▲	61 ▼	1.2 ▼	74% ▼	1.8 -
Instagram	30 ▼	70% ▲	137 ▲	1.4 ▼	47% ▼	2.5 -
Instagram Stories	13 ▼	96% ▲	42 ▼	1.0 ▼	59% ▲	2.4 ▲
LinkedIn	29 ▼	79% ▲	40 ▼	1.2 ▼	61% ▲	1.9 ▼
Pinterest	12 ▼	87% ▲	27 ▼	1.0 ▼	63% ▲	2.0 -
reddit	1 ▼	100% ▲	30 ▲	1.0 ▲	67% ▼	1.7 ▲
Twitter	124 ▼	66% ▲	65 ▼	1.8 ▼	70% ▲	1.9 ▼
YouTube	5 ▼	72% ▲	85 ▼	1.2 ▼	58% ▲	3.1 ▲
Overall	332	82%	61	1.2	62%	2.2

*seconds

How to Use This Data

The data presented in this report can serve as a reference point for evaluating the performance of your school or district’s website, social media channels, organic search, and paid digital marketing campaigns against peer schools and the industry at large.

Questions to ask as you review the report might include:

- * How does my school website’s bounce rate compare to others?
- * Are people spending more or less time on our website than other schools in our category?
- * Are the families that are visiting our website from paid campaigns more or less engaged than they are with our peers?
- * Is our budget for paid advertising in line with what’s common among similar schools?

The KPIs that were evaluated for this report can also serve as a starting point for the metrics you review, report on, and set goals for your own website and digital campaigns.

PK-12 Search Traffic



Search Source	Average 2021 Sessions	Average New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)*	Avg. Sessions per User	Average Bounce Rate	Avg. Pageviews per Session
Ask	3 ▼	72% ▲	174 ▲	2.2 ▼	42% ▲	2.5 ▼
Baidu	378 ▲	89% ▲	66 ▼	1.2 ▼	80% ▲	1.6 ▼
Bing	3,469 ▲	50% ▲	163 ▼	2.0 ▼	37% ▼	3.1 ▲
DuckDuckGo	635 ▲	62% ▼	153 ▼	1.6 —	41% —	2.9 ▼
Ecosia.org	104 ▼	58% ▲	133 ▼	2.1 ▼	42% ▲	2.8 ▼
Google	86,732 ▲	53% ▲	134 ▼	1.9 —	45% ▲	2.7 ▼
Naver	22 ▼	79% ▼	148 ▲	1.6 ▲	49% ▲	3.2 ▲
So.com	5 ▼	95% ▲	27 ▼	1.1 ▼	89% ▲	1.3 ▼
Sogou	50 ▲	100% ▲	4 ▼	1.0 —	91% ▲	1.1 —
Yahoo	1,807 ▲	52% ▲	151 ▼	1.8 ▼	40% ▲	2.9 ▼
Yandex	4 ▼	87% ▼	103 ▼	1.2 —	55% ▼	2.5 ▼

*seconds

PK-12 Paid



Benchmarking type	Average Sessions	Average New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)*	Avg. Sessions per User	Average Bounce Rate	Avg. Pageviews per Session
Preschool	90	86%	132	1.1	32%	3.3
School network/Diocese	2,128 ▼	76% ▲	52 ▼	1.3 —	63% ▲	1.7 ▼
School district	1,907 ▼	68% ▲	53 ▼	6.7 ▲	70% ▲	1.5 ▲
Private: K-12	6,956 ▲	74% ▲	60 ▲	1.6 ▲	68% ▼	1.8 ▲
Private: Elementary school only	3,373 ▲	76% ▲	51 ▼	1.3 ▼	71% ▲	1.8 ▼
Private: Elementary and Middle school	2,804	68%	55	1.4	68%	1.6
Private: Middle school only	3	100%	0	1.0	100%	1.0
Private: Middle and High school	4,265	76%	53	2.1	70%	1.7
Private: High school only	4,526 ▼	75% ▲	57 ▼	1.9 ▲	67% ▼	1.8 ▲
Public: K-12	21,555 ▲	53% ▲	117 ▼	1.4 ▼	58% ▼	2.4 ▲
Public: Elementary school only	8,442 ▲	87% ▲	30 ▲	1.1 —	45% ▼	2.6 ▲
Public: Elementary and Middle school	69	85%	42	1.1	87%	1.4
Public: Middle school only	70	77%	12	1.3	84%	1.2
Public: Middle and High school	3,629	78%	47	1.3	72%	1.7
Public: High school only	9,572 ▼	84% ▲	30 ▼	1.2 ▼	85% ▲	1.3 ▼

*seconds

PK-12 Google Ads Results



Benchmarking type	Average Google Ad Spend	Average CPC	Average Clicks	Avg. New Sessions	Avg. Session Duration (s) *	Avg. Bounce Rate	Avg. Pageviews per Session
Preschool	\$424	\$3.42	124	86%	132	32%	3.3
School network/Diocese	\$54,204 ▲	\$1.56 ▲	19,975 ▼	73% ▲	58 ▼	58% ▲	1.9 ▼
School district	\$5,704 ▼	\$26.27 ▲	16,351 ▼	57% ▲	45 ▼	48% ▲	1.5 –
Private: K-12	\$34,662 ▲	\$1.43 ▲	25,880 ▼	70% ▲	65 ▼	59% ▼	2.0 ▲
Private: Elementary school only	\$22,494 ▲	\$1.57 ▼	11,948 ▼	74% ▲	65 ▼	58% ▼	2.2 ▼
Private: Elementary and Middle school	\$4,546	\$1.24	7,137	73%	66	62%	1.8
N/A							
Private: Middle and High school	\$18,679	\$1.02	20,674	70%	78	56%	2.1
Private: High school only	\$19,007 ▲	\$1.60 ▼	13,143 ▼	71% –	71 ▲	59% ▼	2.0 ▲
Public: K-12	\$2,943,222 ▲	\$7.09 ▲	327,113 ▲	80% ▲	50 ▲	70% ▼	1.5 –
Public: Elementary school only	\$76,539 ▲	\$1.00 ▼	32,785 ▲	72% ▼	53 ▲	58% ▲	2.1 ▼
Public: Elementary and Middle school	\$51	\$0.26	194				
Public: Middle school only							
Public: Middle and High school	\$547	\$0.41	1,320	73%	98	38%	2.9
Public: High school only	\$21,297 ▲	\$1.51 ▼	27,360 ▼	79% ▲	40 ▼	82% ▲	1.4 ▼
Overall	\$246,259	\$3.72	38,769	73%	68	57%	2.1

*seconds

PK-12 International Share of Traffic



Benchmarking type	Average International Sessions	Average Percent International
Preschool	1,080	6%
School network/Diocese	14,706	7%
School district	17,862	2%
Private: K-12	18,754	11%
Private: Elementary school only	9,019	14%
Private: Elementary and Middle school	2,886	9%
Private: Middle school only	13,244	19%
Private: Middle and High school	16,628	15%
Private: High school only	19,758	12%
Public: K-12	17,147	8%
Public: Elementary school only	6,282	10%
Public: Elementary and Middle school	4,426	4%
Public: Middle school only	667	5%
Public: Middle and High school	13,295	6%
Public: High school only	4,280	7%