

Future proof your SEO!

Topic Cluster SEO FOR SCHOOLS

School Marketers Simple Edition

Learn How
Your School
Can get Top
Rankings on Google



Chuck Bankoff

*Author of "School Masters Guide
to Enrolling More Students"*

Topic Clusters

The evolution of content strategies for schools



The days of writing blog after blog and crossing your fingers that Google will list you at the top of their search results are over. It's no longer just about keywords; it's about broader topics and how you organize your content.

Simply put, topic clusters are a collection of interlinked articles or pages around one umbrella topic. They ultimately allow you to provide greater visibility for search engines to identify your content... and therefore your school.

Following is a simplified version of the same step-by-step procedure that the team at Kreative Webworks uses with the schools that we assist with their enrollment marketing.

Step #1

Choose a Core Topic

This should be a broad topic that will be comprised of many sub-topics. Everything should relate to something that your school offers or is known for, and that you would want to be found for by a parent or student searching on Google for a school like yours.



Meet Sharon:
Public School Mom:

- ♀ Gender: Female
- 🎂 Age: 36
- 🏠 Income: \$65,000
- 🎓 Education: Masters
- 📍 Location: Falls Church Virginia

Don't just talk about what you want to talk about, talk about what your ideal parents want to know about!

We always start by creating the schools' [Buyer Personas](#). These are semi-fictitious representations of your ideal Parents (or in some cases students) that you want to target. This is part of our [Digital Marketing Blueprint for Schools](#) service.

Step #2

Brainstorm your Sub-Topics [Cluster Content]

Your sub-topics should be a natural extension of your core topic. For example, if your core topic is **“The Benefits of a Faith Based Education,”** your sub-topics might be:

- Better College Preparation
- Close Faculty-Student Relationships
- Stronger Academic Benefits
- Social Emotional Learning
- Etc.

Each of your individual sub-topics should be worthy of writing about 500 words of detail, however there is no magic number as long as you cover the sub-topic thoroughly.



Social may be sexy, but search still pays the bills

-Tom Pick

Each of your sub-topics should be of interest to your buyer persona and have a reasonable amount of search volume on Google.

Step #3

Keyword Research

Now that you have decided on the Topics in which your “Buyer Persona(s)” would be most interested, you will want to create a “Library” of keyword phrases for your main topic, and each sub-topic.

Search engines have become very sophisticated and are now looking for “user intent”. That means that they understand and reward the broader topic, not the individual keywords. That is why it is important to use synonyms and talk *about* the keywords, not just cram them into the copy.



If you're not meeting your visitors' needs, it doesn't matter how 'optimized' your site is

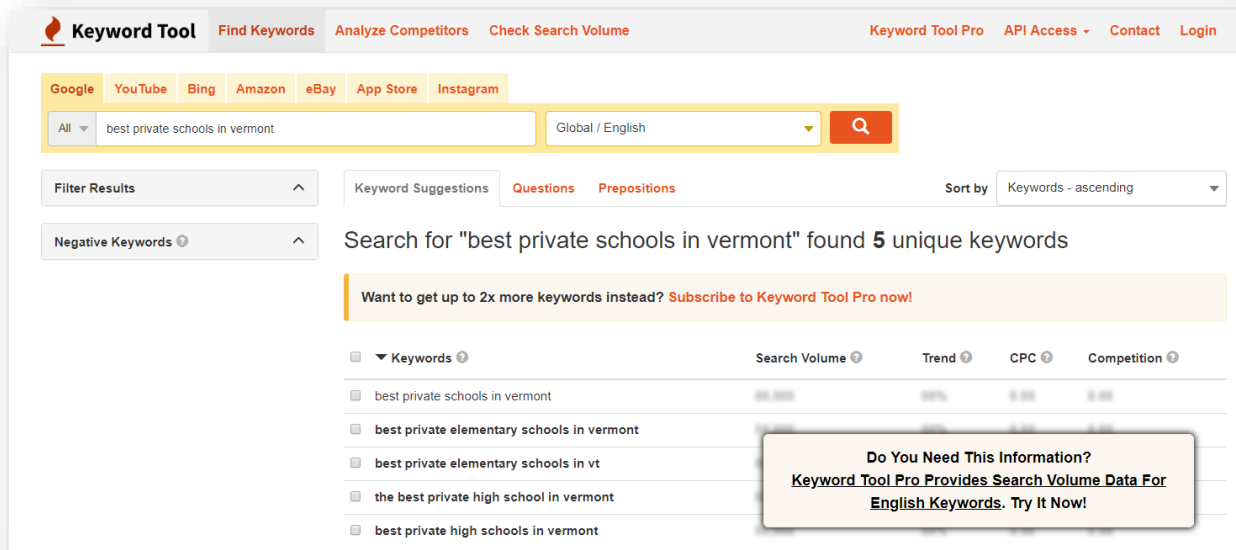
-Stoney deGeyter

As a school marketing agency, we use some sophisticated keyword research tools, however we still start with some widely available free tools such as Google Suggest, Keywordtool.io, and Google Trends.

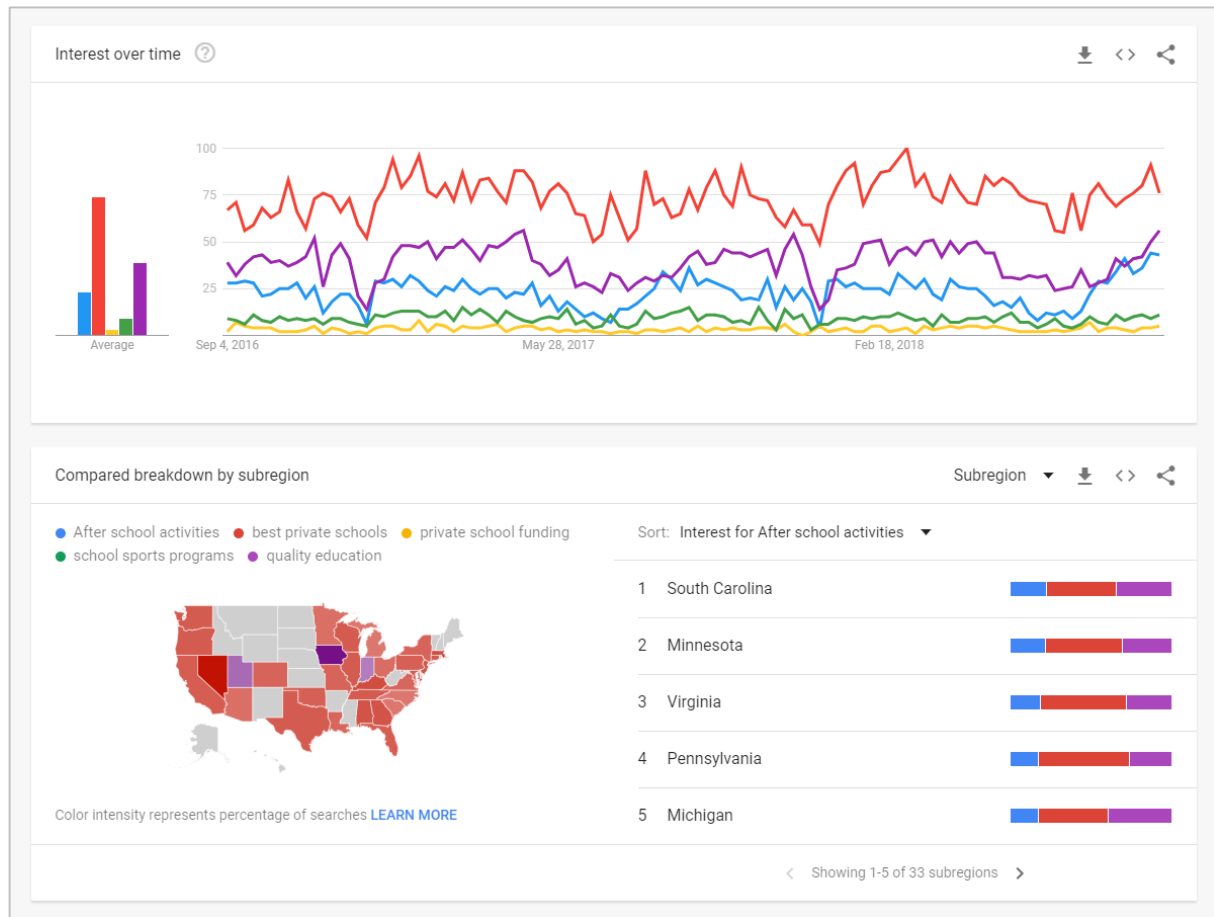
Google Suggest: (a.k.a. Autocomplete) is a Google search engine function which provides suggestions to users to complete the search query while they are entering words in the search box. Just start typing your search query and watch what starts to develop. The results are based on what other people are actually searching on.



Keywordtool.io: is a “Freemium” model where you can get some valuable information for free with the option of upgrading to their paid model for more data on your search terms.



Google Trends is a free website by Google that analyzes the popularity of top search queries in Google Search across various regions and languages. The website uses graphs to compare the search volume of different queries over time.



Google Trends shows relative popularity of a search term over time... not total search volume, to give users an apples to apples idea of the popularity of search terms and how that popularity ebbs and flows based on season change, media coverage, and other events.

Step #4

Construct Your Content Pillar Page

This will be a substantial page of 1500-3500 words based on your sub-topics. Remember that each of your sub-topics (your Cluster Content) will have its own full article, so these sections should be more of an informative overview.

This is not the place to talk exclusively about YOUR school. This is intended to be valuable information for your target persona. Don't worry...there will be plenty of opportunities to promote your school throughout the process.

This will be a long article, so you will want to break it up to make it user friendly:

- Create an intro paragraph that addresses the core topic.
- Table of Contents that “anchorlinks” to each section on the page.
- Use H2 tags for section headers to visually define the sections.
- Include a “Back to Top” button for a better user experience.
- Hyperlinks to each sub-topic (content cluster) page.
- Links to other authoritative websites that provide more information on your topic (Google loves that!).
- Use relevant images throughout the page with the core topic referenced in the ALT text.
- Add multi-media such as videos, slideshows and photographs.
- Reference your Core Topic throughout the narrative.

Don't forget that this isn't just about SEO. The purpose is to help generate phone calls, emails and submitted forms. You will want to include an intriguing CTA (several times) throughout the article.

Step #5

Identify Existing Usable Content

We've found that many schools already have existing content about their sub-topics that they can use for some of their Content Cluster articles. These may be pre-existing blog posts, news articles, or hard-coded pages on the school website. It might be easier to enhance these existing articles than to write a new one.

Step #6

Identify and Write Fresh Content

If you don't have any existing blogs or articles that can be modified or adapted for the cluster content, you will have to write some fresh material.

You should give each of your articles a similar title to the sub-topics in your Pillar Page. Use your Library of Keywords when writing your articles. Note that your sub-topics should be strong enough to stand on their own as a blog post or video AND be relevant to support your core topic.

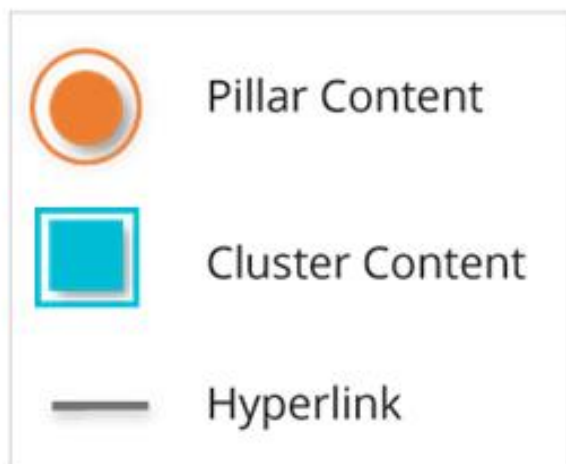
Most importantly, hyperlink one relevant search phrase back to your pillar article!

Step #7

Linking it all together

Linking the Cluster Content (the sub-topic blog articles) to the Pillar Page (the BIG page) and then linking from the Pillar page back to the smaller cluster articles is what signals Google that you are thoroughly covering a topic.

Topic Clusters



You DO NOT have to wait until all your cluster articles are complete to start linking them together. As you add a new cluster article, simply link them back and forth between the pillar page and the new article.

Step #8

Promoting Your Content Cluster

Google rewards good content, and good content is partially measured by visitor interaction. You can give your pillar a boost by getting your pillar out to your market by:

- Promoting through your social channels
- Devoting a portion of your advertising budget to promoting it
- Sending it out to your parents via email
- Promoting it from other pages throughout the website
- Giving it its own tab on the site navigation, if appropriate,
- Referencing it during the Marketing Automation/Lead Nurturing process to prospective parents.



The best place to hide a dead body is page two of Google

-unknown

Google loves a crowd. The more traffic you get, the easier it is to get more traffic. Try kickstarting your pillar using some of the tactics above. Eventually your Pillar will take on a life of its own through high search engine rankings.

How We Can Help

This Topic Cluster strategy is just one aspect of a comprehensive school marketing plan. SEO and web presence is a vital part of any school's marketing plan, but by itself, it only addresses part of the enrollment strategy.

We can help you design a comprehensive enrollment marketing strategy with our **Digital Marketing Blueprint for Schools** service. This is designed as a standalone set of strategies that you can implement internally with your school staff, outsource to any third party of your choice, or work with us on the stuff that you can't, or don't want to do.

Because we work mostly with schools and support education, our Blueprint Strategy is Guaranteed.

