

Guest Blogger Sharie: Tour Early, Make Friends

Description



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I'm happy to say our son started Kindergarten this year at our dream school and last fall's [admissions whirlwind](#) is now a distant memory. Thanks to all the great advice in the *Beyond the Brochure* blog and book, our admissions process was relatively smooth and sane, believe it or not! But if I had to do it all again—like I will for middle school in a few years—there are two key things I could've done in advance to better prepare.

- ***Make friends with the graduating class at your preschool***

The first year and a half or so of preschool I was so busy dealing with terrible twos, terrible threes, sleep schedules, finding lost shoes, carting home armloads of craft projects! I was pretty oblivious to the graduating families at our school. Until it was time to start applying for elementary schools, when I realized that, even though many families from our preschool had gone on to some of our top choice schools, I didn't actually know any of them! So much for getting the inside scoop and asking for references. Oops.

So don't be like me—start getting to know the older families in your school right away. Trust me, you'll be much happier next year hearing from your friends about the pros and cons of their new school and getting their happy recommendations rather than sending out the dreaded "You don't know me, but..." emails and hoping for a response like I did!

- ***Start touring schools you might be interested in, even if you aren't applying for another year***

We didn't tour any schools until the fall we were actually applying for Kindergarten, but boy do I wish we had looked at some earlier. Fall admissions season from the first fairs and tours in September to application deadlines in December-January may seem like a long time but let me tell you, it flies by in a way you wouldn't believe.

It's better to get your applications in early. And not just a day early, but actually early. Super early. Seriously, do them early.

So that knocks off a couple months right there. Plus the various fall & winter holidays also usually take up a lot of time with travel or entertaining. And, while some schools offer a tour every week, other schools only offer one or two tours per admissions season.

If you're trying to look at 5 or more schools, that's a lot to juggle! When we were touring, there were some schools I could instantly knock off the list in the first 5 minutes and other schools I wanted to tour more than once to really help our decision. Had we toured some of them the previous year, I could've wasted less time during our admissions process on schools that weren't right for us and spent more time getting to know the ones that were our top choices.

Somehow we managed to fit all of our tours in and get our applications in early, but next time hopefully I'll follow my own advice and make it easier on myself!

Sharie Piper (not her real name) is thrilled her son was accepted into their first choice school, and vows to stay in touch with the younger families at his old preschool.

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1. Getting Started With Admissions Process
2. Sharie Piper
3. Touring private schools

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Author

admin

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