

Tips To Help You ACE Your Private Elementary School Parent Interview

Description

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Many, but not all, private elementary schools want to meet applicant parents without their kids present as part of the admissions process. [Parent interviews](#) are typically meetings between parents and the admissions director. There is no single format and each school determines how the interview will work. Some schools are very casual, while others are more formal. The tone of the interview will depend on the personality of the admissions director and the general atmosphere of the school.

If you're applying for kindergarten, keep in mind that a parent interview is about you *and* your child. Some schools are very interested in how well a family will fit into the school's culture. Other schools are more focused on whether the child will excel academically. It's hard to know what to anticipate, but researching the school and talking to your preschool director and current parents at the school can help you prepare.

Here are our tips to help you ace your parent interviews:

1. Do your homework ahead of time. Review the school's website and be sure you are familiar with the mission of the school and what differentiates it from other schools. Be prepared to talk about how your family fits with the philosophy of the school. Why your kid would be a great addition to the school should also be something you are prepared to talk about.

2. Review your written application and be consistent in your interview conversation with what you said in your application about your family and its values and goals. Make sure you communicate who you are and make your family's story one that will be remembered by the admissions director.

3. Be positive AND honest about your child. Don't try to make him/her look perfect. In talking about his/her strengths, give real examples of these characteristics. You might talk about how he/she is willing to share toys in the park. Or, perhaps your kid will include other children in playtime at preschool, rather than exclude them. These two examples indicate friendliness, empathy and maturity. In speaking about any challenges, make sure you share that you understand and accept them and are committed to working with the school to partner in serving your child's needs.

4. Be careful about telling the admissions director you'll definitely accept a spot if it is offered. You may feel tempted to do this, but it isn't necessary and could hinder your applications at other schools since some admissions directors do talk to each other. And, don't make the mistake of being too aggressive in the type of questions you ask like, "Why does this school cost so much?" or, "How much will it cost us to guarantee you'll let our kid in?" These are inappropriate questions!

5. Arrive early. Plan your route and allow for traffic and other delays. Showing up late is a big no-no. Both parents (if there are two) should attend. The absence of one parent signals a lack of interest in the school.

6. Try to anticipate a few commonly asked questions like, "Tell me about your child," or "Why do you want your child to attend our school?" Sometimes, starting with a broad comment about why you love the school and then moving to specifics about why *this school* is right for your kid works well. It also helps to discuss your answers to these questions with your spouse/partner before the interview. You should both be in agreement about why you want your child to attend the school!

7. Not every parent interview will go well. In *Beyond The Brochure: An Insider's Guide To Private Elementary Schools In Los Angeles*, I write in detail about a parent interview for kindergarten that went so badly we withdrew our application from the popular school. Sometimes, the interview may feel more like the [admissions director](#) is merely going through the motions and has little interest in what you have to say. Or, you may learn more about the school and realize it doesn't seem right for your child. However, just because you don't think an interview went well doesn't necessarily mean the admissions director felt that way. There are plenty of families who were convinced their interview was a disaster or just adequate, only to receive an acceptance letter a few months later!

Finally, we highly recommend approaching each parent interview with confidence, professionalism and a bit of luck.

Written by Christina Simon and [Anne Simon](#), co-authors of [Beyond The Brochure: An Insider's Guide To Private Elementary Schools In Los Angeles](#)

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