

Guest Blogger Jenny: Pre-Acceptance Private School Participation: Does It Work?



So here it is, another application season, and this pesky question keeps

popping up: Does attending school events before my child even goes to the school give my application an advantage? The answer: it depends.

I feel pretty strongly that the pre-acceptance participation factor only works with certain schools. For instance, when we applied to Mirman for our daughter, her father (my ex) decided that attending the Mirman Holiday Program would be a good idea. Mind you, we hadn't yet really applied, Anna hadn't had an interview or a tour, but he figured it couldn't hurt. So, he drove up to the church across the street from the school and watched a bunch of strange kids sing holiday songs. It probably beat going to work that morning. But did his participation help her chances of getting into the school? No. Anna was wait-listed, and we didn't hear that there was an opening until late June.

But that's Mirman, and Mirman isn't every school. I've heard different things about other schools. One family I know had their child in one private school, but really had their hearts set on another. So, they attended events at the school she didn't go to, showed up for meetings, and, for all I know, paid for a new science wing (just kidding). Well, guess what: it worked! She got in for 3rd grade. Of course, we'll never know definitively if all this participation and dedication garnered an advantage, but there is a correlation.

So, if you know, for certain, that there's a particular private elementary school that's just perfect for your child, by all means show an interest before application season. You could attend an event like

a fair or a fundraiser. You could, of course, give money or silent auction donations, although some schools prohibit this type of giving during the year you're applying to avoid any perception of conflicts of interest. If you have a valued skill set, like public relations or publicity, offer to help the school plan or publicize an event. Most schools like to see helpful and interested parents, and such efforts will be duly noted. In schools with a very clannish scene, showing that you "fit in" is a definite advantage, because some schools are more about the families than the individual children (although that's definitely NOT the case with Mirman).

All this being said, you could still get the dreaded flat rejection letter anyway, leading to all kinds of curses. There are no guarantees.

Or, you could pay for that Science Wing.

Jenny Heitz has worked as a staff writer for Coast Weekly in Carmel, freelanced in the South Bay, and then switched to advertising copywriting. Her daughter started 4th grade at Mirman School last year. She previously attended 3rd St. Elementary School. Jenny has been published recently in the Daily News and on Mamapedia, The Well Mom, Sane Moms, Hybrid Mom, The Culture Mom and A Child Grows In Brooklyn. She now writes about gift ideas and products on her blog, [Find A Toad](#).

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