

Guest Blogger Jenny: Iâ€™m Learning The REAL Cost Of Private Elementary School

Description



Fund-Raising Season Ends At The Merry Spring Fair

As anyone whoâ€™s sent her child to private school will tell you, the financial commitment doesnâ€™t end with the insane tuition costs. Not at all.

First off, usually in the first half of the school year, the school (in my case, Mirman), hits you up for annual giving. Although private school tuition is steep, it apparently doesnâ€™t cover expenses. No, thereâ€™s a shortfall for each child, and, at least at Mirman, the school keeps it simple by informing you of that exact dollar amount. Even if you canâ€™t swing the whole thing (in the low thousands), you need to give something, because the school needs 100% parent participation in annual giving in order to qualify for grants (which also help fund the school).

Annual giving, however, is just the beginning. There are videos to purchase of your childâ€™s various holiday shows (you will never watch these. Your child will never watch these. But you will have to purchase them nevertheless). If thereâ€™s a building campaign, there is additional pressure for donations, even though thereâ€™s a chance that your child will never even enter the buildings you fund. Thereâ€™s â€œfree dressâ€• clothing emblazoned with the school logo to buy. And then, just as the yearâ€™s winding to a close, thereâ€™s that last push, the Silent Auction/Big Fundraiser.

This last event takes many forms at different schools. Some have a big, fancy, catered dinner. Not Mirman. They have a Spring Fair, an entire day of themed food, games, rides, and activities, funded by you.

This was my daughterâ€™s first at Mirman, and I was pleasantly surprised by the unpretentiousness of the event. The Fair had carnival rides and tons of food (although I really think they could have used a few more food trucks). There was an enormous Silent Auction in the auditorium, stuffed full of gift baskets and extra special seats to sports games (all of which was collected and donated through parental efforts). There were tennis cans filled with our kidsâ€™ tiny toys from home, sold off to other kids for 10 bucks a pop. And there was the Bake Sale.

I worked the Bake Sale. For two hours. My impressions are thus: Mirman children are very polite, and, when it comes to baked goods, people will consume just about anything. We sold out of everything by 5pm. Even the gluten free cookies were gone. It was the only bake sale at which I wasnâ€™t even remotely tempted to snatch anything (ok, I did eat one cold, chewy churro). As volunteer stints go, the Bake Sale was great.

My daughter had a wonderful time at the Fair. She ran around with her best friend, terrorizing the place. We were very busy and felt useful. All in all, it was a good experience. Except that I wonder a bit about sustainability.

I mean, how long can private schools keep plowing the same fields for funding, over and over again? By the time the Silent Auction came around, my family was pretty much done giving money. Bidding on items we neither wanted nor needed wasn't an option. I watched parents dutifully line up to pay their winning bids and collect their goodies, and I wondered if they were as grateful as I am to get a summer fundraising respite.

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 this 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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1. Beyond The Brochure

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1. Guest Blogger Jenny Heitz

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