

Your L.A. Private Schools Admissions Checklist by Lisa Marfisi

Description



Weâ€™re excited to have Lisa Marfisiâ€™s words of wisdom on the blog! Lisa has been an L.A. private school admissions director for 15 years (see her full bio below).

So, youâ€™re applying to private school and you think you have a plan. Youâ€™ve visited many schools, narrowed your choices and applied. You have edited your answers multiple times, gotten recommendations from your childâ€™s favorite teachers, and submitted transcripts. You have friends who recommended you. You have interviewed, attended events and written lovely thank you notes to each Director of Admission you met. You are doing everything right! These are just the basicsâ€¦ there are a few more *â€œDos and Donâ€™tsâ€•* to think about and add to your to do list.



TIPS, ADVICE and SUGGESTIONS for applying to L.A. Private/Independent Schools:

1. ONLY apply to schools where you would feel comfortable enrolling your child. If you are not CERTAIN that the school is compatible with your [educational philosophy](#) and/or the [culture](#) does not “feel” right, don’t waste your time or the school’s time. It takes hours to visit, apply, interview and review each school.
2. DRIVE to the school at the EXACT time of day you would be going to drop off or pick up. Many parents visit schools in the middle of the day and then are shocked to find out that there is A LOT more traffic and it takes A LOT longer than they thought it would to get there.
3. FOLLOW DIRECTIONS! If the school asks for a photo of your child. Send them ONE. Do NOT send an entire baby album! If you are required to get recommendations, send recs from teachers who are CURRENT and who teach the subjects which were requested. When applying, remember MORE is not BETTER! If you send extra letters, recs, videos, etc., they will not HELP. In fact, it is unlikely that they will even be reviewed.
4. PAY ATTENTION! Read the questions on each application carefully and answer the question that has been asked. If the question is about your child, the answer should be too! If the question is about your family, stick to the topic and tell the school what they are asking for. Don’t tell about your volunteer experience unless that is what the question is about! There is a reason they are asking. Schools try to get information that will help them determine if your child/family is a good fit. They will NOTICE if you do not follow instructions. In my practice, this is the ONE area that is consistently a problem for most parents. It is challenging to stick to the topic when you want to share SO much information. Make sure you only answer the question which has been asked!
5. EVERYTHING counts! If you have to change your appointment multiple times, it will be remembered. If you are late, it will be noted, If your child jumps on the furniture in the reception area or you drive too fast in the parking lot, the school will KNOW. On the other hand, if you are very pleasant, on time and you attend many events at the school, this will be noticed too.

6. DON'T tell EVERY school that it is your first choice. Schools are interested in families that understand their program and WANT them. If you REALLY have a first choice, it is important to tell the Director of Admission, but if you are not sure, it is better to say nothing.

Take time to reflect on your own educational experience so you can remember all of the things that were important to you as a student. Think about your child and how he/she is different. Will the experience you had work for your child? If not, try to focus on your child's needs so you can find an environment that is JUST RIGHT!

This may be the only time in your life that you get to enjoy this reflective process. (When students are older, they do not depend on you as much for this process.) ENJOY this time. Talk to your child, your partner, your family and use this time to learn about yourself and your family.

Remember that your idea of where your child should be may not match where he/she ends up and THAT'S OK. You may be pleasantly surprised to find you didn't really "get" a school until you landed there.

KEEP BREATHING! It will be OK! March will be here soon!

Lisa Marfisi has been a professional in education in Los Angeles since 1991. She was the Director of Admissions K-12 at Wildwood School and PK-6 at Echo Horizon School. She also worked at the Archer School for Girls, PS #1, and Westside Neighborhood School. Lisa's experience has given her an understanding of what schools are looking for and enables her to help parents navigate the admissions process from an insider's point of view. Lisa has been helping families with the admission process as a Director of Admission for 15 years. Her two children are in college at UC Berkeley and UC Santa Barbara. Lisa has experience as a parent at independent, public, charter and parochial schools. She holds a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania.

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