

Why Your Preschool Director May Be Your Best Ally During Admissions

Description



Gorgeous front garden at Montessori Shir-Hashirim Preschool

Iâ€™ve written about the role [preschool directors](#) play in private elementary school admissions. Iâ€™ve talked about how I truly appreciated [Elena Cielak at Montessori Shir-Hashirim](#), who helped us get my daughter into Willows, Oakwood and Wildwood, the three schools where we applied.

But, Elena's job wasn't easy. The line at her door during peak admissions season was long and she was fielding phone calls from anxious parents all day long. I met with Elena once formally and several times in the preschool hallway. She suggested schools for us to tour, steered us away from schools she didn't think were right for our child and assured us we'd get in. She was right. But, Elena is one of a select few preschool directors who are able to navigate the rocky waves of admissions on behalf of all her families each year. She had visited many of the top-tier schools and was known by admissions directors. Some preschool directors aren't interested in playing that role, preferring to let families go it alone. Others send most of their kids to public school and are uninformed about private school admissions. They are also unconnected from the all-important admissions directors.

Making sure your preschool director is your ally, not your adversary during admissions is key to a successful admissions outcome.

Here are a few ways to ensure preschool director is an ally during admissions:

1. Find out whether he/she is well-connected with schools that interest you by asking director and talking to other parents. If your preschool director knows the admissions director at schools where you'll be applying, let her know early. She will be able to mention that to the school the next time she talks to the admissions director. If your director isn't familiar with a school(s) you like, ask if she'd be willing to go on a tour to see the school and get to know the staff.
2. Understand that your preschool director knows your child and may have strong opinions about the right school for him/her. Respect the director's opinion and tour some of the schools she suggests. Ask why she feels so strongly about a particular school for your child. If there are a lot of kids applying to a school that year, ask her to be candid about your chances (in other words, will she advocate for your kid).
3. If there has been tension between you and your preschool director, try to clear the air before you start asking her to fill out admissions forms. Being on good terms is essential to this process.
4. Realize that no matter how much you want something, it may not be possible. A lot of preschool directors won't advocate for a family for a specific school. There are many reasons for this, including she may have other families in mind for that school or she just doesn't think your child will do well there.

5. Build a relationship early with your preschool director. Let her know you're aiming for private school. Get involved with the school, get to know her, volunteer, try to stay calm when things go wrong at school (it is almost inevitable that little things will happen at preschool to upset you or your child, try to remain even tempered).

6. Your preschool director is balancing a lot of complicated requests, jockeying parental interests and school politics (hers and the elementary school(s). She is likely trying to determine the best fit for each kid, the chances they will get in and make sure everyone gets a spot somewhere so nobody is shut out. This doesn't mean she's your adversary, it means she has a lot of interests to fulfill on behalf of a lot of families at her preschool. Her preschool's reputation is important to her. Placing your child is important and so is pleasing powerful admissions directors at top elementary schools. She will also want to make sure that if she advocates strongly for your child at a specific school, you really want to attend if your child is accepted. Nothing will upset her more than a family who begs and pleads for her to help them get into a competitive school, only to turn it down.

7. Be cautious about what you say to your preschool director and other parents. If you know a board member at a competitive school, no need to broadcast that fact. Tell your preschool director only if you like the school. If you don't plan to apply there, don't play that card because you may find yourself being pushed to apply to the school based on the connection to a board member.

8. In *Beyond The Brochure* we include a copy of the detailed form your preschool director fills out for school's where you're applying. You don't see her answers to the form's questions, but you want to do everything possible to make sure your family and child are portrayed positively. That doesn't mean perfection. She will be honest. But, you control whether you pay your tuition on time and volunteer at the school.

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