

Parent Interviews: Plenty To Unexpected

Description



For better or worse, thereâ€™s no one-size-fits-all when it comes to parent interviews. Itâ€™s clear that every school has its own style of parent interview based on who the admissions director is.

Some parents are thrilled when they have a great interview at a school that is â€œridiculously hard to get into.â€• The elation leads to dismay when their child is wait-listed at the school.

â€œHow could this have happened?â€• they wonder.

â€œThat woman has lunch with our Mother-In-Law every week!â€•

â€œWe felt like the admissions director was an old friendâ€¦!â€™m so furious at being misled.â€•

â€œWe were sure we were in!â€•

What some parents don't realize is that the same admissions director is making *everyone* feel like a beloved old friend. Each family leaves the interview feeling great and convinced they will get in.

Big personality, quiet introvert, young or experienced, friendly or aloof. Admissions directors can reflect both their own style and the culture of the school.

The formal interview is another common style typical of certain schools. Impossible to read, the admissions director is typically nice, but not overly familiar or friendly. Parents may leave the interview not knowing what will happen. "I don't know if it went well," they'll say.

At some schools, the admissions director will give a family signals the school just isn't interested in them i.e. the freezing-cold shoulder. It's not hard to realize when this is happening. "Poker face" turns to "rude poker face" within minutes. It happened to my husband and me, so I can attest to the surprise and dismay at being treated so unprofessionally. I wrote about this in *Beyond The Brochure*.

Every so often, a parent interview can start off well and take a turn for the worse based on a parental statement or question like, "I hear you admit a lot of problem kids." Why yes, a question like that can ruin an interview!

It's equally difficult to read too much into the overly friendly admissions director, as it is the chilly professional. Every admissions director has his/her own style. The key is not to read too much into any individual interviewing style.

Personality sometimes extends into the accessibility of an admissions director. Some admissions directors don't mine emails or chatty calls from prospective parents about the process. Others prefer to keep communication strictly on an as-needed, more formal basis. Whether an admissions director will share information about the number of spaces available or whether the school admits students from the wait-list, also depends.

Since you really don't know what the parent interview will be like, the best thing to do is be prepared to talk about why your child and your family are a great fit for the school. Be specific. Research specific things you like about the school and share that with the admissions director. Ask smart questions that can lead to a conversation, rather than "yes" or "no" responses. A question about how long it will take to get from your house to the school isn't a good question.

Asking about types of volunteer opportunities for parents might lead to a great opportunity for you to tout your expertise in a certain area and for the admissions director to elaborate on the school's signature volunteer projects and opportunities.

The bottom line is that the parent interview is a necessary step in the process. It may or may not be the interview you envisioned. But, once your child is (hopefully) admitted, you can laugh about your perceptions (or misperceptions) with the admissions director for many years to come.

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Author

admin