

Grateful, Hopeful Or Dismayed: When The L.A. Admissions Letters Arrive

Description



It's been an eternity (or so it seems) and finally, the [admissions letters](#) will soon arrive by regular mail or email. All over town, parents will be either (1) celebrating (2) trying to figure out what their wait-list letters really mean or (3) freaking out because their kid didn't get in anywhere. It's [admissions](#) day in L.A.

If you're like me and you've been through the admissions process twice for two kids (DK, K, 4th and 7th grades), you'll probably be familiar with at least two of the three scenarios above. My kids have been accepted and wait-listed, with one application that never got to the finish line after a terrible parent interview (more about that in the book; it caught us by surprise and there was no way our kid was getting into that school!).

First, let's talk about the good news. Acceptance letters! Oh, joy! Now you can break out the champagne, call the school and tell them your family will accept. You'll fork over the deposit and carefully analyze the admissions packet from what is now your kid's school. Your kid has a school! Maybe you got two or three acceptances and you have lots of choices. Weigh them carefully, the pros and cons of each. Perhaps in a neurotic moment of ego-driven self-doubt, you'll regret you didn't apply to even more schools, including that amazing, constantly talked about oh-so-fabulous-school, just to get the letter and turn them down. After all, their tour was lame, the moms are mean-girls who wear Chanel and you'd enjoy the satisfaction, oh, never mind. All of this is pure happiness.



Now to the wait-list. Yes, I've received several, one in particular that I felt panicky about. Actually it was an email and it came at 12 noon on Saturday. Wait-list. Wait. List. To try to get a spot off the wait-list or not. To be or not to be? That was the question and this day seemed truly Shakespearean after a long process middle school process. Barry and I decided not to pursue the wait-list for our daughter, since that would have meant keeping our son at Willows, something we had decided very late during the admissions process would a mistake for various reasons. *If it doesn't open, it's not your door.* Instead, we focused on getting both kids into [Viewpoint](#). And we did it.

It went something like this. We submitted a late application to Viewpoint (late being the Monday after admissions letters were sent out). We didn't talk to the Willows about it, since experience told us that would be pointless. It turned out to be the right move at the perfect time. The kids got in. Maybe at sometime in the future in a galaxy far, far away, I'll spill the details of what I think happened to cause my kid to end up on the wait-list. But, for now, you just need to know that I've had the experience of opening one of those emails and I know what it feels like. It's a very uncertain feeling, but it isn't always a "no" and a few kids at almost all the private elementary schools get in every year after first being wait-listed. Wait-lists move around. When one family declines a spot, the school looks to the wait-list to fill that spot. There are some schools, however, with very high acceptance rates so wait-lists spots are fewer. Sometimes, these are schools with lots of faculty kids, legacy families or siblings applying who are pretty much guaranteed to accept spots when offered. Parents often ask if they should turn down a spot at one school and linger on the wait-list at another. No! Send in your non-refundable deposit to the school where your kid has been accepted. It's not a good idea to mention to that school you're hoping to get a wait-list spot elsewhere. If a wait-list spot opens up, you'll lose the deposit (it can be \$2000-\$5000, depending on the grade level, but that's the reality). That is all just part of the L.A. admissions process.

If you find your family without a school, create another plan. A new plan that discards all mention of rejection letters. Don't blame yourself and definitely don't obsess over what went wrong. It could have been sometime entirely out of your control. Instead, focus on creating new options. Talk to your preschool director. Some of them have near-magical powers within their carefully cultivated relationships with admissions directors. Send him/her to public school for a year until you can re-apply. Call an [educational consultant](#) who knows how to work a wait-list to get a spot and who may also know which schools will take late applications. These might not have been your first choice options, but they can end up working out better than you'd expect. You'll need to be open minded, patient and flexible, not exactly the qualities the admissions process brings out in parents.

We all want the very best education for our kids. Good luck! –Christina

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Date Created

March 14, 2015

Author

admin