

So, You Have A Parent Interview!

Description

Parent interviews. Sort of like a job interview, except there's somebody in the room who is a big topic of conversation without even being there: your child. Therefore, in addition to yourself, you'll have to be prepared to discuss your child in depth.

When my husband and I went on our parent interviews, we approached it like we would a job interview. Prepared. On time. Confident about what our family would offer each school.

Oh, and nervous.

One of our interviews was more like an intake interview. The Admissions Director was out that day and somebody from the secondary school was filling in. It was hard to get a read on what she was thinking. She took a lot of notes and asked a few questions. But, it went fine.

Our interview at The Willows went very well. We hit instantly clicked with Kim Feldman, the Admissions Director. She created a warm, conversational interview that demonstrated a sincere interest in our daughter and us. She also asked a lot of questions. Every topic was covered: our daughter, our jobs, volunteering, diversity, what we do for fun, parenting philosophies, educational backgrounds, etc. We were very straightforward and offered up a lot of information. We wanted her to know we thought the school would be a great place for our daughter.

I've discussed our worst parent interview in detail in *Beyond The Brochure*. It's possible for everything to go sideways during a parent interview. It happened to us. We had no control over it. It was worse than bad. It was uncomfortable and unprofessional. So, we were relieved we had applied to other schools after the "big disaster."

The bottom line about parent interviews is this: imagine yourself interviewing someone for a job. All the things you'd expect from a job candidate are the same things an Admissions Director will be looking for from you. These include a positive attitude, knowledge about the school, well-informed questions, openness about your family, promptness and professionalism and a genuine interest in the school. The same way a job candidate needs to have great qualifications AND the "right fit" also

applies in the admissions process. Does the job candidate need to be perfect? No! Neither do you or your child. As weâ€™ve said before, send a thank you note after every step in the admissions process.

Hereâ€™s a good blog post about [tips for parent interviews](#) from Kate who writes the SFK files.

This is a great parent interview primer by Kim Hamer:

What are you going to say?

Interviews are a two-way conversation. Interviewing is a tool used by most private elementary schools to assess whether or not a family is a good fit. It is also a time for you to assess a school.

You should be looking for the same fit. You are looking for a school to partner with in raising your child, a school that extends, partially, the way you parent into the classroom, a school that makes you want to be part of the community for a long time.

Mastering an interview is a combination of luck and preparation. To prepare you will want to: Do your research. Outline your responses to the common interview questions. Prepare your own questions. Know what not to do or ask. Follow up.

Review your notes from your tour for research. What was it that made you think, â€œTHIS IS IT!â€• or, â€œUmm, okay but not perfectâ€•? What values did you see the school demonstrate? The more specific you are, the better prepared you will be to answer certain questions.

The kinds of questions an admissions director can ask vary widely, but the most common question is:

- **Tell me about your child.**

Most parents are so nervous they forget they have questions too. Come up with a list of questions that you want to ask. Here is one you can use as a jumping off point:

- **Is there a type of child or family that excels at this school?**

- **Don't ask questions that are confrontational**

Watch your tone as well. A really bad question to ask would be: What are our chances of getting in? Ask that and you will have just lowered your chances of getting in.

Snafus happen. I wish I didn't have to include this list but alas, every year, parents commit these interview blunders.

â–ª **Do not answer your cell phone in an interview** unless it's the person caring for your child. And that person should be instructed to only call you if there is an emergency.

â–ª **Do yourself a favor and arrive early.** You can sit in the car if sitting in the school office will make you too nervous. Give yourself time to relax before the interview.

â–ª **After the interview, write a thank you note.** Write it on a notecard and be brief. Thank the interviewer for his/her time, note what you really like about the school and *only if the school is your first choice* include, "I'm offered a spot we will happily accept."

Be prepared for your interview!

Kim Hamer is a parent at Windward School and PS#1 Elementary. She is a former educational consultant.

Category

1. Beyond The Brochure

Tags

1. Parent Interview tips

Date Created

January 23, 2011

Author

admin