

Applying For 9th Grade: Skylar's Story

Description



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Here, I interview one of my good friends, Skylar, about her experience as a mom going through the L.A. private school admissions process for 9th grade. Her son, Luc, attended The Willows for K-8, which is where we met. I think it's always helpful to hear different perspectives about admissions from a variety of voices. —Christina

Question: Thank you, Skylar, for sharing your family's experience with the 9th grade admissions process with our readers. Can you describe what the process was like for your family?

Answer: In a word, CHALLENGING. My son really wanted to go to Crossroads. My husband and I really wanted him to go there. Crossroads was his first choice. He wanted to be in the Crossroads theater program and play baseball there. We had high hopes that coming from The Willows he'd get in. He is a multi-faceted kid (baseball, theater, led tours of Willows, rock band, good grades and engaging personality). His ISEE scores were good, but not great. We had great letters of recommendation from parents at the school, his theater director, his baseball coach and even the head of the baseball league. Despite all this, he didn't get in. It was devastating for him and for me and my husband. He was wait-listed and we tried so hard to get a spot from the wait-list, but it didn't happen. It was an emotional time for us. Luc had good friends going to Crossroads and he wanted to go there with them. And, we thought it would be the best school for him. But, the numbers didn't work in our favor. There were too many families with board-level connections and we didn't have those relationships. Fortunately, he was accepted at 3 other schools.

Question: What do you think was the most difficult part of the process?

Answer: Definitely it was the [written application](#). The parent essays and the essays our son had to write for every school were very tedious. They are so time-consuming and you want to answer the questions directly but still be interesting and not dull. Some schools require long essays and others are short. Each school asks different questions. Whew!

Question: *What was the easiest part of the process?*

Answer: We are all outgoing and talkative, so for our family the interviews were the least stressful part of the process. We can talk to a potted plant and make it a two-way conversation. But, if you are the quiet type, or your kid is quiet, try to anticipate the type of questions youâ€™ll be asked and practice answering the questions. The schools might ask why you want your kid to attend the school. They might ask your kid why he/she wants to go to the school or to talk about his/her extracurricular activities. If itâ€™s an all-boys or all-girls school, they might ask your kid why he/she wants to attend a single-sex school. Vague, general answers arenâ€™t what theyâ€™re looking for. Try to be specific!

Question: *What advice would you give parents who are applying for 9th grade?*

Answer: Cast a wide net! Tour a lot of schools. Apply to enough schools so you end up with options. Look outside your obvious choices or the most â€œpopularâ€ schools. Look for schools where other families at your current school are not applying. Remember that if youâ€™re at a private school, your head of school has a lot of families who are applying to the same few schools, so if you can apply to a school that is not on that list, your might have a better chance of getting in. Your kid is competing against his/her classmates, unfortunately.

Question: *Do you think itâ€™s possible for a kid to get accepted without [letters of recommendation](#)?*

Answer: Yes! At one school, we didnâ€™t know anybody and Luc got in. At the other schools, we did have letters from current parents. The admissions process is very political at some schools. It can be about who your family is, or what you do for work, at some of these schools, even for 9th grade. If your job gives you strong connections to board members thatâ€™s a big deal.

Question: *Do you have any words of advice for other parents?*

Answer: Try to stay calm and know that your family will get through the process, possibly with an unexpected or surprising (in a good way!) outcome. Donâ€™t rule out a school just because it is different than your current school. Kids change and have different educational needs in high school than they had in elementary school. Keep an open mind. Look at teachers, classes offered, extracurricular activities and college placements at prospective schools. Do they fit with what your kid wants? What you want for him/her? If so, apply! We were way too focused on one school and didnâ€™t initially realize that there was another school that was a great choice for Luc. Also, Iâ€™d say that a lot of D1 sports school are religious, but donâ€™t let that deter you. They attract kids of all faiths who come to play sports or for other programs.

Thank you, Skylar for your insights and adviceâ€”Christina

Skylar is the mom of Luc, a sophomore at [Crespi Carmelite High School](#) in Encino, where he is enjoying playing baseball and excelling at the all-boys school.

Names have been changed for privacy.

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