

Guest Blogger Jenny: Apply To The Schools YOU Like

Description



Private elementary school searches in Los Angeles always seem to lead to the same few schools being touted as “the best.” So, inevitably you, the proud parent of some innocent pre-schooler (usually) who’s still building faulty block architecture and trying not to pee her pants, feel pressure to apply to those “best” schools, or look like a loser.

Don’t lie about it. You sometimes hang out with parents who seem to know the scoop on the private school scene, and they have some tough and shill standards to holler at you during cocktail parties. Stuff about the best “progressive” education (I’m still unclear as to what that actually means), the most innovative classroom organization, and (the dirty little LA private school secret) the incredible business connections you could foster with other well heeled parents.

Goodness knows the schools we’re talking about are excellent. All are feeder schools to the top middle and upper schools in the city. All have high ERB scores, and scores of educational goodies. Most are a bit artsy, although underneath that cuddly, slightly 1970’s exterior lurks a ruthless competitive drive. But here’s the problem: you can apply, but the odds of getting in aren’t in your favor.

Take The Center For Early Education (CEE), for instance. CEE is probably the top of the top tier of private elementary schools. Designed by psychologists and other educational experts, CEE is the utmost in “progressive” education (as stated above: not entirely sure what that means), and it’s one cozy and cloistered environment. CEE kids go on to schools like Harvard-Westlake, Marlborough, and Brentwood.

And by all means, you should apply! Why not? But here’s a little statistic for you: your child has more likelihood of getting into Harvard for college than getting into CEE for kindergarten. It’s true.

I’m not writing this to bum you out, but to clue you in on the private school reality. If all you do is apply to the totally top tier, super competitive, ultra progressive (see my other parenthetical statements above) LA schools, you might not get into any of them. Schools like CEE, Brentwood, Oakwood, Crossroads, John Thomas Dye (not progressive, but just as impossible to gain entrance to), Carlthorp and The Willows are a total crap shoot. Your child might get in, either through exceptional performance (could happen with sufficient bladder control that day; skip that extra apple juice box), some connection you happen to have (mazel tov), or sheer amazingly good luck.

This is why it's important to look at other schools, schools which may be excellent and perfect for your child, but aren't in that ultra top tier. Kids from mildly religious schools like St. James and St. Brendan's in Hancock Park still have impressive matriculation stats and offer an excellent education, often for a far lower tuition. Another example of a great school with limited buzz is our friend Virginia's take on [Children's Community School](#), a slightly less well known school that sounds really wonderful. Check those schools out. And then apply to combination of the heavy hitter long shots and the so called underdog schools which might turn out to be the greatest educational experience your child ever has.

Finally, ignore those cocktail party braying donkeys. Private elementary school is not, ultimately, a status symbol. It shouldn't be a place for the parents to get ahead in business, it's a place for children to learn how to function in the world. Your child is the one attending the school; you've been done with school for a long, long time. Sip your martini, nod politely, and let all the nonsense roll right off you.

Jenny Heitz has worked as a staff writer for Coast Weekly in Carmel, freelanced in the South Bay, and then switched to advertising copywriting. Her daughter started 4th grade at Mirman School this year. She previously attended 3rd St. Elementary School. Jenny has been published recently in the Daily News and on Mamapedia, The Well Mom, Sane Moms, Hybrid Mom, The Culture Mom and A Child Grows In Brooklyn. She now writes about gift ideas and products on her blog,

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1. Guest Blogger Jenny Heitz

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