

Guest Blogger Samantha: Wait-Listed At Wildwood, Then The Phone Call That Was The Best/Worst Possible News

Description



Ok, so we all have felt the anxiety of the Los Angeles private elementary school admissions process. For some of us (read: me) it started with preschool, then it quietly smoldered until it was time for kindergarten. By then, the smoldering had turned into a forest fire.

All the mothers I knew at my son's preschool seemed cool and collected on the surface, but just below was the same anxiety I felt, and for some, this competition manifested in some pretty unpleasant behavior. For me, this was the part of the process I hated the most.

For good or for bad, I have the general demeanor of a Golden Retriever. I'm pretty even keeled in the mood department (a plus when going through the stresses of applying to private school), but it also means that I am oblivious to the politics surrounding me as I go along my merry way (not a plus when applying to private schools). I'll spare you the tales of hurt feelings and ruffled feathers and save that for another time. Suffice to say, whatever you are feeling, I guarantee that you are not alone.

In our case, we applied to 4 schools, and ultimately, we were accepted at 3 of them. This is the happy ending of the story, and as someone who fights the urge to read the end of the book first, I've spared you the suspense. However, things didn't start out so peachy.

While it seemed like everyone around me was joyous about their private school acceptances (aside from a few whispers regarding people who hadn't gotten in anywhere), I was not. I had had my heart set on one particular school: Wildwood.

It wasn't that the other schools weren't appealing; they were! It was just that on some visceral level Wildwood was it for me. And absolutely, more importantly, it was IT for my child. When D-Day came, we were wait-listed at Wildwood and I was devastated.

I wrote a note to the Admissions Director at Wildwood. This is what it said:

Dear Chantelle,

We received your kind notice regarding our waitlisted status at Wildwood.

With that in mind, we wanted to reiterate our interest in your school and our profound desire to become part of the Wildwood community.

We know in our heart that Wildwood is the school that we want to educate our children and that we want to make part of our family. We would, at anytime, jump at the opportunity to take a Kindergarten opening if a space were to open up.

Your school is and was the number one choice for our son, and it is our deepest hope that you might keep us top of mind if an opening were to become available.

Thank you so much for considering our family and our heartfelt request.

Not having much time to wallow, for fear my son might pick up on my disappointment, I bucked up, determined to look at the glass as half full. I talked to friends and family, I lost sleep, and within the 2 week window by which time one needs to commit to their said school, we had picked between our 2 contenders. My son was going to The Willows. This was a happy thing! We were so lucky! The Willows was a wonderful school and I knew people who would have loved to have gone there, but didn't get in. Yet, no matter how much spin I tried to put on it, I wasn't as happy as I knew I should be.

I berated myself for getting too emotionally invested in the whole school picking process. My son was going to do well anywhere, I told myself. And, best of all, The Willows was closer to where we lived! See, I kept repeating, that's a sign that we're *supposed* to be at The Willows.

We sent in the deposit check.

After a few days, my talking to myself was working. I wanted to throw off the cape of disappointment that burdened me; it was no fun to wear it around! I started embracing our new school and planning for the fall. I even told my son that he would be attending The Willows with another little boy that he knew from preschool. All was feeling right again, and I was happy to put the misery behind me.

Then, a couple of days after the deposit checks were due; I had a message on my phone. I listened to it. My heart started pounding. I felt nauseous. It was the absolute worst/best news possible!

We were being offered a space at Wildwood off the wait list. I damned the old adage:

Be careful what you wish for!

Suddenly, after all the internal dialogues, and the committees talking in my head, I didn't know what to do. My husband seemed mystified that my gut check was deactivated. When he reminded me that Wildwood had been our first choice initially, I quickly retorted that while that was true then, now I was unsure. My campaign to embrace the other was, apparently, very effective.

I was adrift, feeling (irrationally) that my son's entire life depended on my making the right decision. But which choice was right? Who knew anymore? Somewhere there had to be an answer. I found nothing illuminating. I spoke, once again, with friends and family, taking everyone's opinion-temperature, hoping somehow to find the right answer. Nothing helped.

That day was a cacophony of phone calls, endless discussions with my husband, and talks that seemed more like solace than congratulations. Frankly, it was ridiculous, and that night I vowed to shut out all the voices – those of others and my own – and try to *feel* the right decision.

Clarity arrived from the most obvious of places: my son. Knowing that little boy, knowing his strengths and his stretches and my dreams for him, not to mention his developing dreams for himself, I found an answer.

It wasn't the right answer.

It was the right answer for him.

In June, my boy will be finishing his first year at Wildwood and all of us are happier than we ever could have imagined.

Samantha Goodman is the mom of a Kindergartner at Wildwood School and a preschooler at 10th St. Preschool in Santa Monica. Samantha's son also attended 10th St. Preschool. Before her current parenting hiatus she was a screenwriter in Hollywood.

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