

Guest Blogger Gina: Finding The Perfect Fit School

Description



My neurotic tendency toward organization and over-preparation, while sometimes annoying to my husband, has served me well on many occasions. Most recently, I put this “skill” into use when it came time to think about elementary schools for our twin son and daughter.

I grew up in New York and, although my husband grew up in Los Angeles, he really wasn’t much help in figuring out the complex school system in L.A., so I was left to my own devices. My default operating system is to get rather methodical when I am dealing with something I am unfamiliar with, and figuring out the best school for our family was no different.

Once we realized that our local public school wasn’t a viable option, we knew we were looking at private elementary schools for our children. Although I would much rather have the “free” education that public school offers, I am not comfortable pinning my hopes on a charter school lottery system that might leave us with no school to attend when the time comes.

Thus I began, as many people do, by asking friends about the private schools they knew about, using books like Beyond The Brochure and researching online, using various sites like GreatSchools.net and TheSchoolBoards.com. This allowed me to at least get a list together of names and locations. We narrowed the list down by crossing off schools that didn’t present themselves as Progressive or Developmental and weren’t in a comfortable radius to where we lived. Simple enough.

And then the worries set in. Should we consider schools that are on the West Side even though we live an hour East? Should we look at a school where we have good connections even if the school doesn’t really appeal to us? Will our connections be insulted if we don’t apply there? How many schools should we look at? How many should we apply to? What about those schools that make you apply before you tour? Do we bother applying to schools that are so popular you need to be married to

Brad Pitt in order to be accepted? And the list went on and on. I knew I just had to start or my over-thinking would get the best of me.

We began touring when our children were a little more than 3 years old, a year and a half before we would actually apply to any of these schools. Our first tour was at The Willows Community School and we were really excited about it. From the inspired artwork on the walls, to the enthusiastic teachers to the way the director thoughtfully answered every question the parents had; we could picture our family being a part of this school. A few months later we took our children to the Fall Book Fair on their campus and were again impressed by community spirit and genuine friendliness of all the families we met. Our kids were equally enchanted and, a few weeks later when I told them I was touring another school, cried out “No! But we want to go to The Willows!” It seems we were all in agreement.

Well, if the first school we looked at was such a hit, we were excited to see what else LA private elementary schools had in store for us. This fall we toured 4 other schools and only at one, Oakwood, did we feel as enthusiastic as we did at The Willows. Oakwood isn’t as close to where we live, but there are enough great things about it that will make us consider applying there.

We still have 4 schools on our list to tour this spring and we will then have our “short list” of schools to re-tour in the fall of 2011, which is the year we will submit applications for the class of 2012. I am glad we decided to begin our touring early. I wanted to be able to see as many schools as I could so I could get a sense of what I really liked and what I definitely didn’t like. My sense is that the Fall before your child starts Kindergarten many parents are stressed about interviews and applications; I didn’t want to compound that with having to research and tour 10 or 15 schools. I feel good knowing that my husband and I can focus in on the 4 or 5 schools we really love and feel are the best fit for our family.

I’m feeling calm now. Check in with me again come September when interviews begin!

Gina Osher is a former Holistic Healer turned SAHM to boy/girl twins, a twin parenting coach and the author of the popular blog, The Twin Coach. There she writes on topics ranging from how Halloween candy helped her discover the meaning of life, to how to handle bed rest and premature babies. Gina describes herself and her blog as “one part friend who’s been through it all, one part mom of twins trying to figure it out, one part mentor willing to share”. She can also be found on Twitter and Facebook.

Category

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