

Guest Blogger Sharie: Six Things I Learned in a Hurry When Starting My School Search

Description



As the mother of a preschooler, I've been a faithful reader of this blog and the *Beyond The Brochure* book for a while now, so when it finally came time to [start finding a Kindergarten](#) for our son for next fall I felt pretty prepared. A month into the process, though, it was obvious I still had some lessons to learn!

1. Time flies

Wow, I feel like we just got into preschool and *bam* it's already time to look for a Kindergarten. And I quickly discovered that the time between the fall Kindergarten fair and "tour season" is pretty short. I had to quickly finish my research in order to come up with our list of prospectives in time to rsvp for tours. Tours fill up fast so RSVP early!

2. Your preschool administrator really *is* your greatest resource

I think our son is perfect, of course, and would do well at any school but I was very overwhelmed trying to decide what school style would be the best fit for us. Traditional? Progressive? Big? Small? Our [preschool director was a tremendous help here](#), and we really worked closely with her to come up with a list of prospective schools where our son could really thrive.

3. Tour early, tour often

This is one of the biggies that I wish I'd taken more to heart. If I'd toured even a few schools last year (ie: two years before our Kindergarten entry) [like Beyond the Brochure recommends](#), that's a few more schools I could've either seen again or crossed off the list and saved some hurried pavement pounding.

4. Take notes

This seems like a no-brainer, but I was surprised at how few parents at fairs or on tours actually take notes. Through fairs, tours, events, etc. we probably met easily 4-6 people associated with each school on our list. That's a lot of names to mix up. When it's application time I definitely want to be able to reference some of the administrators and teachers we met along the way.

5. Drive the route. During rush-hour.

There were some schools on our list that we really loved but after doing some test runs during the morning and afternoon commutes it became painfully obvious that it just wasn't feasible to make it to school in one direction and then head all the way across town to work in the opposite direction. What seems like a blow-off at 10am for a tour is a completely different story at 8am, so unfortunately we had to cross an entire area of good schools off our list. Because remember, however far away the school is, you're in the car for four times that duration, going there and back and there and back!

6. Do your research and keep an open mind

The first school we toured I didn't know much about and had considered it more as a backup but ended up loving it. Conversely, a couple of schools we really had high hopes for seemed great on the surface, but going, well, beyond the brochure and asking friends and fellow parents about the schools turned up *some unpleasant surprises* about their academics. And one popular school everyone raves about seemed perfect for us from the website but 30 seconds into the tour [we could tell it wasn't right for our family at all](#). School websites and brochures can tell you a lot about the place but don't be afraid to dig a little deeper. And please, don't be that parent on the tour who asks questions that are obviously answered on the school's website!

The fall tour season seems a little frantic, but thanks to great tips from the *Beyond The Brochure* blog and book I actually feel somewhat prepared. Now that we've narrowed our list down to schools we like, I can't wait for the next phase of the process: applications!

Sharie Piper (not her real name) is on pins and needles to see where her son ends up going to school next year and can't wait to do it all again in a few years for her daughter.

Category

1. Beyond The Brochure

Tags

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2. tips for getting started with school search
3. touring schools

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