

L.A. Admissions Directors: Waiting For Admissions Letters by Janis Adams

Description



Here's a piece with great insight from a few of L.A.'s top admissions directors, interviewed by Janis Adams of [Academic Achievers](#).

After months of researching, preparing, applying, testing, and interviewing, there is nothing left to do now but wait.

We want to give families some behind-the-scenes insight about what is going on as final decisions are being made. Despite this being crunch time for the admissions directors, several top ADs and experts took the time to talk with us about the admissions process.

Laurel Baker Tew, Director of Admissions at Viewpoint School, reminds us that "the student isn't the only part of the admissions decision. The family as well has to fit into the school community."

“I used to be in college admissions,” adds Tew, “and admissions to an independent school is very different from admissions to college. In college we’re looking to admit a student; in independent school, we are looking to admit a family.”

Independent schools agree that the family has to be supportive of the school and its philosophies. Viewpoint likes parents who take the time to do the research and can articulate what it is they are looking for in their families. “Make sure the school is a good fit before going in for the interview,” suggests Laurel Baker Tew. Be sure to have specific examples and questions that align with the mission and values of the school.

Dr. Amy Horton, a prominent clinical psychologist who works with many families from independent schools, cautions, “Don’t go into the school admission process holding back relevant information about your child. It’s not necessary for them to have that perfect ISEE score. Admissions directors are looking at the whole child.” Her advice is, “The best school fit for a child is where they will thrive and feel supported even on their worst day.”

Jeanette Woo Chitjian, Director of Enrollment Management at Marlborough School, reminds us of the reality of the numbers for seats available for every applicant. “There are approximately 3-4 applicants for every one spot in 7th grade, and 10-12 applicants for every spot in 9th grade.”

Jeannette is quick to add, “We are looking for different things in different grades. In 7th grade we are looking to put a class together. In 9th grade, we are looking to add to an established class.”

Of course, each situation would have a different need. When you are putting a class together you want to have students who will balance the group as a whole. Neither an entire group of introverts nor an entire group of extroverts would make for a well-rounded class. Jeanette Woo Chitjian puts it into perspective, “Remember, it isn’t just about what the student can contribute to the class, it is also about what the student will gain from the experience.”

Like other top schools, Marlborough wants to see the academic record (grades, ISEE, ERB scores) and also importantly, the comments from the teachers. “Our girls are much more than numbers to us. We take a great deal of time in reviewing each girl’s application. We encourage parents to send additional information about the child if they feel it will help us to make a more informed decision,” says Jeannette Woo Chijian.

Perhaps it goes without saying, but especially during the stressful waiting period, it is important to remember that regardless of where your child goes to school, they will still bloom.

To this point, Admissions Consultant Rob Stone had this to say: “One thing families can do during that terrible limbo of waiting for the decision is to embrace the premise that everything is going to be okay. The biggest trap is thinking that a child’s whole future hinges on getting into a certain school. The second-biggest trap is allowing the stakes of the admissions decision to create so much pressure in the home that it begins to trickle down to the child. The worst case scenario is that a child feels like a complete failure if they don’t get in.”

You have no control whether the orchestra does or does not need a double-bass player at this time. You give it your best shot but you have no ultimate power over which candidate is accepted. Being a top contender is what matters most.

Stone adds, “It is about positivity and perspective. Getting into a school does not make, or break, the success of a kid.”

The application process is part of a bigger picture in the investment of your child’s education. The skills they develop during this preparation will serve them for a lifetime.

Janis Adams is the Founder/CEO of Academic Achievers, a full-services educational agency headquartered in Santa Monica. Academic Achievers provides customized ISEE, SAT, and ACT prep, application assistance and consulting. KinderPrep: Learning to Love Learning, KinderPrep Camp, as well as elementary and high school remediation and enrichment. www.academicachievers.com

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Date Created

February 11, 2016

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