Waiting, Waitlists and Waitpools by Lisa Marfisi

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Waiting for Admission Decisions â€“ so close, yet so far away! March 15, 2019 is when Los Angeles independent schools notify families of their decisions.

Letâ€™s face it, for most of us, keeping busy is much easier than sitting and waiting. The application process is filled with responsibilities and chores that keep you occupied. During the fall and winter, you have taken time to write an application, visit schools, attend events, interview, go to assessments and testing, and do LOTS of research. Now is the hardest part â€“ all you can do is WAITâ€¦â€¦

If you have a definite first choice which is clearly FAR above the others, you should let the school know. This is sometimes called a â€œfirst choiceâ€• letter. Write a letter to indicate your strong interest and be sure to tell them why the school is your first choice AND that you will enroll if you are offered a space. You can ONLY write this letter to ONE school. Then, you will need to enroll if you are offered a space. Spaces are limited and schools take these letters VERY seriously. You must be sure the school is without a doubt where you want to enroll your child.

Here are a few productive things you can do during this time: clarify which school your child would attend if you are lucky enough to get in. Do your research. When you get your decision letter, you will only have between one week to 10 days to send in your response. The earlier you send in your contract or let the school know that you will not accept the space, the faster the school can figure out how many students they still have room for. It is proper etiquette to respond quickly, even if you do not want to accept admission, so that you are not holding up the process for another family.

- Try to drive to each school during drop off/pick up hours to see what the traffic is like. You may have gone to meetings and appointments during the middle of the day. Many parents are surprised to learn how long it actually takes to get to a school during rush hour. Make sure you have this information BEFORE you make a decision.

- Plan ahead financially. You will be required to make a sizable deposit to hold your childâ€™s spot. Make sure you can do this quickly so that you can respond in a timely fashion to the school of your choice. The deposit is non-refundable. It secures your spot! You will of course at only put

down a deposit at one school. However, there are some instances where parents will put a deposit to hold a spot at their second choice school and then a wait-list spot opens at their first choice school. In this case, the deposit on the first choice space will not be refunded.

- Talk to other parents who you trust who are going through the same thing. You are NOT alone! You can support each other during this time. Instead of stressing on your own, try to talk to another parent who can relate to what you are feeling. It will help both of you. DONâ€™T post your feelings on social media. Talk to parents in person.

Waitlist and Waitpool Letters

Decision letters will be emailed in March. A few schools still use regular mail. Other schools require parents to log on to find out the admissions decision. There are three types of letters. Two of the three are very straightforward. An acceptance letter â€“ yes you are offered a spot! Your child has met the requirements for admission and there is a space in the grade you have applied to. A denial letter â€“ No, your child will not be invited to attend the school.

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Itâ€™s the other category thatâ€™s more complicated. A waitlist or waitpool letter. It is important to understand the difference between waitlists and waitpools. Both of these indicate good news. The schools are letting you know that your child is qualified to attend, but there is not a space in the grade you are applying for at this time. Parents often ask schools if the waitlist is ranked and if so, where their child is on the waitlist. Some schools will provide the information and others will not. Waitlists and waitpool spots can open up in March or right before school begins in September. Or not at all. So, the waiting continues.

However, there is a BIG difference between a waitlist and a waitpool. A waitlist is ranked. The student who is first on the wait-list will be the one accepted if a space opens up. If that student declines the spot, the student who is second on the list will be offered the spot and so on.

A waitpool is ALL of the students who are qualified and waiting for a spot. If a girl space becomes available, ALL the girls in the waitpool are considered, same for boys. The school is trying to figure out which child will fit best with the class they are putting together.

If you get a waitpool or waitlist letter, it is important to respond quickly so that the school knows that you are still interested. You can remain in the waitpool or waitlist until the beginning of the school year or until you decide that you want to withdraw. It is important to let a school know when you enroll in another school, so that you are no longer taking a space in the waitpool/waitlist and other students will be considered.

Hang in thereâ€¦â€¦ your child is beginning a new phase of their education and you are right there with them! Soon this will be a distant memory and your child will be enrolled in a new school!

Lisa Marfisi has been a professional in education in Los Angeles since 1991. She was the Director of Admissions K-12 at Wildwood School and PK-6 at Echo Horizon School. She also worked at the Archer School for Girls, PS #1, and Westside Neighborhood School. Lisaâ€™s experience has given her an understanding of what schools are looking for and enables her to help parents navigate the admissions process from an insiderâ€™s point of view. She is knowledgeable about schools in Los Angeles and is an expert at matching children to schools where they will thrive. Lisa has been helping families with the

admission process for 19 years. Her two children are college graduates (UC Berkeley and UC Santa Barbara). Lisa has experience as a parent at independent, public, charter and parochial schools. She holds a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania. www.lisamarfisi.com

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Date Created
March 4, 2019
Author
admin