

Tips for Navigating the Admissions Process during COVID-19

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Navigating the independent schools application process can be an arduous and sometimes intimidating process in the best of times. During this pandemic, where everything is virtual, the process can be downright overwhelming. Here are a few general tips to help you as you work through the independent school admissions application journey.

- Do your homework and take advantage of the school's website and virtual activities
- Build relationships with the Schools.
- Apply for Financial Aid Early



Do your homework and take advantage of information found on the school's website as well as virtual activities. Since the majority of the admissions process is now virtual, it is extremely important that parents are able to find ways to deeply familiarize themselves with schools, its curriculum, programming, and extracurricular activities. This can be accomplished by exploring the websites, attending virtual tours, and attending school sponsored virtual information sessions.

This year, it is even more important than ever to seek clarity around the admissions process. Remember this is a new journey for everyone, including the admission teams.

Admission teams are more than happy to support you in your admission process. Take advantage of their willingness to help. Inquire about virtual appointments. These appointments provide you with another opportunity to build relationships with admission team members. Seek clarity if you are unsure about anything you read, or may have heard, by placing a quick call to a school or sending an email, most answers are readily available. Many schools are also now posting videos on their websites to share information.

It is also important to be open to other sources of information! Speak with current families, join listservs and other online parenting groups. Another key is to make sure that you get an understanding of current parents' perspective, opinion, and experiences with the school. This information will help you to make a decision about whether this school is a great fit for your family and child.

Find Ways to Build Relationships with the Schools. As a result of everything being virtual this year, building new relationships is even more challenging yet can be critical in helping you to gain a good understanding of any school. Most schools are relying on interviews, additional recommendations, current and past grades reports and/ or possibly prior standardized testing results to make decisions. In many cases, schools are moving away from the testing requirement or are test optional for this year. Therefore it is more important for admission teams to understand the character and skill sets of your child. There are many ways to stay engaged during this virtual year. Send thank you notes, ask questions during open houses/tours, and encourage your child to engage in any school sponsored special events being offered online.

Apply for Financial Aid Early. Another key concern among parents is financial aid. Not only do more parents require aid due to the impact of the pandemic, more returning families are also in need. Which leads to the question, is there aid available and is applying to an independent school worth my time and resources?

The good news is that many Independent schools have financial aid budgets, and schools are diligently working to support as many current and potentially new families, as possible. It is critical to be in conversation with the admissions teams for your target schools in order to maximize your chances of getting as much aid as possible. Know that it is ok to ask about financial aid at the onset of your process. Also, talk to the financial aid counselor if you have specific questions about how to complete the form. Complete your financial aid package as thoroughly as possible. Be honest and offer clear explanations from the start. For example, when the form asks if you have additional information to add your financial narrative, tell it all! This will lessen the chances of a delay in the decision-making.

Stay tuned for our future blogs all geared towards helping you navigate the virtual admissions process.