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# A Manhattan-based preschool consultant on how to handle your kid landing on a program's waitlist — and best practices for nabbing a spot

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**One of the best ways to move your child from a waitlist is to think about the task from the perspective of an admissions director.** Sydney Bourne/Getty Images

**Preschool consultant Wendy Levey shared tips for getting your child off the waitlist at your ideal program.**

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**Consider reaching out to the school regularly and be polite and kind to directors.**

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**Gifts and money can help, but don't overdo it — personalize your offerings.**

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After applying to get their toddlers into top-rated preschools, parents tend to receive one of three responses: an acceptance letter, a rejection letter, or an offer to remain on the program's waitlist should a spot open up.

"Being on the waitlist means that as all of the schools are licensed by the Department of Health, they can only have a certain number of

children for the space they have in the classroom and the teacher coverage," Manhattan-based educational consultant [Wendy Levey](#) told Insider. "So many qualified families are placed on the waitlist."

While you might feel defeated ending up in this preschool purgatory, Levey shared some steps you can take to increase the chances of success in your child's placement outcome.

## **Watch out for key dates and don't be afraid to gently nudge admissions**

If you're based in New York City and looking at Independent School Admissions Association of Greater New York (ISAAGNY) schools, Levey said letters should be sent out by noon on February 25. "The whole shebang finishes on Thursday, March 4," she added, referring to when contracts and deposits are due.

Parents who don't receive letters by then shouldn't be afraid to check in.

"Call and email the school(s) of interest every day and be as polite yet as strong as possible that if taken you will immediately sign a contract," Levey said. "Ask to speak to the head of admissions, if possible."

## **Be respectful and nice**

One of the best ways to move your child from a waitlist is to think about the task from the perspective of an admissions director.

"The parents who get off waitlists do so by being nice," Levey said. "Sounds so simple, but is so true."

As a former NYC preschool admissions director herself, Levey reported from personal experience that tactics such as a daily phone call to the director, an email to them asking for an update, or even sending a cup of coffee and a donut their way to help them get through their day will put a smile on their face.

## **Follow instructions and respond right away**

Levey emphasized that parents should follow instructions incredibly carefully if placed on a waitlist, whether it requires you to call or send an email to remain on the list or receive notifications.

It's also essential to respond to your letter in a timely manner, either as soon as you receive it or that day.

## Use money and gifts wisely

While gifts are not in any way expected or necessary, if there's something small that relates to a personal conversation you had with the director it might get you noticed, which could in turn help your application status. Levey shared several such efforts that effectively turned her head.

"In the more crazy department, one year a parent sent me a signed football by my idol, NY Giant's quarterback Eli Manning," Levey said. "I would have taken them anyway, they were a great family, but that sure got my attention."

Another year, she'd spoken to a particular family about a Rose Bowl Game that Texas played in, and the family remembered the conversation.

"Although I am a rabid NY Giant's fan, they sent me a Vince Young jersey and said maybe I could hang it near my Eli Manning jersey," she said. "Again, it got my attention."

Other actions from families that Levey flagged as "thoughtful" and "considerate" were sending the school a book that was spoken about during an interview and dropping off a daffodil plant with a note that wished the director a happy spring while expressing hope that

admissions would take them off the waitlist.

Money can also talk, when leveraged ethically and appropriately.

"Another thoughtful gesture one year was a family on the waitlist made a donation for our annual auction from the store they worked in," Levey said. "And one year a dad came and sat outside my office on the last day of the waitlist with his checkbook and said, 'I am ready to write the deposit as soon as you say there is movement on the waitlist.' As movement happens at the very end of the process, that worked!"

## **Be ready to jump on a spot with a thank-you note**

If your child is eventually offered a spot, Levey stressed that families should be prepared to sign the contract and pay the deposit as soon as possible.

"It is generally non-refundable, so be sure this is what you want," she added.

And avoid being a last-minute responder. "It is very bad form and starts your relationship off with the school poorly," she said.

She added that admissions always appreciates a nice note with the deposit and contract. As an example, you could write:

*Dear [name of admissions director],*

*Thank you so much for accepting our daughter/son, [child's name], into your 2's program for fall 2021. My partner, [partner's name], and I are thrilled to start our daughter/son's first leg of her/his educational journey at your wonderful school.*

*We look forward to being active participants at [school name] and meeting all the other adorable two-year-olds and their families.*

*We recognize that this year with COVID-19 must have been especially stressful and complicated and thank you for your making the process so gracious.*

*Best,*

*[Your names], parents of [child's name]*

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