



Q&A GUIDE

TOP 8 DILEMMAS OF ADMISSION DECISION SEASON

What You Need to Know Now That You Have or
Have Not Been Accepted to a Private School

A PUBLICATION OF THE EPISCOPAL SCHOOL OF DALLAS PRESS



Questions

When and how will I know if my child has been accepted?

After decisions are released, how do I decide?

What if my child has been accepted to multiple schools, including our top choice?

What if I've been wait-listed at my school of choice but accepted at others?

What if I accept an offer, pay my deposit, and then get accepted by my top choice school where I was wait-listed?

What if I applied for financial aid? When will I know what I was awarded?

What if I'm denied this year? Does that mean I shouldn't bother applying in the future?

What if I still have questions about the school, but no one is on campus during spring break? How do I reach someone?





WHEN AND HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY CHILD HAS BEEN ACCEPTED?

Admission decision release dates vary across the country, but many large metropolitan cities and regional associations share a common decision date. For example, most schools in the Dallas-Fort Worth area accredited by the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS) share a common decision date of the Friday before Spring Break, which typically falls on the second Friday in March. How decisions are announced also varies by region, with the national trend moving towards electronic notification either via email or the applicant software.

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AFTER DECISIONS ARE RELEASED, HOW DO I DECIDE?

Ideally, as you progressed through the admission process, you were able to determine your top three or four schools, in rank order. When you receive an offer or offers of admission, you can quickly make your enrollment decision based on your ranked list. However, if you are torn between two or more schools and received offers of admission from those schools, we recommend you contact those schools to gain more insight. They should be able to answer your remaining questions, thus helping you to determine the school that best aligns with your family's values and the core criteria you defined in our workbook, **"How to Choose a Private School."** Independent rating sites such as **Niche** can also be helpful resources.



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WHAT IF MY CHILD HAS BEEN ACCEPTED TO MULTIPLE SCHOOLS, INCLUDING OUR TOP CHOICE?

Congratulations! Consider yourself very fortunate. It's recommended that you complete the enrollment paperwork and submit the deposit to your school of choice as soon as possible, and promptly communicate with the other schools that you will not be attending. This common courtesy allows the other schools to remove you from their list and make an offer to another deserving candidate in their wait pool.



WHAT IF I'VE BEEN WAIT-LISTED AT MY SCHOOL OF CHOICE BUT ACCEPTED AT OTHERS?

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This can certainly be a tricky situation. Most independent schools give accepted candidates two weeks to return the enrollment agreement and deposit. Be sure to read the acceptance and the waitlist letters very carefully so you're certain of these important dates. Once you are aware of dates and deadlines, contact your school of choice at the earliest possible time to express your keen interest, and to let them know your child did receive other admission offers. You can ask about potential openings and what the chances are of a space coming up before the deadline. If any additional information

is available since the initial application, such as a new grade report or award, let the school know as this may influence their decision. You may find you have to make a difficult decision. You don't want to lose a space at one of the other schools, so when the deadline arrives, you will need to decide to accept one of the other offers if your child doesn't move off the waitlist. Read the enrollment agreement carefully, once it is signed and submitted with the deposit, you may be responsible for some or all of the tuition, so backing out after enrolling is not favorable for you or the school.



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WHAT IF I ACCEPT AN OFFER, PAY MY DEPOSIT, AND THEN GET ACCEPTED BY MY TOP CHOICE SCHOOL WHERE I WAS WAIT-LISTED?

Once an enrollment agreement is signed and submitted with the typically non-refundable deposit, you have entered into a contract as defined by that particular school's terms and conditions. Schools determine their staffing needs and budgets based on projected enrollment for the coming year. So, when families change their minds or don't fulfill their financial obligation, it puts the school in an unfavorable position. Our best advice in this situation is to be as transparent as possible with the school in explaining your situation. Some schools do have "grace" periods where they do allow a family to withdraw without financial penalty. Reading and knowing the details of the enrollment agreement is imperative to ensure you know your obligations and options should you be faced with this type of difficult situation.



WHAT IF I APPLIED FOR FINANCIAL AID? WHEN WILL I KNOW WHAT I WAS AWARDED?

Many schools release financial aid awards in conjunction with the admission decision so families can make an informed and timely decision on whether or not to enroll. If the financial aid decision comes a few weeks after, be sure to ask the school or schools what your obligations are should the award not be at a level that will allow you to enroll your child. Some schools also offer a financial aid appeal process should the award be less than you were anticipating.

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WHAT IF I'M DENIED THIS YEAR? DOES THAT MEAN I SHOULDN'T BOTHR APPLYING IN THE FUTURE?

Once the dust settles on the enrollment season, contact the school and request a meeting so you can learn what factors led to your child not being admitted. Oftentimes, a short supply of spaces or gender ratios can impact the number of spaces that a school offers. Or, you may find your child did not meet the academic expectations. Once you're armed with feedback and data, the admission staff at that school will help you determine what the chances are for re-applying the following year or at a later date.

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WHAT IF I STILL HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SCHOOL, BUT NO ONE IS ON CAMPUS DURING SPRING BREAK? HOW DO I REACH SOMEONE?

Many schools close down completely during spring break. Check the school's FAQ or New Family webpage for answers to your questions; it's likely you'll find what you need without having to wait until break ends. If you can't find an answer to your questions, simply email your admission staff to request a meeting when their office opens. Upon return from break, it may take a day or two for a response due to the volume of calls and messages. It is a very busy time for admission offices; your patience will be appreciated.



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Navigating the world of Independent Schools can be intimidating but it doesn't have to be. I hope that by sharing my experience with prospective parents, they will feel more at ease.

– Ruth Burke, Associate Head of School, The Episcopal School of Dallas.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RUTH BURKE is the Associate Head of School at The Episcopal School of Dallas, overseeing Enrollment, Communications, Community Culture, and Strategic Initiatives.

Ruth's experience in independent school administration spans 30+ years with 21 in service to ESD, and The Bolles School and University Liggett School. Her roles include administrator, teacher, coach, advisor, and dean. She has served as conference chair for the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS) Admission Conference and led numerous panel discussions and seminars for the Secondary School Admission Test Board (SSATB), National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), and ISAS.

Ruth earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Masters in School Administration from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania.



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