



From Preschool to Grad School: Strategies for Success at Any Level of Competitive Admissions

Kim Palacios

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Luxe Publishing (Oct 1, 2012)

Softcover \$13.95 (279pp)

978-0-9857983-0-7

Many parents and students are willing to jump through the highest hoops that selective private schools set for them. They believe that the benefits of a private education at an exclusive school justify the stressful application process. This is equally true for parents looking at private kindergartens for their children and college students considering law school. In *From Preschool to Grad School: Strategies for Success at Any Level of Competitive Admissions*, Kim Palacios explores the challenges of competitive school application at all levels.

Palacios brings a unique perspective to the inner workings of the competitive admissions process since she has successfully navigated its waters both as a student and as an active member of several admissions committees. Writing in a clear, accessible voice, Palacios decodes and demystifies a process that leaves legions of students and families nervously wringing their hands each year as they try to figure out what those ambiguous application questions mean and how best to answer them.

Answer them authentically, suggests Palacios. This is not a book that gives applicants a leg up on the competition by prescribing a series of “right” answers. The reader won’t find college essay samples or test-taking tips here. There’s no list of enrichment classes for your toddler. Instead, the author’s advice is aimed at helping hopefuls of all ages stand out from the pack of applicants without forsaking their own desires, talents, and preferences. She notes that “be yourself” is one of the most common pieces of advice given to applicants by admissions officers. In a refreshing departure from the familiar formula, Palacios encourages students and families to spend some time thinking deeply about their personal goals before putting pen to paper.

Palacios addresses each element of the application process in detail, from writing memorable essays to gathering the most helpful recommendations and dealing with the dreaded deferrals and waiting lists. Humorous examples spice up what could have been a dry step-by-step instruction manual—for instance, dozens of college applicants have answered the ubiquitous “Who is your hero?” question with “Yoda,” of *Star Wars* fame.

Although Palacios addresses all levels of education, she offers more concrete advice to the high school and college applicant, perhaps only because those applications are the most complex. Nonetheless, parents of elementary school students will benefit from the author’s description of how teachers choose students who best fit their classes.

Palacios’s writing flows logically and elegantly from one topic to the next, making it easy to read this book from cover to cover. Of course, many readers will want to return to certain sections at different times, and for this Palacios provides a detailed table of contents. *From Preschool to Grad School* is a book for parents and young scholars to keep handy as they work their way through the application maze.

SHEILA M. TRASK (April 16, 2013)

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