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How to get your kid into NYC's prestigious 92nd Street Y Nursery School, according to 3 preschool consultants and a parent

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Every year, parents fight to get their children a coveted spot at the 92nd Street Y, a prestigious preschool on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

Once dubbed the "Harvard of Nursery Schools" by New York Magazine, the school attracts celebrities and executives thanks to name-brand recognition and a track record of getting kids into top private elementary schools in the city.

Preschool consultants and one parent who applied to the program shared with Business Insider their tips for making your kid's application stand out.

It's never too early to start networking, especially if it's with influential people at the school or admissions, and point out facts about your family or child that show they'll be an easy "exmissions" candidate.

Paying upfront for tuition or attending stepping stone programs can also help your child's chances of getting in.

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The [92nd Street Y](#) is housed in an unassuming building on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. You might never guess from the outside of this nonprofit cultural and community center that it's home to the preschool countless celebrities — including [Woody Allen](#), [Michael J. Fox](#), [Katie Couric](#), [Connie Chung](#), and [Kevin Kline](#) — have sent their children.

Once dubbed "[the Harvard of Nursery Schools](#)" by [New York Magazine](#), 92nd Street Y has some parents going to great lengths to land their child a spot in their class of 169 kids each year.

[Jack Grubman](#), formerly a top analyst in the investment banking division of Citigroup, took an extreme measure to get his twins into the 92nd Street Y Nursery School back in 2002. As reported in [The New Yorker](#), Grubman sought the help of Citigroup's chief executive, Sanford Weill. Grubman later described the "satisfying transaction" in an email to a friend, where he shared that he'd "raised his rating of stock in AT&T, a potential Citigroup client, as a favor to Weill." Grubman's twins ended up getting in, [New Yorker's Rebecca Mead](#) wrote, while Citigroup pledged to donate a million dollars to the preschool.

"The numbers haven't changed much since the Grubman twins," [Alina Adams](#), author of "[Getting Into NYC Kindergarten](#)" and "[Getting Into NYC High School](#)," told Business Insider about the

preschool's acceptance rate. "If anything, it's gotten harder."

These kinds of transactions aren't uncommon even today. One parent who asked to remain anonymous told Business Insider that her family applied to the 92nd Street Y and didn't get in, calling it a "crazy process."



Alina Adams. Alina Adams

The parent said she spent \$300 an hour for a tutor who wanted to work with her four-year-old on developing better "interview" skills and prep him for entrance tests that might arise when they went to see the 10 elite preschools in NYC that the family applied to — particularly for the 92nd Street Y, which was initially the family's first choice. When the parent and her preschooler walked into the school for a tour, she said she was "bombarded by [Birkin bags](#)."

"What I didn't realize is that the applications were about the parents, *not* the kids," the parent said. "What I didn't know is that applying to these schools is like waging a war or launching a campaign. Favors were called in, letters of support were written."

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how to get in, according to parents and consultants

Adams estimated that top private schools generally receive between 800 and 1,000 applications for each round. Current tuition rates for the 2020-2021 school year range from around **\$30,000 to \$40,000** a year.

According to Adams, the 92nd Street Y's popularity is not about what goes on *inside* the school. There are many top-notch nursery school programs all over the city that can vie with its facilities — which include nine classrooms, a library, two outdoor terraces, and a rooftop playground — and its **program offering** that "emphasizes creative expression, provides opportunities for play and encourages respect for others" mirrors the descriptions of many competitors.

Rather, Adams said that the desirability of the 92nd Street Y comes from name-brand recognition and its track record of impressive "**exmissions**" — in other words, it's ability to get kids into the top private elementary schools in the city.

"I would say that close to 100% of their students get placed in great private or public gifted and talented schools," Adams said, noting that the 92nd Street Y is a feeder program for some of the best NYC elementary schools including Dalton, Trinity, Horace Mann, Collegiate School, Brearley, St. Bernard's, Chapin, and St. Ann's.

Business Insider gathered the best tips from experts for making your kid's application stand out and land them a coveted spot in the program.

It's never too early to network

Adams said that knowing someone with pull is a big plus. "If this person can vouch for you and your child, it will give you a leg up," Adams said. "Knowing fellow parents is good, knowing alum is good, knowing someone on the board of the 92nd Street Y is very good."

"I know a big real estate person that got in that way," added Manhattan-based educational consultant [Wendy Levey](#), who founded a preschool on the Upper East Side and served as director for 45 years. "He knew a big-deal real estate guy on the board."

Cindy Chanin, the LA-based founder of [Rainbow EDU Consulting & Tutoring](#) and a former Ivy admissions rep who's heavily involved with several of New York City's most sought-after private schools, told Business Insider that one client shared that certain families resort to "lobbying support from a higher-up at JP Morgan who is one of many big benefactors of the school."

"The problem with this theory



is that if too many people know the same bigwig, they may not be willing to recommend more than one family or they will recommend several families and the school will not be able/willing to accommodate that," Levey added.



Cindy Chanin. Cindy Chanin

The consultant recommended instead taking other classes at the Y to become a "known quantity" to the teachers and administrators and getting to know the rabbi who's connected with the Y — "Obviously if everyone uses this route his influence will be nil," Levey said.

"One family I know sends regular videos to the rabbi — who also married them and did their baby naming — and in that way he could speak about the little girl's temperament, language, and curiosity," she said. "This rabbi also advocated only for this family for this group."

Another way parents can network is with admissions. This can be particularly important if you find your kid waitlisted.

"It's always very helpful to build a relationship with the admissions

reps and let them know that their school is your number one, and genuinely mean it," Chanin said.

It's rarely too soon to start the process of networking, Adams added. "Some people join the 92nd Street Y and seek out relationships with people in power there before they even have kids," Adams said.

Read more: *Getting your kid into the Ivy League of preschools is notoriously cutthroat. Real parents unpacked their greatest horror stories of applying.*

Being able to pay tuition in full is a plus

Adams also said that "having money helps," as there is a separate admissions pool for those who can pay in full and those who need financial aid — and, according to Adams, the full-paying pool is always bigger.

"Schools never release how and why they select their students, but it's a simple matter of math," Adams said. "The majority of students in a private school pay full; ergo there are more spots for students who can pay full."

"We didn't qualify for financial aid, so it wasn't an option," added the parent who'd applied and didn't get in. "We were in the full-paying

pool. I have always heard that it is easier to get into schools if you don't have to apply for financial aid."

Levey explained that while the need for financial aid has increased dramatically and preschools want to be as generous as possible, they also have budget and endowment limitations. She added that a full-paying family that's also attractive in other ways — for example, by virtue of diversity, having "interesting jobs," being involved with their preschool, and/or placing education at the top of their family's values list — is an added benefit.

"Especially right now when schools have all spent as much as \$1 million and up for COVID changes in plans, staffing, and financial aid, all unbudgeted," Levey said.



Wendy Levey. Wendy Levey

In terms of what types of jobs might be considered interesting to 92nd Street Y admissions, she pointed to having a career that will be perceived as "useful."

"For example, I know a big-time theatre/sports/concert ticket broker that got in when it is unlikely the family would have otherwise,"

Levey said.

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Showcase why your child will be an easy exmissions placement

Another tactic Levey recommended is what she referred to as "trickle-down admissions" — to be able to point out something unique or interesting about your family or child that will make getting the child into kindergarten easier.

"Since the 92nd Street Y and other nursery schools live and die by their exmissions — it's what gives them their desirability — a child who they believe will make an excellent kindergarten placement candidate also becomes an excellent nursery school admissions candidate," Adams added.

One element to highlight is where you as their parent went to college.

"If you went to a top college, that makes your child a legacy there," Adams said. "Which will make them more attractive for high school

admissions, which will make them more attractive for elementary school admissions, and here we are back at pre-K."

However, Levey warned that legacies are no longer a sure bet for entrance to kindergarten.

"Schools want a parent base that is broader than just alums and they want cultural diversity as well, which is less likely to be from their alum base," Levey said. "Trinity, for example, while a large school by NYC standards, does not always take their alums because their kindergarten is smaller than Dalton, for example, and they are committed to taking teachers' children and outside children as well."

Apply to a stepping stone program

All children enrolled in another 92nd Street Y program through the organization's [Parenting Center](#) — a three-day-a-week experience called "[3 Day 2s](#)" — gain an [automatic spot](#) in the 92nd Street Y Nursery School for the following year, according to the program's website. 3 Day 2s offers a "gradual separation experience" for two-year-olds, the website notes.

The application process requires a \$2,000 deposit. If you get in, program fees for the three-afternoons-a-week option cost [\\$16,000](#).

Levey, however, warned that there are a limited number of families in the three-day-a-week program, and stressed that if your child doesn't do well in the program or your family is irritating to the school staff — for example, by "complaining about fire drills, questioning going outside in cold weather, or wanting 20 family members to come to school for a child's in-school birthday party," she said — that can impede admission.

She added that getting into 3 Day 2s is "totally arbitrary."



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application and agreed to pay upfront in December and you could get in," Levey said.

"However, all that being said, if your child is adorable and if your family is value-added in contributing to life at the school in a way the school likes — coming in to read a book, going on a field trip, teaching a special class, being a Shabbat parent helper, working on the auction, attending parenting workshops — then it is helpful to be in that program," Levey said. "It's just not a guarantee."

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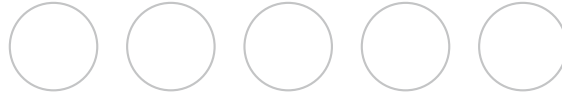


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