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## *Toddlers are subjected to gruelling interviews for KG admission*

By Our Education Correspondent

MUMBAI: Although kindergarten is supposed to be a place for more fun and less learning, getting a seat in a good school is no child's play. Starting with interviews of parents and the child, the admissions procedure sometimes goes on to check even a parent's social standing and the size of his or her purse.

"School authorities expect children to read and write," says Shirin Choksey, principal of Godrej Udayachal school, Vikhroli. A toddler is often subjected to gruelling interviews on the alphabet and numerals, topics that a child is expected to pick up at a later stage. Incidentally, the pre-primary act had done away with kindergarten from formal education, making it a play-school. The act had provided for banning donations and interviews, among other things.

According to Ms Choksey, interviews and the preparations that go into it put a lot of pressure on the child. "It hampers the child's growth, the fact that you are concentrating only in one area, leaving no time for play or emotional and social development," she says. The situation is worse if a child doesn't do well in an interview, as he or she is made to feel inadequate, academicians point out.

Many school authorities, however, prefer to refer to these 'inter-

views as an 'interface'. "Quite often, parents from other localities try to get admission for their children at our school, and they lie about their address. Meeting them is essential to verify the facts," says a trustee of a Catholic school.

Lancy Pinto, manager and trustee of St Anthony School, Saki Naka, says that an interview panel is formed during KG admissions. The panel, among other things, ascertains whether a child is 'ready for school', he says, adding that there is never any question of pressure on the child.

Interviews also double up as an opportunity for the school authorities to screen out candidates. "Many schools receive, say, 800-odd applications against the 240 seats available," points out Dolphy D'Souza, who was an active member of the Parent Teachers' Association at St Anne's School, Malad. In such a situation, interviews serve as an opportunity not only to verify addresses but also to turn away undesired candidates, says a school trustee. "There is no other way for us," he adds.

But as Bhagavanji Raiyani, president for the Forum for Fairness in Education, points out, a child doesn't even understand the meaning of the word 'interview'. And that is the key issue which many city school authorities have not been able to comprehend so far.

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**ADULT ADMISSIONS**