



Calendar

December 12
Webinar: Successful Approaches to Admission Testing

December 19
Special Webinar: Character Skills Snapshot

December 25
Office Closed

January 1
Office Closed

January 9
Webinar: State of the Profession

January 17–19
Professional Member Retreat, Savannah, GA

January 31–February 2
NATSAP Conference

February 7–9
Executive Committee Meeting

February 13
Webinar: Helping College Transfers Thrive

March 13
Webinar: Taking the Stress Out of Test Taking

April 4–6
LD College Tour, MN

April 9–14
Upstate New York Tour

April 22–25
IECA Pre-Conference Tours, TX

Inside Insights

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December 2017/January 2018

A Conference to Remember in Washington, DC

"Where are we now?" Chuck Todd asked in his opening remarks to a sprinkle of laughter from the packed opening session at the IEC Fall Conference in Washington, DC. Todd, moderator of *Meet the Press* and host of *MTP Daily* on MSNBC, was referring, predictably, to the first anniversary of the 2016 presidential election. His up-close view of what's happening in Washington, DC, and his unique perspective on how it affects citizens across the country can be summarized as follows: we are in a period of change; an economic, cultural, and educational divide; a cultural war. He rued the fact that politicians have stopped persuading, instead tending to speak only to those who agree with them and seeking to get them to vote by finding issues that motivate them—push their buttons—to get them out to the polling place. As a result, "we have stopped persuading, so we have stopped compromising," he said.

Aside from the political arena, his remarks were apropos for a conference mind-set, reminding attendees that although we all often retreat into the safety of what we already know and believe, it is not a productive way to conduct our lives and our businesses. It's through continual learning and exposure to new ideas, people, and products



that we grow and achieve success. The IEC Fall Conference with its record-setting attendance was exactly the place to do that as it turns out.

With that invigorating start, the conference barreled full-steam ahead in the new compressed Wednesday to Friday schedule that included crowdsourcing and an updated general session format that featured three speakers instead of one.

For the first time at an IEC conference, participants participated in crowdsourcing. And although it may not have been as dramatic as the new crowdsourcing television show *Wisdom of the Crowd*, participants identified three topics to problem solve at the end of the conference:

- How can we best keep up with changes in admissions?

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President's Letter

Overrule Fear to Make Sound Decisions

During the Master Class at our conference in Washington, DC last month, Dr. Jonathan Dalton spoke about anxiety and its insidious manipulator, fear. "Overrule fear," he stated. "Base decisions on values and priorities."

After leaving the session, I reflected on that statement and its broad application across both my work and my role in decision making within IECA. In my work, if I can help college-bound teens define and affirm their priorities and understand their personal values, they remain focused and directed in the college search process. They might stand up straighter when faced with fear and self-doubt. Even better, when I convince the students' parents to articulate their values and priorities in an honest and consistent way, I run less interference within families and eliminate the second-guessing.

And wouldn't you know it, I had more than one opportunity this past week to practice Dalton's strategy! When Sarah, a senior whose attributes resonated across all seven

pages of her solid application, wanted to add more colleges to her list, I asked her to defend the impulse. (I thought fear of rejection might be the culprit.) We revisited her values and priorities (yes, we keep a written record of those), and soon enough she had her own rational response to her fear.

That experience prompted me to take a long look at some of my own fears: I fear the admission landscape is changing so quickly that I might not be able to keep up. I wonder if I have the competencies to harness the technology that is driving much of our profession. As my business continues to grow, I worry about keeping a meaningful connection to my clients, families, and professional peers.

More broadly, wearing my IECA hat, I wonder whether I will be able to stay connected to the members and our mission as our association continues to grow exponentially. Will the IECA brand be one that I can both rely on and enhance through



Ann Rossbach

my professional work? I thought about Dalton's advice. If I focus on my values and priorities, I should be able to subdue my concerns and make sound decisions about my business. In a similar way, I would like our membership to know that the Board is grounded by our Association's values and priorities as we make decisions to help members address the challenges that they have articulated through surveys, discussions, committees, and IECA posts. Those values, articulated right on our website, are driving many of the current initiatives—now including, overrule fear with sound decision making. That's the answer.

Ann Rossbach, MAT, IECA President

IECA⁺ INSIGHTS

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In Focus

North American Boarding Initiative

2017 Engagement Performance

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**Total Sessions to RFM.com:
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Campaigns

**Email Addresses Collected:
630**

IECA Member Direct
Phone Sessions

**With Parents:
40**

Source: TABS' NABI Initiative

What We Learned at the IECA 2017 Houston College Symposium

By Ibrahim Firat, MBA, IECA (TX)



After approximately nine months of planning, in-person meetings, Zoom conferences, industry trend analysis, Hurricane Harvey interruptions, and go-or-no go decisions, the big day finally arrived and the IECA Houston College Symposium, The Next Generation College Access: Technology and Transparency, got underway. Following are some highlights

from the event and some takeaways.

A social environment is key. The first-ever meet and greet reception at an IECA symposia got college admissions directors and their associates, IECs, and sponsors mingling in a casual setting over delicious food and drinks. Everyone got to exchange ideas without the usual “college-fair” across the table environment, which prompted candid and collaborative discussions.

Metrics matter. In a metrics-packed session Matt Steiner of Compass Prep, one of the two sponsors of the event along with Trinity University, told attendees that the SAT and ACT are now

“closer than ever” in terms of content, but the ACT continues to be leading the way in terms of students’ preference. He added that the SAT subject tests are losing their popularity and informed attendees about test-optional and test-flexible colleges because the numbers have been increasing.

In-depth discussions bear fruit. A panel of college reps moderated by IECA CEO **Mark Sklarow** was structured to address transparency in applications, requirements, preferences, testing, merit aid, financial aid, and more. High-level admissions members from Texas Christian University, Southwestern University, Tulane University, Rice University, Trinity University, University of Texas-Austin, and Texas A&M University provided some key takeaways:

- Demonstrated interest matters
- Small liberal arts colleges, such as Trinity and Southwestern for example, like knowing that an IEC is working with a student
- Fit is just as important from the college’s perspective

continued on page 8

Insights Is Evolving

To ensure that each issue of *Insights* has something for every member, the format is changing a bit. Each issue will contain articles from all the specialty areas, so members should see something specific to their specialties in each issue as well as a broad view of what’s happening across the independent educational consulting field.

Here’s What You Need to Know

- Beginning with the February/March 2018 issue, committees are invited and encouraged to provide one article for each of the six issues (see calendar).
- The featured topic will have the lead or cover article each month.
- Articles do not have to be written by committee members or even IECA members—it’s fine to recruit outside experts to contribute.
- Topics should cover the most relevant and timely information in the field or transcend specialties to address financial matters, business practices, communication, technology, social and behavioral concerns, and so on.
- The Ethics and Inside the IEC office columns will continue
- What We’re Reading and 1 Challenge, 3 Solutions columns still require your input to succeed!

2018 *Insights* Editorial Calendar

February/March Featured topic: Graduate School

Articles due January 8, 2018

April/May Featured topic: Learning Disabilities

Articles due February 26, 2018

June/July Featured topic: Therapeutic Advising

Articles due April 20, 2018

August/September Featured topic: Global Advising

Focus Articles due June 25, 2018

October/November Featured topic: College Admissions Advising

Articles due August 24, 2018

December/January Featured topic: School Admissions Advising

Articles due October 26, 2018

Manuscripts should be approximately 1,000 words and emailed directly to Jan Umphrey, editor, at Insights@IECAonline.com in a Word document with no special formatting. Supplemental resources, such as sidebars, graphs, and the like, are welcome. Each author should provide a photo of him- or herself and a one-sentence biographical note.

Conference Photos



The General Session with Chuck Todd offered a dynamic and thought-provoking start on Wednesday.

The School & College Fair and Therapeutic Info Swap gave IECs and admission reps time to meet and share information.



Ethan 'Essay Guy' Sawyer's breakout was a popular session.



Conference Central was the place to meet!



Dr. Jonathan Dalton conducted a captivating Master Class on anxiety and school refusal.



A few presidential visitors stopped by the Networking Reception.



The member dinner is always a fun way to start the conference.



Roundtable and Community Discussions offered a space to exchange ideas and explore options.



Members toured campuses in Maryland, Virginia, and DC prior to the start of the conference.

- How can we support and improve standards and ethics in therapeutic programs?
- How can we increase awareness and respect for IECs among admission reps? (See M2M for results from the crowdsourcing sessions.)

Another well-received innovation occurred in the closing general session with the ACE (adolescence, consulting, and education) Talks. Featuring three speakers instead of the traditional one, the session moved quickly and engaged participants. First up was Jonathan Dalton, PhD, director for Behavioral Change, who also conducted Wednesday's Master Class. Dalton's insights on school avoidance and the effects of anxiety on students of all ages resonated with the crowd, especially the definition of anxiety shared by one of his patients as "that moment when you know you have leaned too far back in your chair, but have not yet fallen."

Lidia Soto-Harmon, CEO, Girl Scouts Nations Capital, gave attendees much to think about with her engaging discussion of the Girls Scout's Lead Like a G.I.R.L. campaign—be a go-getter, innovator, risk taker, and leader. Sharing the goals of the Raise Your Hand initiative, which was started by Alice, a grade-4 Girl Scout who noticed that boys raised their hands and girls waited, Soto challenged the group to raise their own hands—and to recruit three more girls to do so. She also reminded IECs and school and college reps that the Girls Scout's Gold Award, which requires 80 project hours to achieve, is a worthy accomplishment for an application or essay.

Ending the ACE Talks on a fascinating note, Alan November, an educational technology expert, led participants in understanding how crucial it is to command the web, rather than let it command you. He asserted that too often, "the people in control put up resistance in the face of new technology because they fear losing control." He shared the powerful data engine Wolfram Alpha as an example; some schools have blocked it because it might be abused, but the potential for learning is amazing.

He also reminded us of how algorithms that track our searches and all manner of online behavior shape search results to show us *only what we already believe and want to see*—reminiscent of Chuck Todd's comments. Leading the group in a Google search exercise, he demonstrated how limited our searches can be without the tools to dig a little deeper. Consider this simple nugget: if you are searching for "Iranian hostage crisis, Iranian sources only," you get nothing from Iran. You can use the country code to search "site:ir" or you can consider what the "hostage crisis" was called in Iran. Lightbulbs went on. He advised a cheat sheet: Google "google operators" for a list of search prefixes (www.googleguide.com/advanced_operators_reference.html is one result). "It will change your world," he promised. 🚀

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Top Five Hiring Misconceptions of College Grads

By Jill Tipograph, MBA, IECA (NY)



Despite improved job reports and a stronger economy, college grads are not having an easy time finding the right job. Getting hired today is vastly different for college students and

grads than what it was for their parents 15 or more years ago. In fact, most parents and grads are not aware that it takes college grads, on average, 7.4 months to land a job once they start searching full time (iCIMS 2017). And based on what time of year they start the job search, it can be a longer and more challenging process.

College grads do not magically figure out the job search process. And no one has taught them those skills. When parents drop off their teens as freshmen at college, they know there are resources and advisors for them to turn to. But the landscape for college graduates is different—the infrastructure and support are gone, they feel isolated, and most lack a plan to transition from college to career.



Independent educational consultants (IECs) see firsthand the lack of understanding about the job search process. Both young adults and business leaders look at the process from their own perspectives, which are vastly different. Employers seek skill-based

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Symposium, from page 1


- The word “access” was used more than 50 times
- The holistic review is more important than ever with small liberal arts colleges
- UT-Austin will be moving to the Coalition app next year and Texas A&M began using it last year.

Case studies reveal admission reps’ thinking. In a hands-on session, attendees reviewed eight case studies of applicants with their full profile, essays, and resume. Tables included at least one college rep and eight or nine IECs. Three facilitated 20-minute rotations were completed and the conversations were not about the decision of yes/no/waitlist but rather the “internal discussions” and “behind the scenes” reviews that each college might have regarding that particular applicant. Notable takeaways were:

- Grades matter most
- Minimum wage work and caring for siblings are valued
- Students applying far from home with little or no experience traveling was of concern
- Recommendations can be a tie breaker
- Demonstrated interest continues to matter.

Not all applications are equal. Nancy Griesemer’s (VA) lunch presentation addressed the various application types and how multi-media sharing is transforming the application process for students and IECs alike. She believes it is a “disservice” to students for school districts and even private school counselors to stay with only one familiar application because the requirements in one application might favor a certain kind of student over different requirements (for the same school) in the other application. Knowing the differences in the applications best serves students. She shared examples of how students successfully utilized media uploads in the Coalition and other applications.

Technology continues to expand influence. With 15 minutes to discuss one trend or tech tool that is changing or disrupting their process, Texas Christian University, Tulane University, Southern Methodist University, High Point University, Rice University, and Oklahoma University shared how they use ZeeMee; Coalition Locker; and social media tools, such as Snapchat, on-line interviews, and video essays. For example:

- Tulane University uses Slate as a CRM tool to track demonstrated interest. It is such a powerful tool that some schools, including Tulane and Rice, are using it to give students a demonstrated interest score.
- ZeeMee is undergoing more change to be accessible to kids using their phones. 

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experience and do not understand the mindset of today's entry-level candidates. And the millennial lens of cultural fit and quality of life prevents them from understanding what employers prioritize when hiring young adults today. In other words, there is little intersection of the needs of each group.

To help these groups better understand each other, here are a few of the top hiring misconceptions of college grads for 2017 that were inspired by a recent report my company, Early Stage Careers, published that was based on ongoing conversations with hiring managers, students, grads, and parents; trend tracking; and continuous research.

1. College grads are career ready. Although many college grads feel that they're prepared to join the workforce, most recruiters disagree. According to iCIMS's (2017) job outlook report, grads may have gained the education behind their respective industry in the classroom or during internships, but they still need to build on their hard and soft business skills. College grads need to evaluate the skill sets that align with what employers are looking for and adjust accordingly. This might mean getting certified in a specific skill, such as Microsoft Office, or honing public speaking, data analysis, or social media skills.

2. College students and grads are tech-savvy. Earning a college degree and understanding the ins and outs of basic modern technology don't necessarily make anyone an expert (despite what a grad's older-generation relatives might say).

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This basic competence should not be misconstrued for the level of technical—or other—skills employers are looking for in entry-level candidates. College grads need to learn which specific technical skills are needed for the positions they're interested in.

3. A top university degree with a strong GPA gets you a job.

Graduating from an Ivy league school with a near-perfect GPA may help a college grad stand out on his or her résumé and might even warrant an interview, but it won't necessarily land anyone a job. When it comes to the workforce, skills and what college grads bring to the table in terms of execution matter more than a GPA. What do grads have to offer in terms of experience—internships, freelance gigs, summer work, volunteer opportunities, and involvement in school programs? The ability to demonstrate real-world skills paired with passion for the role they're interviewing for are key.

4. Any internship or job is great. It may seem backwards to need experience to land an entry-level job, but most require 0–2 years of experience. That can be fulfilled through internships. But students shouldn't settle on just any internship: only those that build knowledge and skills are worth their time (and their future employer's). Consider that 70% of recruiters find internships more valuable than a GPA, and more than half (60%) of hiring managers look for candidates who have had internships (iCIMS 2017). Students should focus on opportunities that require initiative, drive, and the chance to build additional skills.

5. Grads are prepared to ace the interview. Job interviews can be scary, especially for a first-timer. Not knowing what to expect, candidates sometimes show up hoping for the best and aren't prepared to sell the interviewer on their relevant experience that makes them a desirable candidate. But first impressions are everything and often prevent the candidate from moving forward. Before college grads show up to an interview, they must do their due diligence—research the position, the company and its culture, and the interviewer. They have to be prepared to speak about anything on their résumé in detail, create relevant and memorable questions for the interviewer, and make sure to silence their phones and all electronic devices before walking in the door. After the interview, they should send a well-written thank-you note within 24 hours. Many recruiters say applicants need to improve in the interview area, and that 74% of entry-level candidates do not send a thank-you note after an interview (iCIMS 2017).

By being more aware of the many complexities of the job search process and misconceptions about entering the workplace, as well as better preparing for specific opportunities and interviews, college students and grads will be able to optimize their early career launch. 🚀

Reference

iCIMS. 2017. *The Class of 2017 Job Outlook Report: What college seniors expect from their first post-grad job search and how this compares to recruiters' expectations for entry-level talent.* www.icims.com/sites/www.icims.com/files/public/Class-of-2017-Survey-Report%20Final_0.pdf

Jill Tipograph, Early Stage Careers, can be reached at jill@earlstagecareers.com.

The School Admissions–IEC Relationship: What Makes It Work Well?

By Krissy Naspo, MA, IECA (CT); Allison Dillon Kimmerle, MA, IECA Associate (MA); and the Schools Committee



Krissy Naspo



Allison Kimmerle

IECs and school admissions officers must have a two-way relationship and trust and rely on one another to be successful and gain the greatest benefits. But when they work together, the students and families benefit the most. The following insights from school-focused IECs and school admission directors reveal that honesty, transparency, and individual relationships are the hallmarks that help all students, families, and schools work well together.

Schools: Why is the independent educational consultant (IEC) relationship important to you?

Peter Curran, Assistant Head of School, Blair Academy: As IECs better understand our school culture and curriculum, they can recommend families to us that would be a

great fit. Without their assistance, some of those families might never find our schools.

Meghan Grover, Director of Admission, Millbrook School: IECs are

essential in bringing great families to our campus, and their insights about students are incredibly helpful when we make decisions about candidates.

Liz Schmitt, Chief Enrollment and Student Affairs Officer, Miss Porter's School: IECs are on the leading edge of communicating current messages about schools, their programming, and their outcomes. They also play an increasingly important role in ongoing parent relationships and student retention once a child enrolls.

Amy Graham, Director of Enrollment Management, Pomfret School: I know that an IEC has spent a considerable amount of time assessing the needs of their clients. When they recommend that a client look at my school, I know there is a high likelihood that he or she could be successful here.

JP Burlington, Director of Admission, Trinity-Pawling School: Once a IEC has had a good experience and establishes a relationship with us, they are likely to continue to refer clients to my school. An ongoing dialogue with IECs is integral to the enrollment success of our office.

IECs: Why is a relationship with schools important?

Lucy Pritzker (NJ): Understanding the mission of a school as it grows

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and changes helps me to refer the right students. My relationship with a school helps me to stay current.

Elizabeth Hall (MA): Being an IECA member lends credibility to my work with schools and creates a much higher level of trust. The schools that I have worked with repeatedly trust my referrals and therefore my instinct.

Krissy Naspo (CT): When we have great relationships with the admissions officers at schools, we learn more about the schools, we help our students find the right fit, and we feel confident that our clients will have a good chance of being successful and happy in their new school.

Christine Southgate (CA): I rely on admissions professionals to be open and direct with me about my client families and individual students. At the heart of that direct communication is my commitment to absolute transparency from my clients and with school admissions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of each of my student applicants.

Sarah Contomichalos (ME): A school relationship is important to me because I can verify any “urban rumors” about a particular school to keep the conversations firmly based on fact, not fiction.

Allison Dillon Kimmerle, Associate member (MA): I don’t want to waste anyone’s time. A brief conversation with admissions may be enough to determine that the visit is worthwhile. If I don’t know a school well, however, I do want to fly my student’s profile by

admissions before I give the family the OK to schedule a visit. I know that if a school encourages a visit, it is never a guarantee of admission.

Schools and IECs: What does the ideal relationship look like?

Sarah: Receiving honest feedback about my client and which part of the application is weighed most heavily is really helpful.

Elizabeth: Maintaining transparency and open communication throughout the admissions season is imperative and encouraging the schools to do the same is when the relationship with schools is at an ideal point.

Christine: The ideal relationship is trust based and rooted in the knowledge that we are both trying to do the best for the student and family.

JP, Trinity-Pawling: We take the time to visit IECs and learn about the clients they work with, and we appreciate when they visit our campus and spend time getting to know our programs and community. It’s a mutual effort to place appropriate students at our school.

Amy, Pomfret: Ideally the relationship is built on trust, transparency, and feedback. If a red flag comes up during the admission or enrollment process, I feel safe connecting with the IEC. In turn, I hope that they will share information about their client’s experiences at my school.

continued on page 12



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Vocal Performance, est. 2010

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Relationship, from page 11

Meghan, Millbrook: We are unified by the same goal: to help the student find the school in which they will thrive. We are honest and candid with each other, and we think long-term about each family and our relationship.

Liz, MPS: The ideal school and IEC relationship is a partnership that involves regular and timely communication and thoughtful decisions—at every juncture—that support the needs of the student.

Schools: What do you currently struggle with in your relationship with IECs?

Liz, MPS: Attracting IECs to campus and addressing any outdated notions about our institutions can be a challenge. But it is crucial to our success. Also, as families increasingly narrow their search to schools closer to home, we need IECs help to break into new markets.

Amy, Pomfret: We struggle with finding the best way to communicate information. Do IECs want to receive materials electronically, such as e-blasts? Do they want office visits or invitations to campus? Also, what is an appropriate thank you: gear, a dinner invitation, or something else?

JP, Trinity-Pawling: We struggle with some IECs' perceptions of who we are and what we have to offer students. Our school has undergone many changes and getting the word out and encouraging IECs to visit us will always be our goal and a challenge.

IECs: What do you struggle with in your relationships with schools?

Allison: Occasionally I have trouble with timely communication with a school. I know the admission folks are busy, but waiting for a response to an email or a voice mail—knowing that the family is also waiting for my feedback or response—is frustrating.

Christine: I currently have a challenge in my geographic area. When there is a new admissions director at a school in the San Francisco Bay area, I have to educate them about how I work with kids and families and that I am not trying to “package” kids for admissions.

Elizabeth: I struggle to stay current with application and essay requirements because almost all schools now require parents to log in and create profiles within their portals to access all that

information. It is not feasible for me to create “fake” profiles within all the schools' admissions portals, nor would I be inclined to do so. I feel that I'm at a disadvantage when I can't access the current year's application. I am also amazed at the number of schools that don't respond to or acknowledge the materials I send regarding a student before the interview.

Krissy: I struggle with schools asking us to guarantee where a 14-year-old student is going to go and what they are going to decide on March 10 or April 15. All I know is what my families tell me. And although I guide them, sometimes they do a 180 and there is nothing I can do about that. I am as honest with a school as I can be. Kids and families don't want to decide until they know what their options are.



Sarah: I have sometimes found admissions officers to be focused on selling the school rather than helping me learn what type of student will thrive there.

Lucy: I work with students who don't always look like the right referral on paper, so sometimes I struggle with the school understanding that I wouldn't want them to consider a student who isn't a good fit. I don't want to waste anyone's time. If I refer someone, it's because I feel the student is a good candidate based on my understanding of the mission of the school and whom it can and cannot support. I am hopeful that admissions officers understand the depths of my diligence to ensure fit. It takes a few referrals to convey that, but I persist!

Schools: What is the value of a school tour to you?

Liz, MPS: School tours and programming for IECs allow schools to showcase their campuses, students, faculty, and distinct advantages



and to dispel myths or outdated notions about their campus climates, programs, or student bodies. There is no better way to understand our communities and cultures than to visit campus.

Meghan, Millbrook: As a IEC you need to internalize the experience of each school to really know it and know whether it's right for your student. School visits are of paramount importance to us!

Amy, Pomfret: I love having IECs on campus and I want to know what areas they need more information about. It gives me confidence that they are aware of what is happening "right now" on my campus and who our students are.

JP, T-P: On school tours, most IECs are visiting us for the first time or haven't visited in several years. A tour gives admissions the opportunity to establish (or reestablish) relationships with those individuals.

Peter, Blair: The school search process encompasses both science and art: the science is the collection of quantifiable data (school size, academic offerings, boarding/day ratio, and so on.), while the art is the school's essence and the feelings you experience as you walk around campus and look at the expressions on student and faculty faces.

IECs: What is the value of a school tour to you?

Allison: There is great value in seeing the kids in action and getting the school's "vibe." A campus visit when the school day is happening all around me allows me to do that. On a school tour, I appreciate student panels, especially when the adults step out of the room and allow the kids the freedom to say what they are feeling about their school, their transition into it, and their experiences. I have never seen such a situation turn into a gripe session, and it has always yielded valuable insight into the type of student who is happy and successful there and why they chose that school in the first place. And I really must get a look at a boy's and a girl's dorm room.

Elizabeth, MPS: The most beneficial tours to me are the ones where I have time alone with the admissions team to ask admissions-oriented questions. I especially like doing this after I have already toured, met with students, and had time with faculty. I also really value touring campus with a student tour guide rather than a member of the admissions team because that chance to speak candidly with students is so insightful.

Krissy: My sense of a school is not something I can develop through a website or written materials. It is a feeling I get from my observations and conversations when I am on campus. Sometimes, it is something I can't really put into words.

Lucy: The opportunity to interact with students is the highlight of my tours and gives me the best sense of who the school serves. Watching faculty and students interact is an important way for me to measure right fit for my clients. Is this a school with a more formal teacher/student relationship? Or is it one where teachers are on a first name basis and play Frisbee with the students on the green. Just like my students, schools often look different in person than on paper.

Christine: My only challenge is that it is tough to get away from my office in the fall and many tours are organized during those months.

Sarah: I always look very carefully at the schedule to see how much time is allowed for lunch, clubs, etc. and like to visit the library and cafeteria.

Schools: what information, documents, or materials are initially important for you to receive from a IEC?

Meghan, Millbrook: Any impressions from the IEC and thoughts on why our school is a good fit are greatly appreciated. If the student has neuropsychological testing or any past behavioral or emotional issues, we like to get that information up front in the process too.

JP, T-P: It is also great to receive a transcript that includes current grades. SSAT, TOEFL, SAT or PSAT scores (whichever applies) are very helpful.

IECs: What materials are helpful for you to receive from a school?

Elizabeth: Increasingly, I prefer materials sent to me electronically. The other information that I find helpful is a copy of the weekly schedule as well as pictures of the campus that I can put into my database. I also like to have information about the financial viability of the school (such as endowment, admissions figures, building and grounds figures, etc.), although not all admissions folks have this or are willing to share it, which is disappointing.

Christine: I rely on the individual school websites and value when a school keeps their information up to date on sites such as TABS and

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School Advising

Relationship, from page 13

Boarding School Review. Although I enjoy having printed school materials in my office, most students and families seem to prefer online information.

Sarah and Allison: I rely heavily on the website and do not use paper at all. If I need a course catalog, or an alumni magazine, or a student handbook, I give a call to admissions.

Final thoughts from schools and IECs:

All school representatives: Schools are happy to connect with IECs via email, phone calls, or even texts.


Peter, Blair: In the application process, IECs provide another voice to advocate and champion for the student.

Sarah: Be as clear about the student profile that does not fit your school as you are about the profile that does.

Lucy: Start your tour with a student profile and basic facts. That sets the stage for the rest of the visit.

Amy, Pomfret: IECA should set up a speed dating arrangement for schools and IECs during conferences!

Elizabeth: I wish we had a team of school and other specialty IECs who worked together at the beginning of the year to put together a master school tour list. This could be done in geographic regions with an IEC and an admission officer working together. Knowing all the school tours well ahead would be really helpful because I budget not just my time but also my financial resources for my travel and touring each year and I could plan more strategically. During the summer months, when we are all somewhat less busy, I wonder if schools would consider emailing an admissions update of new faculty and staff, school news that will impact the coming year, changes to their application, and the like. Too often we find out about things through clients, rather than on our own. Being ahead of the information is super helpful to our work.

Christine: I encourage schools to work with IECA-affiliated IECs over those who do not have strong standards for best practices and ethics. I have encountered representatives of educational consulting companies out here on the West Coast who literally hire local moms to use parking lot gossip as the source for learning about schools and programs. There is nothing that can replace school/IEC relationships and honest and authentic exchanges of information. The value of visiting campuses is indisputable. That is the cornerstone of our membership in IECA. 

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Note: The Schools Committee extends a special thank you to the admissions officers who contributed.



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Starting with Questions: The Promise of Inquiry-Based Learning

By Timothy Breen, PhD, Head of School, The White Mountain School and Allison Letourneau, Associate Head for Enrollment Management, The White Mountain School



Timothy Breen

We live in an incredibly exciting time in education. Over the past decade, research has led to new understandings of the importance of motivation in learning and the role that inquiry-based learning—driven by students' authentic questions—can play in developing enduring understandings. There has also been a focus on identifying the skills and habits that correlate with college success as well as an explosion in access to information and ideas. Anyone with a connection to the Internet can access vast stores of information and interact with others about ideas.



Allison Letourneau

The convergence of those trends allows us to think anew about education. The basic task of learning is, and has always been, inquiry—asking questions and pursuing answers. Real inquiry in schools was rare in

the past, however, because we did not have the resources or a full understanding of its import for future learning. A look at how three different schools are using inquiry to engage students and deepen



their learning provides some insight into how it can be incorporated into the curriculum.

Whitby School (Greenwich, CT), a day school from nursery to grade 8, uses inquiry-based learning to fuel students' motivation and investment in their education. Teachers constantly challenge students to ask questions that begin with *why* or *how* and then encourage them to find the answers. By leveraging children's natural curiosity about the world around them, inquiry-based learning transforms education from something children "have to do" to something they truly enjoy. For example, seventh graders participate in a Genius Hour project. Each week in their English class, they devote one hour to pursuing their own learning opportunities with only one stipulation: that they reflect on and present what they've learned. Through Genius Hour, students can pursue their own wonderings, work collaboratively with peers, and connect their learning to personal interests.

North Country School (Lake Placid, NY), a coed junior boarding and day school embraces project-based teaching as part of its guided discovery approach to learning. Larry Robjent, who has been a science and theatre tech teacher at the school for 18 years, oversees many of the school's inquiry-based projects. "To further investigate topics that they study in a given class, students are asked to identify a real need or to improve a campus area. That way, they begin with a knowledge base, develop further questions, and design projects that serve a purpose. They draw on their creativity in all phases of implementation," explained Robjent. Recent projects have included the construction of a triple windmill in the school's farm pasture and a science field station on a campus wetland that includes more than 30 meters of bridges that give students a responsible way to closely study sensitive ecosystems. Robjent continued, "By continuing to ask questions and determine solutions, students learn to be practical and creative at the same time. It's gratifying to see them share a sense of pride in having met a community need."

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Inquiry-Based, from page 16

At the White Mountain School (Bethlehem, NH), a coed boarding and day school for grades 9–12, all students complete at least one LASR Project before graduation—a semester-long independent study that challenges students to ask their own questions and pursue answers. LASR is an acronym for leadership, arts, service, and research, and those are the different approaches students can take.

To prepare students for this large project, all the science, history and English classes at White Mountain incorporate mini-LASRs into the curriculum. For example, a chemistry class might look like other chemistry classes for the first 10 weeks, then the teacher will say to the students, “Now that you’ve learned some of the central ideas in chemistry, what questions do you have?” Students will then have 2–3 weeks to explore their own questions, such as, What is the chemistry of candy-making? or What is the chemistry behind how ceramic glazes work?

Helping students learn to ask great questions and pursue them vigorously prepares them well for college because they develop critical thinking skills, research skills, communication skills, and organizational skills. All traits that align with the research on college success. As we reviewed that research, we also visited academic and admission leaders at colleges and universities. When we shared the results of our inquiry-based learning projects that described those skills and habits, the Dean of Admission at Wellesley College

noted that the habits listed—curiosity, reflection, collaboration, and persistence—were just what their admission readers were trained to look for. And the Director of Admission at MIT noted a parallel in their work and ours: MIT has just added an optional research portfolio supplement to their application process. More and more colleges are recognizing that students who are effective at learning through true inquiry are students who have the skills and habits to thrive in college.

“In times of change, learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists,” Eric Hoffer wrote in *Reflections on the Human Condition* (1973, Harper & Row). Historically, schooling in the United States has focused on helping students become “learned”—exposing them to facts, concepts, and ideas so that they develop an understanding of our intellectual heritage. And of course, we educators still do this; but we know now that it’s not enough to prepare for our changing world. Students must become true “learners.” School today cannot be about memorization and recall of facts and ideas; it must be about inquiry and real engagement with our intellectual heritage. In that way, we help our students on their way toward interacting with the world in ways that will shape it into a better place. 🧑🏫

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Allison LeTourneau can be reached at allison.letourneau@whitemountain.org



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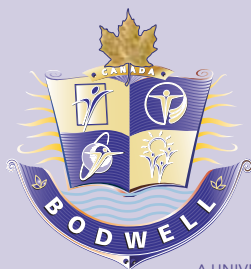
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Careful Assessment Leads to Proper Placement for Frustrated Learners

By Aria Carter, MEd, Director of Admissions, The Greenwood School



I am often asked about admissions work in LD boarding schools for the frustrated learner. What is getting in the way of a student finding success in school? How do you know if what you are seeing is organic vs. situational or emotional vs. academic, and what can you do to tease it apart? Often, an honest, open dialogue between the admissions staff,

parents, and the independent educational consultant can reveal the best placement for students.

The Many Sides of Tommy

Tommy is a 14-year-old in a fast-paced school system. **His parents wrote** that Tommy is an optimistic boy who is friendly, kind, and a bit naïve. At home, they say, Tommy is increasingly irritable and tension in the home has intensified. Academically, “he struggles with the English language because of his difficulties in reading, spelling, and writing. Otherwise, he is talented in numbers, logical thinking, music, and the arts. Socially, he sometimes does not like to participate in group discussions and tends to keep quiet, and he never makes friends easily. He almost always prefers to be alone.”

Tommy’s parents are anxious to know what is going on, and their concerns are validated by a psychoeducational assessment. **The evaluator wrote:** “Tommy is a loner and teenagers are increasingly feeling threatened by him; he often ignores peers when they greet him and is seen lashing out at classmates; often bullies others; refuses to join group activities, etc.” Academically, Tommy cannot decode words with more than one syllable, makes careless mistakes, struggles with phonological and orthographic processing, and has limited working memory and a depressed processing speed to name a few. According to the testing, however, Tommy’s emotional regulation challenges come to the surface as his primary difficulty.

And what does Tommy think about all of this? **Tommy stated** that his teachers “look for the bad things that I do,” and “They get mad at me for no reason.” Once a happy kid, Tommy now has elevated areas of depression, and he is beginning to show more serious signs of withdrawal.

An IEC’s Assessment

As Tommy’s struggles continued, an independent educational consultant (IEC) was hired to find a school for Tommy that would best address his needs. When she called me, she explained that she had a great conversation with a sweet, intelligent, young boy—Tommy. She said that he was currently in a classroom of 60 students and was always getting into trouble. He was “disruptive in class, excessively questioned the teachers, called out, moved around the room, and avoided work.” She described Tommy as a fish out of water who was finding little to no success in his current environment.



We talked about all the struggles that Tommy was experiencing and tried to determine the root cause: were those struggles organic or situational, emotional or academic? After many conversations, a therapeutic program within a gentle milieu was chosen as the place for Tommy to address his challenges. During his time in the program, Tommy demonstrated significant emotional growth and self-awareness. He was described as “respectful with adults, very tolerant of his peers, holds no resentment, and likes to learn from others. Tommy has no problem following the rules and is so creative when given opportunities to show his talents.” And the praise continued.


The Right Placement

LD schools are typically not designed to work with students who have significant therapeutic needs, so it can be challenging to

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consider a student who appears to have presenting issues that are not primarily academic based. It does not always happen that way, but in Tommy's case, it was truly the environment that was the root of his behavioral struggles—getting in the way of his success and masking his incredible potential. Following his successful completion of the therapeutic program, Tommy enrolled at Greenwood so that he could address his primary academic needs and complex profile. Now, Tommy is described as “a deep thinker, perfectionist, a comedian with a wonderful and sarcastic sense humor,” and even better, “there are no signs of emotional or behavioral difficulties.” In fact, Tommy is often described by his peers as the “best roommate ever.”

The relationship that a school has with an IEC is one of the most important pieces of the admissions process. School advising is most successful when there is an open and honest conversation, fueled by a mutual desire to find the best placement for the student. In Tommy's case, nobody knew how he would respond to a therapeutic environment. But through many phone calls, open conversations, and a truly collaborative process, Tommy's challenges were identified and supported, and he was finally given the opportunity to maximize his potential and feel good about himself. 

Aria Carter can be reached at acarter@greenwood.org.

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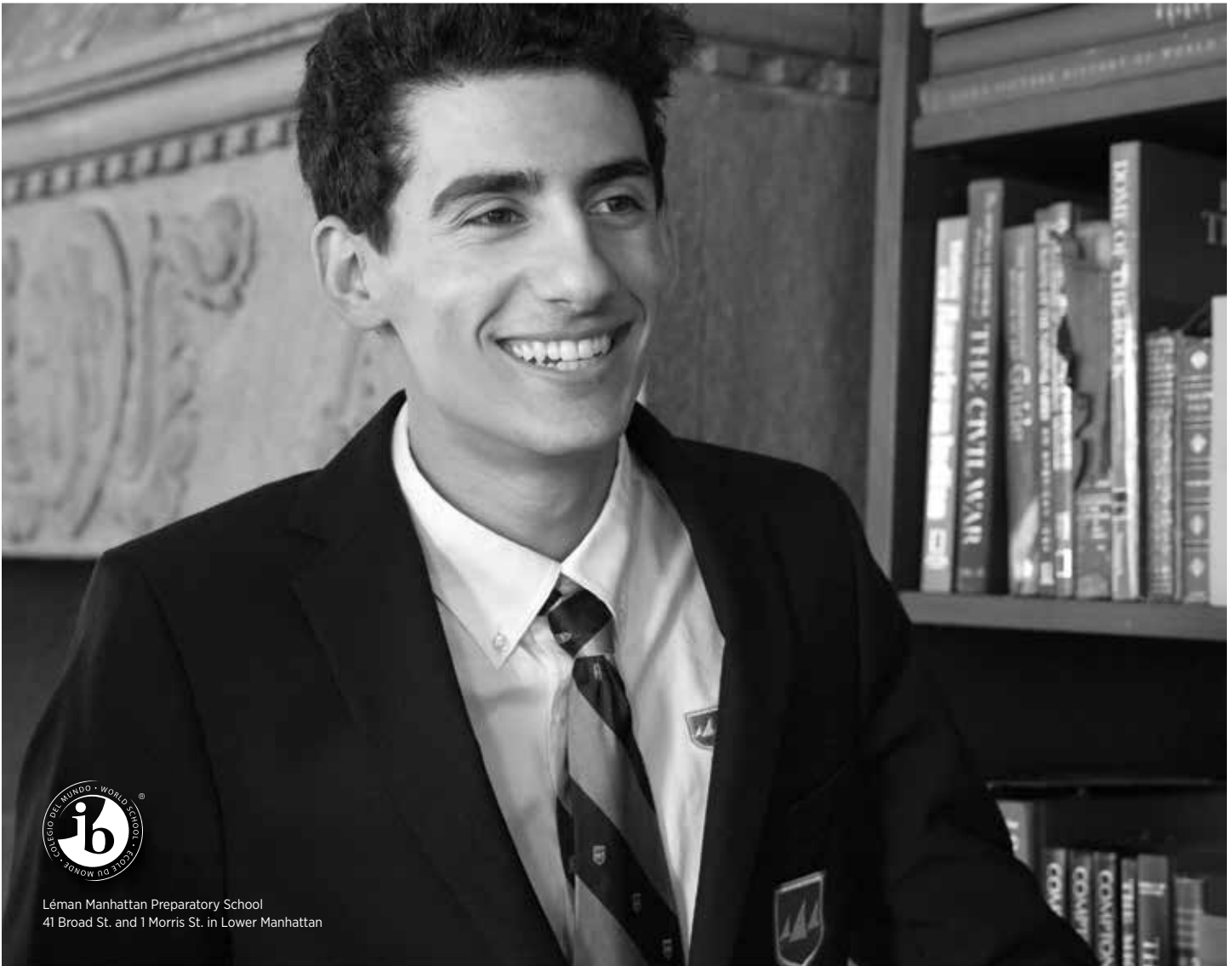
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Decoding Transcripts from China, Russia, and the United Kingdom

By Sarah Contomichalos IECA (ME), Jack Cao, IECA (China), and Elizabeth Cashel, IECA Associate (NY)



Sarah Contomichalos

International students are an important population for US high schools. Although admissions officers are very aware of the positives this population brings to their schools, it can be challenging to understand and correctly interpret their credentials. When working with the British, Chinese, and Russian elementary and high school national curriculums, for example, it is necessary to understand the grading systems, external exams, how to differentiate the level of the student within each system, and other cultural considerations. Independent educational consultants (IECs) are key to helping schools understand how to read international students' qualifications.



Jack Cao

United Kingdom

In the British system, the arts, including music and drama, are considered an important component of a student's education in addition to the traditional academic subjects and are required up until year 10. School consists of 13 years and the calendar age cut off is August 25. Britain has a robust boarding school tradition that may begin as early as age six or seven. Students start in reception at age four and begin year one at age five. Junior school

consists of reception through year 6. Senior school consists of years 7 to 13. External testing may be introduced as early as year 9 (US grade 8) in English, math, and science. Grades and half-term grades are given, and grading up until the International Diploma Program is done using A–F with effort noted on a scale of 1–7.

The middle school curriculum consists of years 7 to 11 (US grades 6–10) and is designed to be a sound preparation for the International Baccalaureate or AS & A levels offered in years 12 and 13 (US grades 11–12). In years 10 and 11 (US grades 9–10), students prepare for examinations set by the Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) for international British schools or GCSEs for UK students. Those examinations are specifically designed to test a wide range of skills in addition to those normally associated with written examinations, such as field work in geography, practical work in science, and oral communication in languages. US high schools should request copies of any external testing as part of the application as well as school transcripts. Many colleges ask for copies of the IGCSE or GCSE certificates as part of the application process.

China

In China, the middle school education (grades 7–9) is the final part of the nine-year compulsory education (grades 1–9). Most of the US

boarding school Chinese applicants submit applications when they are in MS. The three-year MS curriculum is standard nationwide and required subjects are Chinese, mathematics, English, history, ideology and morality, information technology, and PE for three years; biology, geography and music in grades 7–8; physics in grades 8–9; one year of fine arts in grade 7; and chemistry in grade 9. The MS education is driven by *Zhongkao*, a three-day strict high school entrance exam taken in June of grade 9 at the provincial level. The subjects tested vary by provinces. In Beijing and Shanghai, students sit for Chinese, mathematics, English, history, physics, chemistry, and PE. Each high school sets its own minimum *Zhongkao* scores to admit students. The more prestigious the school, the higher its cut-off score. Admission is based solely on the student's exam grade. This undermines the importance of the learning process that is recorded by grades. In China, the students are graded twice each semester on the basis of mid-term and final exams, which count for 40% and 60% respectively in the overall semester grade stated in the transcript. Homework does not count in the grading system.

Many schools implement strict transcript policies to protect their academic integrity, although some are still flexible regarding transcripts, which means the grades may be enhanced as the result of parental pressure. US boarding schools—based on years of experience reviewing Chinese applications—do not rely that much on Chinese transcripts because they lack confidence in the transcripts' accuracy. Instead, they rely more heavily on standardized test scores, such as SSAT or TOEFL, and the campus or Skype interviews or the third-party interviews offered by Vericant or InitialView. The *Zhongkao* scores are reliable but are not available until the end of grade 9. If the Chinese applicants apply to repeat grade 10, they should be encouraged to submit their *Zhongkao* scores because they accurately reflect their academic level.

Russia

Education in the Russian Federation is predominately provided by the state and is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Science. General education in Russia has an 11-grade system comprising three stages: primary (grades 1–4), lower secondary (grades 5–9), and upper secondary (grades 10–11). Basic education curricula typically stipulate 34 weeks of study with 27–38 hours per week. The school year extends from September 1 to the end of May and is divided into four terms or two semesters, depending on the school. Upon completion of lower secondary school students take the State Final Appraisal exam and are awarded the certificate of basic general education, which entitles a student to complete secondary education or move to a vocational education track. After completing upper school, students must pass a state exam to be awarded a Certificate of Complete Secondary Education (ATTESTAT).

The Ministry of Education establishes the minimum content of education and the workload of the students. The state prescribes a

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basic curriculum of compulsory fields of study: humanities with a special emphasis on Russian language, literature, social sciences, and physical education; sciences with emphasis on mathematics; or technology. Each school designs its own curriculum that is based on that basic standard. There are specialized schools that offer advanced programs in select disciplines, such as mathematics, physics, foreign languages, and humanities. Those elite academic schools require a special exam and interview and are frequently called gymnasiums, colleges, or lyceums. In addition, students who are interested in music, art, or sports attend specialized schools after their academic school day. Upon completion of middle school, the ninth year of schooling, some students attend a technical or vocational college or a highly competitive music or art college. These four-year colleges (called *uchilishche*) are the equivalent of the last two years of high school and the first two years of college in the United States.

The Russian grading system is based on a five-point scale with 1 rarely used. Both 1 and 2 are equal to failing and do not appear on student records. A grade of 5 is equivalent to excellent or an A, a 4 is equivalent to good or B, and a 3 is equivalent to satisfactory or C. If students receive a 1 or 2, they must retake the exam; two attempts are allowed. GPA is computed using the five-point scale.

Obtaining transcripts for Russian students can be challenging because sending students' transcripts to international schools is not standard procedure in Russian schools. The most common documents available are:

- ATTESTAT—awarded for passing the Unified State Exam
- Excerpt from examination grade book—a copy of the grade book that lists all courses taken each semester, including the number of academic hours and grades received.

Conclusion

Reviewing international students' applications begins with understanding the country's curriculum and grading system. Equally important is recognizing the differences among schools within each country as well as the cultural norms that influence outcomes. To evaluate students from these systems, IECs and admissions officers should request any available external exam results as well as a copy of the school profile that the high school is providing as part of the university admissions process. It is also important to note that most educational systems focus on leaving exams, which minimize the relevance of semester and yearly grades and transcripts. 🧑🏫

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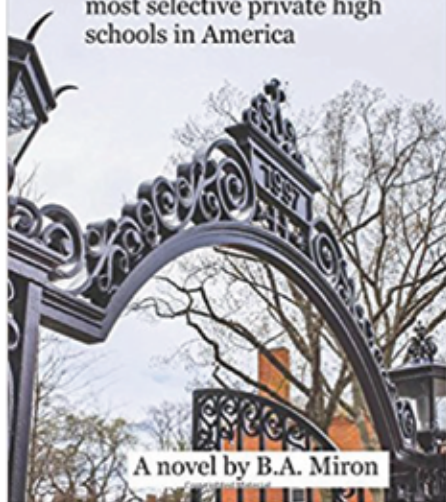


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From LD to 2E to Diversity and Infinite Possibilities

By Dr. Michael Riendeau, Assistant Headmaster for Academic Affairs at Eagle Hill School



As educators and educational consultants, we are all familiar with the changing landscape of educational terminology and the ubiquitous acronyms (LD, ADHD, 2E, and so on) that tend to become the signposts in that landscape. It can be interesting and sometimes useful to follow the trajectory of that terminology and the orientation toward students and their

learning needs that it signals. The idea that some students might usefully be described as “twice exceptional” or 2E began to emerge in educational literature about 30 years ago. Over the decades since its first use, the terminology has been variously defined and much debated, and I don’t plan to resolve any of the existing differences of opinion here. I will, however, offer a conceptual definition that might help us think through programming for our students. Conceptually, describing a student as twice exceptional or 2E indicates that we’ve been surprised

twice by her performance. Thirty years ago, we very often first identified a situation of unexpected underachievement (an honest and defensible definition of *learning disability* I think) and then sometime later were surprised again by unexpected talents. Key to those formulations is the role of our expectations—and the source of those expectations.

Expectations

First, let’s think about how we handle the 2E situation. Very often, we are on solid ground developing or finding programming for students who experience “unexpected underachievement”—these are special education and learning disabilities programs. There is a wide variety of such programs serving, presumably, a wide variety of so-called learning disabled students. Individual programs or schools, especially at the secondary level, often target a relatively narrowly defined group of students and tend to operate on the principle that the needs of a narrowly defined group of students will also be narrowly defined.

The same is true of our historic approach to “gifted” students—those who demonstrate unexpected talents or achievements. By and large, we have considered those students somehow meaningfully different from most students and, perhaps, especially different from those identified as learning disabled.

Our approach is consistent in that we have tended to develop instruction and instructional programs that we believe match the type of students with whom we are working. In beginning to recognize 2E students and their needs, we question the unitary nature of the educational categories on which we have depended. We’ve noticed that students can need unusual support in some ways and demonstrate unusually impressive performance in others. In short, we have recognized what Todd Rose (2017) terms the “jaggedness principle” in his book *The End of Average* (p. 82).

The jaggedness principle operates on two criteria. To be considered jagged, a quality must be both complex—that is, multidimensional—and its multiple dimensions must be only weakly related. Consider Rose’s example of human size and the US Air Force’s misguided attempt to design a cockpit for the average pilot. Size is a multi-dimensional characteristic (think height, weight, limb length, etc.) and



its dimensions are largely independent of one another. I can be large by being tall and thin or short and muscular. The Air Force learned, at great expense, that a cockpit designed for the average pilot was just right for no one. It turns out that the same is true of intellectual characteristics and academic skills, and Rose suggests that all human profiles are jagged profiles that include qualities that might be unexpected if we expect the average.

A Learning Diversity Approach

There are a couple of lessons for educators and independent educational consultants (IECs) here, particularly with respect to 2E students. First, we should recognize that all students are 2E students

continued on page 28



Learning doesn't just happen in the classroom!

Little Keswick School is a nonprofit therapeutic special education boarding school that serves boys 9–15 years old with social/emotional challenges and learning disabilities. The small school setting provides warm and nurturing relationships, intensive clinical interventions, and individualized education for 35 boys in a highly structured environment that ensures successful development.

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LD to 2E, from page 27

if we look carefully enough. In fact, I would suggest that we are all ∞E (infinitely exceptional) individuals—the range of our exceptional qualities is unbounded except by our tendency to simplify complex situations: our tendency to take a one-dimensional look at a multi-dimensional individual. For that reason, I suggest that we try to adopt a learning diversity approach, rather than a learning disability or even a 2E approach. A learning diversity approach is predicated on the inevitability of human diversity, the recognition that differences among students are not best understood as expressions of unfortunate dysfunction but as the inevitable jaggedness of human profiles. (See *How Schools Created Learning Disabilities: And What They Can Do About It* at <http://info.eaglehill.school/learning-disabilities-white-paper-information>.)

One way to recognize the needs of 2E or ∞E students is to consider the opportunities for academic and intellectual challenge that, given outdated thinking about human potential, we may not have considered for students with so-called learning disabilities. Among those options is the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme. The IB organization was among the first to adopt the language, principles, and practices of learning diversity and it “supports the premise that schools should be organized in such a way that student diversity of all kinds can be included as a resource, seeing individual differences not as problems to be fixed, but as opportunities for enriched learning” (International Baccalaureate, 2010, p. 2).

The inquiry model of IB programming and the opportunity to take a deeper dive into relatively fewer subjects provide exceptional opportunities for students who have traditionally struggled with a variety of academic tasks. The collaborative nature of many project-oriented tasks and the emphasis on interdisciplinary and innovative approaches are also welcome aspects of the IB Diploma Programme for many so-called 2E students. As we strive to adopt an ∞E approach to human potential, we will undoubtedly recognize new worlds of possibility for students who have previously found mostly frustration and disappointment in school contexts. 🦅

References

- International Baccalaureate. 2010. *Learning diversity in the International Baccalaureate programmes: Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes*. Cardiff: International Baccalaureate.
- Rose, Todd. 2017. *The End of Average: How We Succeed in a World That Values Sameness*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Dr. Michael Riendeau can be reached at www.eaglehill.school.*



Make Your Own Luck

By Paul Vespe, MA CAS, IECA Associate (CT)



Just over one year ago I attended IECA's Summer Training Institute (STI) to garner important knowledge in the field of independent educational consulting. I spent a good portion of the full-group time sitting silently on the side of a lecture hall at Swarthmore College wondering just what I had gotten myself into. I was quiet,

reserved, and took copious notes as I listened to my contemporaries speak passionately about their profession. It did not take long for me to be smitten; it was the beginning of what would be my own small business.

My goals were centered on helping students and families and having a sustainable livelihood. Easy to formulate, but tougher to implement. I waived for a long time between being confident that I could be successful and wondering what on earth I was doing and whether independent educational consulting was a viable and noble career path.

Although I had researched the field of independent educational consulting before becoming a member of IECA, I had zero campus visits at that point. Drawing on my knowledge of special education, teaching, classrooms, assessment, executive functions, and communications gave me a little ease, not complete confidence but a sense of comfort. My priority was to visit some schools. I had no idea how to go about scheduling a school visit. I asked a few Professional members and was told "you just call"—perhaps I was overthinking things a little. I also didn't know how to dress for a visit. Typically, I look nice, but I learned the hard way to be aware of the surroundings and the type of program or school when I ruined a pair of shoes during my first Wilderness program visit.

I was hooked. I started showing up for campus visits, conferences, tours, dinners, lunches, speaking events, and so on. My goals shifted again to where I wanted to be recognized by more and more professionals with each passing event. Nowhere was my main goal to find 20 families to work with in my first year. My idea of success was based on being recognized, not on profit. Mind you, I prepared financially before setting out on this venture, which afforded me the flexibility to visit schools and programs with little hindrance on my current lifestyle. The more I ventured out, the better IEC I became. I asked better questions, and I assessed critically.

As a former teacher, I pictured every one of my former students in my head as I walked a school's halls, wondering if I could place a student in specific schools with confidence. My assurance grew—

a testament to the school officials and the programs I visited—and after almost a year of travel and conferences, I set off completely on my own and formed my own company. I hemmed and hawed about the prospect of leaving my previous job and great colleagues to attempt success in a new field that had such depth and required such commitment. I sat in my car breathing heavily into a paper bag before I put my letter of resignation on top of my notebook and walked into my office.



I went home that night, put my hands in my face, and sat in silence, wondering if I made the right decision. I did. Being an IEC became my fulltime profession. I incorporated help from friends, family, coworkers, and others to guide me through some tough decisions. I waited for someone, anyone, to say no, but no one did. I was met with positive feedback and well wishes. There was also crucial advice to make sure I was as prepared as possible. There are always changes to be made, but the foundation was in place to be a small business owner.

I am privileged to be in the position I am. Although the word *independent* is in IECA, it does not mean that you are alone, actually quite the opposite. Reach out to colleagues, ask all your questions, trust yourself, have a team, and be proactive. Go out, see schools and programs, meet your colleagues, and increase your knowledge base—and while you are doing that you will make your own luck.

Paul Vespe, PSV Learning, can be reached at paul.vespe@psvlearning.com.

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Regional Groups

Philadelphia



The Greater Philadelphia regional group has had a very busy fall. So far, we have met with representatives from Landmark College, St. Andrews University, SUNY Binghamton, Trinity University, Monmouth University, Ithaca College, Knox College, Boston College, SCAD, and Kalamazoo College. We are planning more activities and welcome new members. For more information about this group, contact Joanne LaSpina at joanne@mycollegehelper.com.

Long Island



The Long Island regional group visited SUNY Maritime College on October 26. Pictured are Lucy Wang, Jan Esposito, and Tony Esposito with tour guides Lilly, Brendan, and Will. Not pictured are Doretta Katzter Goldberg and Jodi Nadler. For more information about this group, contact Jodi Nadler at jlnad225@yahoo.com.

New Jersey



In November, the New Jersey regional group lunch was held at Boulevard 572 Restaurant with Sarah Zoll, the New Jersey rep from Purdue University. Pictured first row (l to r) are Matthew Weingarten; Laurie Weingarten; Carolyn Mulligan; Sarah Zoll, Assistant Director; Jill Siegel; and Abbie Rabin. Second row: Cynthia Chomiak, Carole Kraemer, Julissa Germosen. Third row: Lynne Rosenfeld, Melanie Talesnick, Traacy Hobson. Fourth row: Tony Carnahan and Pam Kwartler. For more information about this group, contact Carolyn Mulligan at insidersnetwork@comcast.net.

New England



On October 4, Allison Matlack hosted 10 members of the New England regional group at her home to meet with Dave Frohman from Ohio Wesleyan University. For more information about this group, contact Sally McGinty at sarahemcginty@gmail.com.

Send your group news to *Insights* at Insights@IECAonline.com

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Why I Belong

Community and Support

By Jean Louis, IECA Associate (NY)



Four years ago, like many of my colleagues who started in this business, I decided to leave a career as a college administrator to become an independent educational consultant (IEC). While pondering my next move, I felt like it was a risky decision because it was a career change. The challenge was different in many aspects from any of the previous challenges I had faced in my

job. The uncertainty had me very concerned about which steps would help me succeed in my new endeavor. After exploring my options, I decided to join IECA. Soon after joining, my worries started to diminish because of the Association's support for its members. It felt as though I had become part of a community.

Here are a few reasons why I belong to IECA:

- IECA offers a welcoming environment to all members.
- Networking opportunities are plentiful because there are various events being organized all year round.
- IECA facilitates strong support from colleagues. Through the

TalkList, IECs can get answers to any unanswered questions from clients. Because the Association has members globally, any client's question you may need help with will likely be answered in less than 30 minutes (I am not exaggerating). And, it happens at odd hours too because members are operating in different time zones.

- Members have opportunities to collaborate with colleagues from across the globe regarding subjects of interest.
- Training through webinars and other events helps me to stay abreast of current issues in the field.
- At conferences members get to spend several days together while sharing ideas regarding best practices and other important topics related to the profession.
- IECA enables the engagement of its members through volunteer positions within the association.
- The association offers a platform for all members to receive assistance with various types of problems they may face in their daily business.

Jean Louis, Louis Educational Consulting, can be reached at louisedconsulting@gmail.com.

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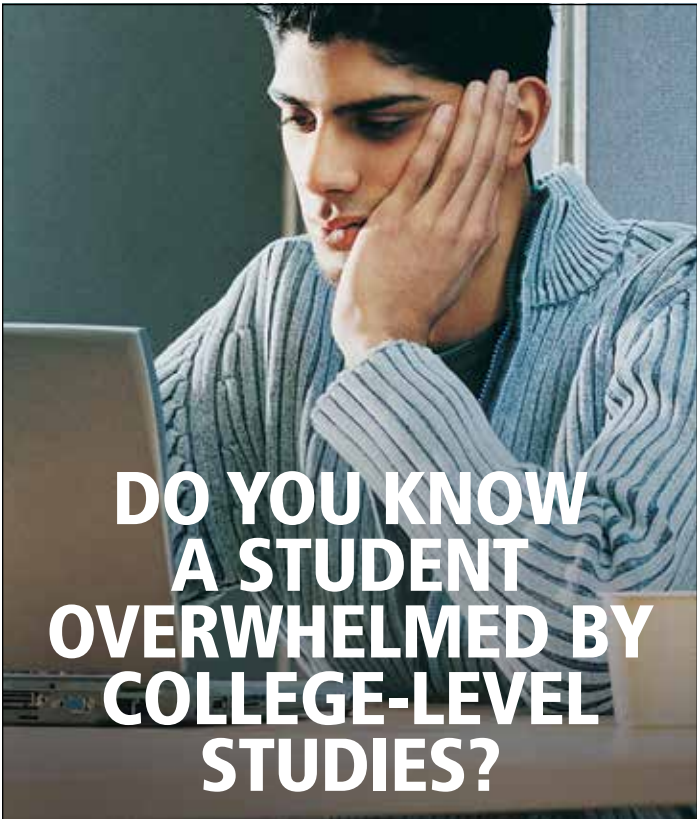
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Katz Award Honors Pro Bono Work of Group

The Irvin W. Katz Service Award stayed consistent with the spirit of change and innovation in the air at the IECA Fall Conference by honoring a group of 35 IECs for their work with The Possibility Project (TPP), rather than one individual as is customary. **Marilyn Emerson** (NY), founder of the initiative with TPP, spoke for the group, thanking the IECA Foundation for making a change so all the volunteers could be recognized along with her. "Marilyn is all about inclusivity," **Betsy Donnelly** (GA), said as she presented the award to her colleague.



The Possibility Project (TPP) uses the performing arts and community actions to help teenagers build relationships across differences, resolve conflicts with violence, take responsibility for others, and lead. The partnership with Emerson provides a team of independent educational consultants (IECs) to provide pro bono, one-on-one college counseling to 11th and 12th graders and their parents each year. In addition, Emerson and her colleagues plan and lead a college tour to upstate NY campuses for all 11th and some 12th grade students. The IECA Foundation sponsors the trip.

For more information about The Possibility Project, visit www.the-possibility-project.org.



On the Road



◀ CEO **Mark Sklarow** was in Houston, TX, for IECA's 2017 College Symposium. He moderated a panel discussion, *Looking Behind the Admission Office*, which emphasized transparency and the impact of technology. The panel included the vice president, dean, and directors of admission from Texas Christian University, Tulane University, Texas A&M, University of Texas–Austin, Southwestern, Trinity University, and Rice University. Texas IECA members **Ibrahim Firat** and **Susan Dabbar** chaired the symposium. (See page 3 for a review of the symposium.)

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In the News

Laurie Kopp Weingarten was featured in “Are You First Gen? Depends on Who’s Asking” in the *New York Times* on November 5.

Jill Madenberg was quoted in “College Search Quandry: There’s an App for That” in the *Wall Street Journal* on September 19 and in “What Vanderbilt and Northwestern and Other Elite Colleges Don’t Say About Acceptance Rates,” in the *Washington Post* on October 7.

Mark Sklarow, IECA CEO was quoted in “When Application Essay ‘Help’ Crosses a Line” in *Inside Higher Ed* on October 16. His article “How an Education Consultant Can Help Find Your Right-Fit School” was published in the *Atlanta Business Chronicle* on October 29.

“Applying to College Test Optional” by **Janet Rosier** was published in the *Norwalk Hour* on September 10.

Dana Stahl’s (NY) article “Helping English Language Learning Students Who Are Learning Disabled” was published on October 11 in *TAP into Mahopac*.

Katelyn Klapper (MA) was profiled in “Meet Katelyn Klapper of College Options in Sudbury” for *BostonVoyager* magazine’s Boston’s Most Inspiring Stories feature section.

“Five Steps to a Winning College Application” by **Stephanie Klein Wassink** (CT) was published in the *Jewish Link* on September 28.

“The College Scene: What Do You Know?” by **Mark L. Fisher** appeared in the *Atlanta Jewish Times* on September 28.

Nancy Griesemer was quoted in “Penn Welcomes the Coalition App—an Admissions Platform Designed to Increase Accessibility” in the *Daily Pennsylvanian* on October 1.

The *Greenfield Recorder* announced **Martha Seretta’s** (MA) acceptance as an IECA Associate member on August 24.

Catherine Marrs (TX) was interviewed September 18 by a reporter from local Channel 8 news regarding the change in the University of Texas’s top 7% rule starting in fall 2019.



Initiatives

On September 24, **Jeff Levy** (CA) presented “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About College Costs but Didn’t Know Who to Ask” to members of the Hollywood entertainment unions representing directors, editors, gaffers, grips, and cinematographers. On October 7, Levy led a workshop on college affordability and financial aid at the third annual American Indian College & Career Expo at the Pechanga Indian Reservation in Temecula, CA.

Elizabeth Stone (CA) organized a free one-stop college application resource day on October 29 to support students and families affected by the Santa Rosa/Napa fire. Support included help with filing FAFSA, an ACT/SAT workshop, information about college’s flexible policies, extensions, and fee waivers, and more. More than 20 IECs who could not attend offered their services by phone or Skype.

Mary Spiegel (CT) returned to the Fairfield (CT) Library on October 17 to present the popular program “Mapping Your Road to College” for seniors and their families.

Jill Madenberg, Associate member (NY), and her daughter, Amanda, spoke about college admissions at Sid Jacobson JCC on October 10.

Jennifer W. Taylor (CA) was the featured speaker for the Menlo Park Kiwanis Club on October 17.

Susan Groden (FL) presented The College Application Process through a college planning webinar with Tobias Financial Advisors on June 14th.

Elizabeth Levine (NY) presented a program on college admissions at the Cornwall (NY) Public Library on September 27.



▲ **Camille Bertram** (CT) was the recipient of the 2017 Everett E. Gourley Award presented by the Enrollment Management Association on September 18. She is pictured with Tom Southworth of Southworth Educational Consulting, LLC, and executive director and CEO Heather Hoerle (right).

Melinda B. Kopp (CA) presented “Investing in Your Children,” hosted by Pelorus Capital Management, in Irvine, CA on May 3.

Kavita Mehta’s (Mumbai, India) company, The Red Pen, was appointed to provide in-house counseling for D Y Patil International School, Worli in September.

Campus Visits

Fall Tour in the Berkshires



A contingent of IECA members visited Buxton, Berkshire, Miss Hall's, and Bard Academy and Bard College at Simon's Rock. Pictured are Rachel Carter, associate director of admissions, North Country School; Lee Carey, Associate (MA); Susan Miltner (CA); Bernd Foecking, headmaster, Hampshire Country School; Kris Gernert-Dott, director of admissions, Woodland Hill Montessori School; Allison Kimmerle, Associate (NH); Bill Morse (CT); Paul Vespe, Associate (CT); Linda Lavin (NY); Margo Cardner, senior recruitment officer, Buxton School; Kang Chu (PA).

Fab Five Tour



IECA Consultants Elizabeth Hall (MA & NH), Bill Dingleline (SC) and Lee Carey, Associate member (MA), attended a dinner hosted by the Directors of Admissions and Heads of Schools from the Fab Five School Tour (October 29-31): Dublin School, Putney School, Stoneleigh-Burnham School, Vermont Academy, and The Winchendon School.

Fall Tour of LD Schools



On October 3rd, The Glenholme School opened its doors to a dozen educational consultants as part of the week-long fall tour of LD schools in New England. Pictured are Gail Curran (AZ), Kathy Nauta (NJ), Faith Callahan (RI), Jesse Quam (NC), Lucy Pritzker (NJ), Marla Simon (CA), Lisa Cheyette (GA), and Elaine Morgan (CT).

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Introductions

Please Welcome IECA's New Professional Members

Kristie Campbell (ID) has been an IEC for



12 years and was an Associate member. She has a diverse background in the network of private, parent-choice schools and programs for at risk youth, having

attended and graduated from a therapeutic boarding school for girls and working after graduation in several schools.

Before becoming an IEC, Campbell had more than 10 years of experience in therapeutic schools, including a tenure as assistant director at Woodbury Reports, where she began as a secondary secretary and later held several positions where she assisted parents in crisis. During that time, she returned to school and earned a BS in psychology from the University of Idaho. Campbell attended IECA's 2014 Summer Training Institute and is a member of NATSAP.

Campbell and her husband, Ron, have six kids between them, (though only one currently at home). They enjoy living in North Idaho where they spend a lot of time serving others and enjoying the outdoors.

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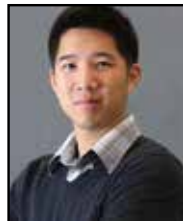
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Specialty: T

Wilson Chang (China) has been an IEC for



six years. Before that, he was the general manager at an established language training company in China that focused on the study abroad market. During that

period, he oversaw close to a thousand individual cases, which provided insight into the Chinese mentality, the growth of the industry, and the challenges still facing schools in their efforts to maximize the benefits they derive from the Chinese market.

Chang received his bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and his MBA from CEIBS (China Europe International Business School). He has always been concerned about underprivileged populations and his experiences have taken him to the Navajo reservations in Arizona, the Ddegeya Village in Uganda, and to NGO orphanages in China.

Chang was born in Chicago. His father was a university professor, and he was raised in a strict, academic environment and has always been interested in education. His first experience as a teacher was on the tennis court as an instructor and later as a TA during college. He is an avid fan of winter sports, such as skiing, snowboarding, and ice hockey. Go Blackhawks!

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Specialty: S

Karen Goldberg (CA) has been an IEC for



seven years and was an Associate member.

Her previous career was in corporate account management in the tech sector, which has proven

valuable with the students she counsels as they discover the intersection of their skills and interests.

Goldberg holds a BA in mass communications from St. Bonaventure University and a college counselor certification from UCLA Extension. She is a member of NACAC and WACAC.

During the application season, she enjoys volunteering at local high schools and community organizations to help students with the college process—essays are her favorite!

She is involved in fundraising for Children's Hospital Los Angeles and encourages her test prep partners, tutors, and fellow IECs to donate their services to support the hospital.

Goldberg and her husband, Don, have two children, Andrew, 26 and Kristen, 21. They love to travel, and no matter where their travels take them, there is always a nearby college or university to explore.

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Specialty: C

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Matthew Gray (IL), has been an IEC for four years and was an Associate member. He worked with partner **Harriet Gershman** since 2013 and recently purchased the company. Before becoming an IEC, he spent eight years as a



commercial litigator at the international law firm of Greenberg Traurig LLP.

Gray graduated from Cornell University with a BA in American studies and earned his JD from the University of Michigan Law School. He is a member of NACAC.

Through the Cornell Alumni Admissions Ambassador Network, he counseled Cornell applicants on the admissions process and advised the university admissions office regarding candidates' qualifications and compatibility with university standards.

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Specialty: C

Kate Hauser (British Columbia, Canada) has been an IEC for three years and was an Associate member. Before becoming an IEC, she was an instructor, a college prep advisor, and an academic



advisor to international students and new immigrants to Canada at Vancouver Community College.

Hauser holds a BA from the University of British Columbia and an MEd from Boston University. She also studied Japanese at Harvard University, has a certificate in independent educational consultant from UC Irvine Extension, and attended IECA's 2014 Summer Training Institute.

As a virtual college coach for ScholarMatch (San Francisco), Hauser provides pro bono services to high performing/low income high school students.

Hauser and her husband raised two sons, both of whom have left the nest. Her home is in Vancouver, BC, Canada, a few blocks from the beach, where she can often be found walking and enthralled by the ever-changing ocean and mountain views.

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Specialty: C

Marci Miller (CA) has been an IEC for 12 years and currently practices as a student rights attorney. Previously, she practiced litigation, disability, and employment law at Miller & Miller LLP,



Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP, and Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP.

Miller earned a BA from Claremont McKenna College and a law degree from New York University School of Law. While working in special education law, she received her advanced-level Special Education Advocate certificate (SEAT). Later, she completed a certificate in college counseling from UCLA. She is a member of NACAC, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Bar Association (DHBA), COPAA, and AHEAD.

In addition, Miller serves on the board of the Berger Institute for Work, Family, and Children, which is a leading source of quantitative, interdisciplinary research on the intersection between business practices and family life. She also provides pro bono college counseling and legal services and is the parent liaison for a local nonprofit that uses the arts to promote public awareness and funding for families affected by autism.

Miller has been married to her husband, Shawn, for 24 years, and they have four children: two sons who are in college, a daughter who is in high school, and another son in middle school. They also have two adopted dogs, Shane and Archie.

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Specialties: C, +LD

Melanie Talesnick (NJ) has been an IEC for 14 years and was an Associate member. Before becoming an IEC, she was a school counselor and college counselor at Morristown High School and a school



counselor at Franklin Avenue Middle School and Livingston High School.

Talesnick earned a BS with a concentration in business administration and a double major in marketing and management from the University of Delaware–Newark and an MA with a concentration in student personnel services from Montclair State University. She also has a certificate in college counseling from UCLA Extension and is a member of NJACAC.

She has a seat on the High Point National Advisory Board. Her volunteer activities include participating in the College Application Assistance Program (CAAP) as a counselor at Summit High School and providing pro bono services through her business.

Talesnick loves spending time with her family and friends, including her dog Cooper. She enjoys taking Flywheel classes, sitting on the beach, seeing Broadway shows, and is a big fan of the NY Yankees.

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Specialty: C*

Bo Wang (China), an Associate member for one year, has been an IEC for three years. Before becoming an IEC, he worked as customer manager in Britain and spent several years as an educational consultant.



Wang earned an MS at Swansea University in the United Kingdom. He was the lead translator for *College Solution: A Guide for Everyone Looking for the Right School at the Right Price* by Lynn O'Shaughnessy and has contributed several articles to *Insights*.

Wang has a daughter who is almost three years old. After failing to teach her the SAT vocabulary book, he eventually gave up (just kidding). Family support is very important to him. He is a video game fan, an amateur gourmet, and a really bad cook.

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The Back Page

College Enrollment Snapshot

Total College Enrollment in 2017:
20,400,000
(up 5 million since 2000)

Who are they?

56% Female

44% Male

62% Full Time

38% Part Time

34% Two-Year Institutions

66% Four-Year Institutions

86% Undergrad

14% Grad School

Black and Hispanic Student Enrollment is growing:
(from 2000 to 2017)

Black college enrollment is up 21%

Hispanic student enrollment is up 75%

Note: Black and Hispanic students are 18% more likely to attend a Two-Year College and 10% more likely to attend part-time as compared to white students.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017