

Mary Miele (00:03):

Welcome to Be Evolved, a podcast for parents and educators who prioritize developing possibility and expansion within the total educational process for themselves and their children or students. We invite you to listen to the podcast with your child or student in mind and with yourself at the center of the learning experience. Ultimately, our goal is to bridge the gap between educational expertise and research, translating it into practical action. Gaining knowledge plus taking action is what it means to be evolved. Hi everyone. Well, it's the end of 2024 and this is Mary speaking. We are going into the December episode of Be Evolved. I can't believe it's the end of the year and we're looking towards 2025 now. I am joined today by three incredible colleagues of ours who have played pivotal roles in our mission. Amy Nathan is the Director of Student Services. Becky Reback is the director of assessment services and Elian Seidel is the director of consulting programs. Together we're going to explore today all of our favorite accomplishments of the past year and what we're looking forward to in this coming year within these three areas of service that we provide here at Evolved. At the end of the episode, I'll share some of my own reflections and hopes for 2020 fives. So let's dive in. Amy, Becky and Elian, welcome to be Evolved.

Amy Nathan (01:39):

Thanks, Mary, thrilled to be here. Thanks, Mary. I'm excited to be here and look ahead with

Becky Reback (01:43):

Everyone. Yeah, I appreciate being part of the conversation. Thanks so much for having me,

Mary Miele (01:47):

Mary. Alright, so everyone knows also we can make this a little more real. So right now, Elian and Becky and I are all in person in New York in our office and Amy is joining us via Zoom. Something that I think is so special and evolved is that we are all working in different capacities at different times in terms of coming and working with our clients in person and then sometimes we're online and I just think our flexibility makes everything work really well. So just to give you a little context so you can picture us all here having this podcast episode. So I'd love to start the conversation. Amy, if you don't mind, you can kickstart us here. I'd love for you to share a favorite accomplishment from this past year.

Amy Nathan (02:32):

Sure. So this has been a really great year and we're super busy and we're really growing all of the tutoring and test prep services, which I'm very excited about. One of my favorite accomplishments this year was really building out our tutoring programs to meet or to better meet, I should say, the needs of students with language-based learning disabilities. I'm really happy with the team that we have on board and I've worked closely with our families to provide evidence-based multisensory approaches and really excited about the progress we've seen in our students reading and writing. I'm also particularly proud of our test prep services and the way we are able to customize a program for each individual and respond to the student's goals and needs. Even last night we had a tutor that joins a student via Zoom, speaking of being flexible in the way we work and went above and beyond to kind of get him what he needed to prep him for the test in two weeks and get his score to the next level. So I've been really happy about those great things going on in tutoring and we've really strengthened our intake process and doing what we do best, which is to make sure families are matched with the perfect tutor for their child.

Mary Miele (03:59):

Yeah, it's been really fun to watch you do all of that and I love that just the responsiveness and just the deep dives that you do with families. Even just coming onto an intake call with you provide so much insight into what's possible and I really appreciate the time that you spend with our families in that

process, so I am excited for that celebration. So Becky, let's turn things over to you. So I know you wear many hats here at Evolved, so I will ask you to speak about assessment because you are director of assessment services. I personally love having assessment here at Evolved because I do absolutely love diving deep into our students and their educational experiences and really working towards understanding them, and I feel like your assessment services really help us to do those key pieces of work. So I'd love just to hear about your assessment of this past year and what you're most proud of within that division.

Becky Reback ([04:53](#)):

Yes, absolutely. I also love the assessments. I'm so glad that we have the opportunity to do that. It's really one of my favorite ways to work with families and help them really understand who their kids are and how they learn and how they can best support them moving forward. I would say for this year, I think the biggest win for assessment is that we've expanded our services. We have new tools and new assessments. We introduced executive function assessments so we can really understand how to best support our clients that are coming in looking for executive function coaching. We have amazing college readiness assessments, which people have found hugely helpful and given them a really good jumping off point to support their child as they prepare for their college applications. And then just like I said, giving families insight into their child's strengths and their areas of growth, and not only what that looks like in school, but also what that looks like at home for them and how that's presenting in their day-to-day lives and how they can support their children in and outside of school. We are working closely with schools and learning specialists. Sometimes we get the opportunity to go into a school and share our assessment findings with the teachers and help create a plan for their student to make sure that they're learning optimally in school. And that's of course so rewarding. And then just seeing our kids thrive and make connections and become stronger because of all the insights we've gained really makes the assessment piece worthwhile to me.

Mary Miele ([06:22](#)):

Yeah, definitely. I loved also just the reports that you give both in written form and then also the debrief that you give with families. As a mom myself, I just find myself asking you often, how can I actually do something about this issue that's going on? And I think the assessment really gives parents a really clear pathway into what can be done because we are the leaders of our children's learning life ultimately, and so just giving us more information and even the jargon of education can be hard to understand. So certainly helping families understand those kinds of arrangements is really helpful too. Thank you. Yeah. So Elian, you came into the role of director of consulting services sort of at the tail end of this year, this calendar year, and you're going to be continuing in that role next year. And what I'm wondering from you is just in the few months that you've been overseeing our consulting services, what excites you the most in terms of what we've been able to

Elian Seidel ([07:20](#)):

So I was just sitting here listening to everybody else speak and I was thinking about one of my favorite things about working at Evolved is the collaborative nature of the work that we do here. So even though I am working primarily with placement and the consultants who are working in the private school admissions process and public school admissions process, I find myself working very closely with Becky and Amy and Mary to make sure that we're looking very holistically at all of the children and the families that we're working with. So I guess for me, as I'm reflecting on my time so far, I would say that I'm really proud of the work that the team has done and in finding the best fit schools for the children that they're working with and schools where they're thriving and where they're really getting the opportunity to be really the best that they can be in that type of an environment.

([08:15](#)):

And I'm especially proud of the way that the different consultants have supported families as they're navigating the complexities of the process because there really is a lot to be done and it can feel very daunting and overwhelming if you're approaching it alone. And so by working with the team here at Evolved, I think that people feel very supported and they have someone that they can turn to to help them navigate everything that they might be experiencing. And I've also been really impressed with all of the relationships that we've built with different schools and families, and so that's really been a highlight for me.

Mary Miele ([08:50](#)):

Yeah, for sure. I mean every year I love going into the schools and learning more about also how evolving and what's happening that's different, and I think it's really helpful to know that we're engaged in that way too. So yeah, it's been such an amazing year. I guess this is maybe where I'll input some of my notes here around 2024. I just feel, of course, continuation of pride coming into our 10th year. We had our 10th year celebration in April of 2024. There were four books that were published this year, and those are really exciting resources. Of course, starting with Chloe's Phone Free Life, which was really coming on the coattails of watching Jonathan Het before he published The Anxious Generation. But he really inspired me to think creatively with my daughter and write a fiction story for the first time. And then of course going into the 10 Steps to Private School Admissions with the team and helping our families to really engage in our process a little bit maybe as we consult with them or before they start to consult with us to understand a little bit of the way that we do work and how we really appreciate both understanding the student, but then also supporting the family through all of the nuances of the process and saving them time and stress and all of those kinds of things.

([10:11](#)):

So I really, really appreciated all of that work. Of course, I feel really grateful to have the team that we do. I feel like we've had so much stability here with the leadership anywhere from all of our consultants on the team to now having Elian come in and make sure that our work is really cared for. Something I've learned as a leader of a bigger organization is just how important it is to give attention to the work that we're doing in different areas. And I'm really grateful that is happening here. Of course, I look to our clients and I feel like there's been so many success stories. I've gotten many different emails and testimonials, especially as we placed last February, there were so many success stories of families getting into multiple schools, students who had difficulty with placements because perhaps they were not in their best fit schools.

([11:06](#)):

And then seeing that placement then become actualized in September and following up with our students and understanding that the work that we do puts a student on a path of lifelong learning success is really, really, really fulfilling. I would say in addition, I really appreciate the care that our tutors have given our students, and it certainly begins with Amy, but also all of our employee tutors and the tutors that we contract with. I feel like it's just super amazing to extend that impact into students' homes and really help them with their learning processes. So that's been really exciting to see. So I'm really grateful and I'm excited for everything that we're about to talk about next because this is perhaps what's most interesting to anyone listening is what is evolved going to be doing in 2025. Well, we don't really know because things do come up. I have to say

([12:07](#)):

We have some ideas, but I have to say we're a very, very responsive organization and I think every year we put our best foot forward and then we have to be responsive, of course to everyone who's coming in. And what I like, I guess about the inevitable calls that will definitely happen this year is that somebody will call me and say, I know we have this service, but I'm wondering if we could maybe do it a little bit differently because this client needs to have this particular situation happen. And I really love

empowering that to be possible. So I sort of feel as though we need to continue that flexibility to be responsive to what our families need. But I'll go in the same order so you can hear from everyone in their different hats and our different areas of service. So if you're looking for tutoring services in 2025, Amy, what are some things that you're most looking forward to this coming year and give us a little preview of some things you have in mind.

Amy Nathan ([13:03](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. I'm really excited to continue building our student services in particular. I'm really eager to partner with Becky with assessments to really use that data as a foundation for our tutoring programs. I think that's super important. And kind of what you said of not knowing what comes up. I think that we're responding to all of the needs that we see, and I'm excited to customize a little bit our mock testing for our clients with our test prep and really give our clients a very bespoke experience in that way.

Mary Miele ([13:45](#)):

Yes, for sure. We've talked a lot about that mock testing component of the test prep, and the question always becomes how do we best have our students work through that learning process, especially when they're working through the piece of work, which is so important around feedback and how are you progressing in this process of test prep? And we don't want to also create too much assessment within that process because we need our students to have that cognitive load to be able to practice and learn and acquire information. So there becomes that balance of how many times are you mock testing in a process versus how many times are you actually learning in that process and practicing. And I think that is the careful work that I'm looking forward to doing in 2025 for sure. Okay. Becky, I'll turn it over to you. What are you most excited about in 2025 coming on

Becky Reback ([14:34](#)):

In terms of assessment, I feel like we have a lot of, we've done a lot of growing and we're really trying to continue on that path. I will echo Amy and say it's worked really well when tutoring and assessment has lined up and we've assessed the kids before, they've begun tutoring services and the tutor can really hit the ground running. And I think that parents feel even better about the way that we support their kids. So that's really great. And then in terms of other things with assessment that I'm looking forward to, I think just really strengthening our assessment team. We have a couple of really awesome assessors that work with me that are so good at what they do and just strengthening them, getting them more resources. I want to continue to build our assessment library so that way we have ready at the hand whenever we need that we can modify and tweak for each individual student. It's funny, I actually did an assessment this morning and I texted one of the school placement counselors after and I said, okay, I'm changing the whole report form. I use different materials. And I realized that this was way better. So just always being open to changing and being responsive to the needs of our clients and our families and not just sticking with what we use but adapting as we move along. I'm really looking forward to that.

Mary Miele ([15:55](#)):

Yes for sure. I mean, I am too. I think it's great. I actually really love, of course, the process of learning and improving. And I think it's so great when you do get to do the work. Every time you do the work, there is that opportunity to just add a little more in and make it a little bit stronger. And I think that's something that you do very well. And I'm really also very excited to add to the team and expand this particular division. So anyone who's listening who wants to know more about their child, make sure that you contact us because we are ready for you.

Becky Reback ([16:28](#)):

We're moving and growing.

Mary Miele ([16:29](#)):

Yes. Alright. So Elian, tell us a little bit about what you are most excited about regarding the consulting programs here at Evolved.

Elian Seidel ([16:36](#)):

Yeah, so again, I am listening to everybody speak and I think that there's definitely some themes here, but the two things that I think I am looking forward to most or looking at most closely are the collaborative nature of the work that we do here at Evolve and then also the responsive nature of what we do here at Evolve. So I think in the spirit of collaboration, one of the things that I really appreciate about the way that we all work together is that there's so much expertise in house. And so you can have a kid who does an assessment with Becky and then they're on the phone with Amy talking about a best fit tutor. And then I'm getting a call to talk about what are some opportunities for school placement, and then I'm back to Becky and Amy and Mary. So there's really a lot of different touch points throughout the process and people working together to make sure that everybody is getting what they need.

([17:28](#)):

And so I think in that spirit, looking at where everybody's strengths lie and making sure that we're leveraging the skills of everybody on the team most effectively. So that's one piece of it. And then I think the second part of it, as I said in terms of responsiveness is looking at the existing packages that we're offering within the school placement space and reflecting on the ways that we can continue to best serve families. So looking at what has worked really well, what might need a little bit of tweaking, because right now we offer a variety of different ways that parents can work with us throughout the admissions process, whether it's a full placement package or whether it's more specific support with essay or interview or whatever it might be. And so just figuring out what is it that families really are looking for and what do they need, and then how does that inform our work with them for the upcoming admissions season.

Mary Miele ([18:26](#)):

Yes, I think that's really great. And I've always really dreamed this is not a design by anything accidental, but because I've always dreamed of having an organization here that can carry a family from the twos programs, literally all the way through that college, even after college support that might be needed along the way. And at this point, what I'm most excited about 2025 is really building out the college division as I have my certification with UCLA and now have a really strong network of support for students that extends worldwide into even international summer programs into US-based summer programs for students in the high school areas. And then of course placing them at the best fit college programs for them, really supporting them through our college support services in actualizing their plans during high school, but then also working with them on their applications and writing up those narratives as they need to is really what we're primed to do because we can offer that counseling support.

([19:31](#)):

But then if a student needs test prep, if they need support writing a personal statement, if they need to get something filled out application wise and need support with that, everything can be done literally within house. And it's really exciting that we are in that place of work right now in 2025. I'm also really excited about the integrated executive function coaching program and the impact that I intend to make going into the 2025 year Mercy College or Mercy University has written a grant to have me in to teach different program departments that offer student support in January, and I'll be working with their faculty as the professional developer for this particular program and model. And I'm looking to of course continue that

work, but in addition, I really want to work with our clients here at Evolved to make sure that they have access to this type of model.

[\(20:25\)](#):

And that's really an important part of it. No year is going to go by without me adding to the resources that we have here because of course, I want to make sure we're just continuing to evolve our impact. So I am publishing shortly a book on a problem solving model, which involves sort of a scientific method. And our staff here at Evolved uses five step method to improve our own learning and professional development within our work. And this particular model also having five steps helps any school, any educator, any parent to move through a proper process of solving problems for their children. And I'm really excited to talk more about that and to give more attention to that particular model. I love a model, I love a framework. I'm just saying because, and I'm going to tell you why, because listen, I think there's such a great value in keeping things moving forward, especially in education, especially as we have more access to new research as we are building our understanding of that unique brain who comes into our world of education.

[\(21:31\)](#):

And so if you're too rigid, let's just say with what you're doing with kids year after year after year, it becomes difficult for anybody in an institution to move and to evolve and to be responsive. And I think a model or a framework helps us to stay in the line of evidence-based in the line of what works, but also be creative when we need to be. So that's what I'm most interested in leading. And of course, this podcast will be continuing in 2025, so you'll notice in 2024, we used it a lot to talk about the work. It evolved, and I have loved doing that, and we were literally just talking Becky and I before about the potential of interviewing some like-minded resources that would just expand our knowledge into different disciplines and to even areas of professional work that compliment and supplement the work that we do here at Evolved, and also hopefully to expand our own impact and footprint on what is done in a bigger sense.

[\(22:38\)](#):

So in that light, we're going to be working on that in the Be Evolve series in 2025. So lots of really exciting things, that's for sure. I do love a nice transition. I feel like as educators, we are really lucky in that we get maybe three of those a year. I feel like it's like September becomes a new year, January becomes a new year, and then June, when we get into summer becomes a new year for us. So it's kind of fun that we get to kind of pause and take stock and make some goals. And I hope you're doing the same thing. I really do. I hope that you're listening to this and just thinking about your students, thinking about your kids, and just thinking about what you could be doing going forward. Because there's never a relief point, right? There's never a done button. There's never something that just sort of goes and just is what it is, right? At the end of the day, we're always thinking about ways we can continue to amp up that learning experience and have a more fulfilling learning life. So that's what we're doing here. So I appreciate everyone's time today. Amy, thank you for being here.

Amy Nathan [\(23:38\)](#):

Thank you so much, Mary.

Mary Miele [\(23:40\)](#):

Yep. And Becky, thank you for being here. It's my pleasure. Thank you. Yeah, and Elian, thank you as well. Of course. So if you have any questions at all for all of us, you can of course reach us on our website and that information is in the show notes and such. And of course, the closing will come very shortly and give you all that information. But thanks again for listening and giving us your precious time as well as we start this exciting new year and happy holidays for everyone during the holiday season. I hope you have a healthy and joyous start to the new year. So long.

(24:18):

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