

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.

Becky Reback ([00:40](#)):

Let's talk about your school list. Not the one you've been building in your head since your child was two, not the names you keep hearing it drop off or the schools your neighbor applied to, or the ones at the top of whatever ranking you found online at one o'clock on a Tuesday morning. I want to talk to you about what a real school list actually is and why getting it right is truly the most important thing you can do before you begin the placement process and the application process. My name is Becky Reback. I'm a school placement specialist at Evolved Education Company here in New York City. And in this episode, I want to walk you through something we call the school list building. What it is, what it does, why families we work with consistently tell us that it was the best investment they made above everything else in the admissions process and why it makes sense to start with the building process.

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Here's what I see over and over again. A family comes in, they have a list, they say they've done their research, they're not unprepared, and the list is fine. It's got names that every single person talks about, maybe one or two that might feel a little bit safer to the family, and they're ready to get started. My first question always when working with a family is why these schools? What about these schools is best for your child and your family? What I hear back almost every single time is some version of reputation or cachet or name, prestige. Everyone says it's the best. My colleague's child went there. It came up a lot in my research or our outplacement advisor at our current school gave us this list. What I rarely hear is because of the way that they teach, because of the size of the school, because of what their community looks like and whether my child would belong in that community, or because of the philosophy in the classroom and whether it matches how my child actually learns.

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The list that they have is built on signals or I'll call it noise from other people, not an actual understanding of their child or of the school that is on the list. And I'm not criticizing, this is not a criticism. It's just what happens when families start or navigate this process without the right help. And my goal is to ensure that the families receive the support that they need to make sure that the list, the school list, actually matches the needs of the child and the family. And the school is building process and service is really designed to change the outcome to make sure that we're putting our best foot forward. So what is the school list? What do we actually do here? The school list takes about two weeks. At the end of it, you have a real list, a strategic, honest, balanced document that tells you exactly which schools make sense for your child and your family and why.

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And what, if anything, about the school maybe isn't 100% of the fit? We work with families truly at every stage, nursery, kindergarten, middle school, high school, and everything in between. And the process does look different at every level. There's more involvement from the students at the older level. There's less involvement from the parents and so on and so forth, but the foundation for all of these levels of schooling is really the same. We start with you, the family. We have a deep conversation, not a quick intake call, a real conversation. We really want to understand what you believe school is for, what your educational philosophy is, what you believe your child needs, your family's values, and what your practical constraints are, geography, finances, siblings. There's so many different factors that go into building a school list and what you're actually hoping your child's school years will look and feel like.

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Most families haven't asked those questions before. Nobody's asked them that. Tell me more about what the commute looks like for you, right? Is anyone asking you that? Maybe, but maybe not directly. And the answers change everything about which schools belong on the list. After we've had this really detailed in-depth conversation, we look very closely at your child and not just a description of who your child is, but we actually spend time with your child. We assess them, we sit down with them, understand how they learn, how they process, what they're strong at, what they're still developing in. And we look at where they are right now against the schools they're hoping to actually go for and what the schools are looking for in the process of admitting a student. And we're truly very honest about that gap and what is realistic that we need to do to close the gap between now and when applications are going in.

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Something that's important about building the right fit school list is not only do we want to make sure we know how to prepare your child for going into the application process, but we also want them to be successful when they actually get into and experience the school. So at the nursery level, this is a developmental readiness and fit, right? We are looking at how your child is performing with early development tests. At kindergarten, we're really considering the metrics for the school if testing is applicable and understanding all your child's pre-academic abilities. In middle school, this is where we're really looking at our full academic profile. We're looking at the transcripts, standardized testing like an IC, your current school relationship. There's a lot more factors that go into this and also how your child will show up at the interview. In high school, it's everything all at once.

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We're looking at the record, the scores, the extracurriculars, the essay, the college pipeline, how your child will show up and engage in the process, their developmental readiness for the rigor of the school that we're applying to. Every age really has its own picture. And I think something that's so important to know is that we really know how to read all of them. So here's the part that I think generally separates us from everyone else in this space. We actually study the schools. We don't just draw on what we already know. We reach out. We attend information sessions. We have conversations with the admissions offices. We get current intelligence on what a given program is looking for this year for this cohort or for a student with this particular profile. Schools change, right? They evolve and we are called evolved. So it is a key feature of our practice to stay on the current and latest metric of the program.

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So for the schools the students are applying to, we know how to guide the families. We want to know what the schools are looking for in three years and not necessarily what they looked for in the past. A school that wasn't right for a certain kind of learner may have evolved their program entirely. These conversations are not a luxury. They're how we make sure that the list is given to you is built on something real. When we sit down with your family at the end of this list building service, we're not handing you a list of names. We're handing you a document with reasoning behind every single choice. This is a reach school. Here's what would make your child competitive to apply to this school. This is a strong fit. Here's why the culture matches what you told us you value. This is likely an admit, and here's why your child belongs here, not as a constellation, but as a genuinely wonderful option.

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Every school on the list is somewhere your family would be happy to say yes to. That's not a small thing. That's the whole point. The thing I hear most after we finish is, "I didn't know what I didn't know." And there's a real relief in that. Families come in overwhelmed, carrying this ambient anxiety and this noise in their head about doing the right thing for their child. And what they come out with is a plan, a real plan grounded in something true, who their child is and actually achievable to gain admissions to. That shift from overwhelm to clear is worth more than any other single element of the admissions process, truly. I

truly believe that. And that's why we always start here because once you have the right list, everything else is just execution. And a little bit of strategy here and there, but most of the time execution.

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And we're really, really good at execution here. So in closing, if you're heading into any admission season, nursery, kindergarten, elementary, middle school, high school, and you don't yet feel genuinely clear about your school list, this is really where you start. Not the applications, not the test prep, not the essays, the list. The right list built the right way for your child and your family. Come find us at evolvededucationcompany.com. Call us 646-907-8381. The first conversation is always complimentary and always honest, and we'll tell you exactly where you are and what we think you need. And if the school list building is right for your family, we'll tell you that too. I'm Becky Reback. I'm one of the school placement advisors here at Evolved. I'm also the director of academic assessments, and I really thank you for listening. Wherever you are in this process, you can do this.

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We will be here to support you and you don't have to figure it out alone.

Mary Miele ([11:04](#)):

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