



What to Look for When Working with an Educational Consultant

An interview with Elizabeth Hall, founder of **Hall Educational Resources**, a New England Educational Consulting and Private School Placement Company.

Sue Cranford, Associate Director of Admission

Hi, everyone,

It's Sue Cranford from the admission office at Eagle Hill School. I'm excited to welcome you to today's podcast, which features one of my dear friends and colleagues in the world of independent school education, Elizabeth Hall. Elizabeth is an educational consultant, and at Eagle Hill, we work with a group of educational consultants who are really terrific professionals whose mission is to help families find the school that will be the right fit. And Elizabeth founded her firm, **Hall Educational Resources**, which specializes in helping students with learning differences. Elizabeth works with only a limited number of clients each year because she wants to develop strong and meaningful relationships with all her clients. She also has wonderful relationships with admission offices like ours. I am so excited for you to get to know her and to learn a little bit more about what she does and also a little bit more about Eagle Hill. So welcome to Elizabeth, and I hope you enjoy our podcast today.

Sue Cranford

Hi, Elizabeth. How are you?

Elizabeth Hall, founder of Hall Educational Resources

Good. How are you, Sue?

Sue Cranford

I'm good. I'm so glad to have you here today, and welcome to the Eagle Hill Podcast. And I know our listeners will be so happy to hear what you have to say and get to know you. So, as I said, Elizabeth is a professional educational consultant. I thought we could first educate our listeners on what an educational consultant is. And how did you end up becoming an educational consultant?

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

Elizabeth Hall

Sure. Well, first off, thanks for having me. I really appreciate the opportunity to connect and share. I love helping families and parents, and that's a big part of why I'm doing what I'm doing. But to answer the question of how I got into educational consulting, I started my firm, Hall Educational Resources, 13 years ago. And the reason why I started doing what I'm doing and helping families is because I have three kids of my own. When my two older children were younger, my son, in particular, was diagnosed with early intervention for speech and language services. And then, my daughter, when she was in kindergarten, I was questioning if she could have Dyslexia.

And so, I navigated a lot as a parent regarding their learning needs. Back then, I wished I had known that educational consultants existed, and I didn't know anything about them. And I just jumped right in, kind of headfirst, and learned as much as possible to advocate and help my own kids and identify their needs and resources to help them. So, what happened was over and over, somebody would pass my name along.

It was usually a mom who I didn't know and, in most cases, had a son diagnosed with Dyslexia. I would come home from my job, and get my kids settled and into bed. I'd then go off to the local Starbucks and meet this mom who I didn't know, who had gotten my name, and help her think through all the different things she didn't understand and was trying to figure out and navigate.

Over and over, I'd come home from these coffee dates, and I just felt so much purpose and so much meaning. And I loved helping parents figure out what their child needed. But most importantly, to help these parents see that even though their child has been diagnosed with a learning difference, it's not a black mark. It's not a scarlet letter. These are students who have so many strengths, and it was, from my perspective, so rewarding and so meaningful.

At that point, I was considering whether or not I wanted a transition. I went to boarding school and was active in the boarding school I had gone to, and I was serving on our board of trustees and really kind of at a crossroads in my career about whether or not I wanted to transition and work at a school, work in admissions, work in advancement.

And so I started doing informational interviews with different admissions directors, and a number of them kept saying you really should go into consulting like you would be an excellent educational consultant. And so it was at that point that I started to research it.

I'm embarrassed to say this, but I literally went on the internet and put in consulting and then education. And then, I found IECA, which is our professional association for educational independent educational consultants. And there was a meeting that was coming up, happening in Boston, and I was just determined, and I was going to go, no matter what it took to pull that off. I just started learning more and made that transition. My boss at the time was really really supportive in terms of my making this transition. So that's how I got started.

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

Sue Cranford

That's a wonderful story because it found you sort of like you were led there, I think. It really meant a lot to you. And I relate to that because I've spent my whole career in independent schools doing many different things. And I never planned to go into admission. And I sort of fell into it for the same reasons. Because I love working closely with families, and I love helping families find solutions and a way to have their children thrive.

And I've worked admission at three different schools. What I want to say to families from the admission point of view is I feel as though in a sense, I'm a consultant as well. If anyone ever said I was a salesperson, I think I would have to quit because that's just not who I am. Even though you might think admission is selling the school, for me, it's really working with a family. And if Eagle Hill is not the right school, I will refer a family to you. Or I will refer a family to another school that is a better fit.

When families encounter admission offices, the admission office should reflect the school's culture, the school, philosophy of the school, and, hopefully, transparency. And so that's how I feel. I never want families to feel that there would ever be any pressure if they contacted my colleagues here at Eagle Hill or me. We always feel we're trying to do the same thing you're trying to do.

That's how you and I work together. And we've worked together now for a long time, even when I was not at Eagle Hill and learning about what educational consultants do.

But now, at Eagle Hill, 40% of our students have worked with an educational consultant. Our podcast today is not just to talk about educational consulting but that it's an amazing resource many families need to learn about.

Parents are doing Google searches. They're trying to figure this out on their own, and then they get these testing reports that are fifty pages long, and they're trying to understand what all of this means and how a school promise to do these things to help, and will they be able to do those things?

Tell us a little bit about the scope of your firm. Who are the families and the students that you work with?

Elizabeth Hall

Our firm specializes in just school placements. When working with families, we're working with prekindergarten students all the way up through a postgraduate. We will work with some families we had previously placed their students in schools. But as their students age up, we help them get ready for the college admissions process. We're not doing traditional college admissions but rather helping them think in terms of the steps to college accommodations, what they need to be doing in terms of their testing, and their readiness for eligibility for accommodations at the college level. Some kids aren't ready for a traditional college program,

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

but they might need more of a transitional college support program. But I would say most of the students we work with are elementary through high school age.

We work with families by starting with what we call a parent strategy session. We work with them in that session to gauge what they're looking for and to determine if we're the best fit for them or if what they really need may be more of an advocate or an attorney.

Are they even looking for a placement at this point, or do they need help more from a thought partnership perspective. But most of our families are at the onset hiring us for placement purposes.

A big part of what I do is a lot of parent coaching. Part of how we're doing that is to take whatever it is that exists in terms of the student file and testing and who the student is interested in, strengths, all that sort of good stuff and start to tease out what is the root issue or issues that are going on. I tend to come at things very much from a systems perspective and look at what are all the different systems that are at play and what's the interconnectedness?

Because a lot of times, this is new. They've maybe just got a new diagnosis, or they have been trying to figure things out for however many years and are just at a point of exhaustion and frustration and know the public school isn't going to be the best fit. So, they're looking for private school placement, but to help them see what the possibilities are.

In order to do that, we really have to understand what it is that's going on. The majority of the students we work with are students who are bright, accomplished, and successful. Many of these students who do learn differently are kids, as you and I know so well, who have so many strengths, and yet they're not maybe feeling that their parents may be frustrated or feeling as though they're procrastinating or lazy or whatever it is.

That's where the coaching comes in, to help the parents understand what is going on, what's the interplay between the different behaviors being exhibited, and the reconciling kind of that cognitive profile of the student.

And again, back to the strengths and helping them find the possibilities. For many families, those possibilities are in private schools, and in particular, a lot of the boarding schools have just such wonderful support for students with learning differences.

Sue Cranford

Yeah, you know, it's so funny. Do you know much about functional medicine?

Elizabeth Hall

Well, not much.

Sue Cranford

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

I know some, and in my spare time, I love to listen to other podcasts on health and functional medicine, and you just described what functional medicine does. They don't just look at, oh, you have this condition or disease. They look at what the root cause is. They dive into everything.

That's sort of what you're doing. You're not just looking and saying, oh, this student doesn't read well, you're doing a deep dive through everything, and then you can explain it to families in a way that allows them to understand, embrace, and be excited about the possibilities. And there are only so many schools that can do what we're talking about.

What Eagle Hill and other schools do is work well with kids who learn differently. There aren't that many schools, particularly in certain parts of the country. We have a lot of kids who come to us from California and who come to us from other parts of the US. And abroad. I would say most of the families I speak to, no matter where they come from, are really nervous about the boarding aspect.

Maybe we can just talk a little bit about that. I know you went to boarding school yourself, but how does boarding schoolwork for students that learn differently in general?

Elizabeth Hall

Absolutely. It's so interesting what you raise around functional medicine because I even think back on one of my own kids and so many of the younger students coming to us. There's a lot at play.

When parents tell me some of the symptoms they're seeing in their kids, for example, constipation, stomach aches, tummy aches, like, things like that, they're going to see a GI doctor and chase down this rabbit hole. In reality, what's really going on is the anxiety that's at play because as the students get older, they're aware that they're so different and feeling different. This anxiety is impacting the GI system, and it's all so connected, and it's amazing.

I was just on a call with a dad prior to this time with you, and I was telling him that I love the transformation I see in the kids we work with. It's so purposeful and meaningful, and it's just one of the best parts of the work that we do. I'm sure you feel it too because the kid that you interview is so different from the student who graduates from your school.

Sue Cranford

You are so right, Elizabeth, especially at this time of year. We have our graduation in two weeks. I look at these seniors; many of them I worked with when they were coming in 8th grade, 9th grade, or 10th grade, it doesn't matter. I look at them, and I literally can't believe the transformation I see. You mentioned your own children, and you know that I have two children who both have Dyslexia, but my younger daughter also has ADHD and Dyscalculia.

I didn't need to go to an educational consultant because I had so many people that I knew that could help and guide me. I found Eagle Hill for Sophie, for my daughter, and that's why I ended

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

up coming here. I watched my child transform right before me at this school. And now, I'm watching her in college in a very challenging nursing program. I just keep pinching myself because I just never dreamed that it would be anything like that would not only be possible for her but that she would have the confidence to actually go for it and do it.

She was both a day and a boarding student here. My husband and I always say that boarding is the piece we feel was equally valuable to everything else that happened. So, I'm anxious to hear your perspective on working with families around boarding school.

Elizabeth Hall

Yeah, there are so many reasons why I think boarding school is beneficial for a student. And one of the areas that I would probably start is the way that boarding school is structured. There's so much predictability in the schedule, and there's so much structure. That, in and of itself, supports all learners, but in particular, helps students who do learn differently whether they have ADHD or not as part of that profile.

But that predictability, in terms of routine expectations, it really plays to teaching these kids and helping them discover the skills and strategies that will work for them. That kind of consistent routine, I think, really helps kids. Another area that I would say from a boarding school's perspective, and especially a school like Eagle Hill, where you have so many similar learners, is the school culture.

It's that understanding of who they are as learners and how they learn best. It is embedded throughout everything that you do. For kids who have, wherever they were before, felt different or felt like an outlier, felt like they didn't fit in or couldn't find success because their teachers didn't understand them.

When you get into a boarding school environment where you're taught by teachers who are specialized in working with students, with that, for example, Dyslexic profile, it's so powerful for these kids because they feel understood for the first time. They can find their voice. They can gain that confidence and that self-esteem. And I think that's huge.

I tell parents your child might have anxiety, and I'm not saying that anxiety will go away when they go to boarding school, but what you're going to find is it will fall into the background. It's going to fall to the wayside because they're going to feel comfortable. They're going to feel that they have friends again. They are finding their tribe. There are kids who are like them, and they're in a place where they are understood.

The anxiety just kind of fades into the background, and they're accessible again. They're engaged. And that's the other way that I think boarding schools differentiate themselves from public schools. To some extent, even private day schools are just that real opportunity for high-interest academics and activities.

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

And what I mean by that is it's along the lines of the opportunity in the evening to go and, for example, work in the art studio because you're working on your art portfolio. If you're in a day school or you're in a public school, you don't have that opportunity during evening study hall. And so higher interest, higher attention, and it gets back to kind of that structure, but also the quality of the overall experience the student's having. I could go on. I really could.

One of the other areas is the overall quality of life. I was talking about this the other day with a parent. Right now, when a student is at home in their local school, and they're struggling, the parents are wearing so many hats. They're the tutor, they're the executive functioning coach, they're the chauffeur, driving to all the different tutoring sessions and speech and language sessions, and they're trying to be the parent, and they're the cook, and dinner has to be ready at whatever time. And there are so many different hats that a parent is wearing. When a student is in boarding school, I tell parents, don't view it that you're sending your student away.

I think a lot of parents view it through that lens, and I really encourage parents to reframe how they view it, look at it through a wider-angle lens, and you're not sending your kid away. You're providing them with an opportunity.

One of the ways that it impacts families more than anything is just the overall quality of life. Not just for the student, but again, back to the whole family system. These are kids who, you know, as a parent, you put on just that mom hat or that dad hat because you're not having to chauffeur. You do not have to provide tutoring and executive functioning support and everyone. The relationship just improves across the whole family system. And I could go on if you want me to name more reasons. I can, but I tend to ramble, so I'll stop there.

Sue Cranford

I think you're really highlighting so many things that resonate with me. How many families have come to me and said so many things, like, I finally have my child back, the lightness of being that returns both for the student and for the parents. And that normalcy. That feeling of like, we're a family. Again, I certainly can relate to that as well. There are a lot of pain points for families who are considering this option. When you mentioned that feeling of, I'm sending my child away, and I think that my advice to parents is always, this might not be your first choice, but don't rule it out. Give it a chance. At least go and look. There's so much fear, I think, for people.

I was curious about how you coach parents around the fear of what they're most afraid of and how you help them develop trust. I think a lot of parents have PTSD, especially since coming out of a system the way it is. Many parents who go into boarding schools are used to being in battle mode.

They're used to being not trusting. They're used to expecting not to know when something's going wrong and being blindsided. They're expecting the worst, actually. I just said a lot. But if there's anything in there that you can pick up on to say how you work with parents would be interesting.

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

Elizabeth Hall

That's a really good question because many parents hesitate about boarding school. And families where one of the parents has attended a boarding school, there's less hesitation, but in some ways, there's more resistance from the other parent. And again, it's what is at that point of resistance and trying to understand it from that system's perspective.

I try to look at it and say, what's the block or the blockade happening, and what can I do to help kind of coach and provide more information to lessen that resistance?

Obviously, A lot depends, and each family is different, and their point of resistance may be different. So, for example, one family might be afraid of the fear of the unknown because boarding school is unfamiliar to both parents. It's a new concept, and they hadn't even thought about it. That might be the point of resistance or hesitation versus another family.

I find a lot of families are really worried. You were saying they've been warriors, and it's too much of a jump for their child. They're worried that they're not with their child to provide the scaffolding and support. This will be too much of a jump for them.

And then there are certainly parents that have the concern around the lack of oversight at a boarding school, oh my gosh, I'm not going to be able to be separated from my child because what if they have trouble brushing their teeth and taking care of themselves? It's understanding what that point of resistance is.

Once I get a better sense of that from just my ongoing work with the families and building that relationship, and as I get to know the families that are clients of mine, I then work with my admissions partners to help them understand what it is that might be that point of resistance. I think at my firm, we're really known for being very transparent. There are no pretenses, and there are no points of shame or embarrassment.

I tell parents that I'm not replacing you. I'm not replacing your voice. I'm being the facilitator of a process here and opening up our dialogue and conversations for a really collaborative process. And so, in doing so, I want you, as my admissions colleague, to understand where there may be fear or concern, or hesitation.

One of the ways that is helpful to the families and to understand and lessen that concern or fear is by providing information and data. The more we can partner to make sure the parents have as much opportunity for conversations with whoever is going to be helpful for them, that alone is so powerful for a family. And then, they need to move forward and continue to talk with whoever they need to talk to understand and get to that point of comfort.

Sue Cranford

That makes a lot of sense. I love working with consultants, but every consultant is also a little bit different. I have such a high level of trust in you, and we also pride ourselves on being really

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

transparent here too. And I know that when you work with a family, you're not just going to be recommending Eagle Hill. You're going to be putting together a list for families, and then the family will be visiting multiple schools, and that's great. That's what families really should be doing.

When you're working with a family, and the family is thinking about boarding school, and you're putting together that list, how do you know? When do you put Eagle Hill on the list versus other boarding schools that have support? There are differences between a school like Eagle Hill, which really is an expert in working with students that learn differently, versus boarding schools that have a certain percentage of the population that might learn differently and they would provide support more in a silo. We cross over with those schools quite a bit, but to help families understand how you think of Eagle Hill, we give families a little bit of a sense of that piece.

Elizabeth Hall

Yeah, absolutely. It's, again, another really good question because every family is obviously different. But I think from my perspective, a really helpful way that we start is I tell parents I'm going to cast the net wide, and we're going to consider a number of different types of schools.

Part of what I'm hoping is that by having parents consider and get to know schools of varying, I'm going to say profiles, but levels of support in this sample that we're talking about will help them rule in or rule out other schools.

We have what we call our green schools, our yellow schools, and our red schools. Almost a very simplistic traffic light analogy, but it really works. The reason is the green schools are the ones that I think are going to be the best fits, and here are the reasons why I think they're the best fits, and then our yellow ones are going to be good fits. Or maybe it's too far away geographically, or maybe it's single-gender, and you want coed, or whatever the reasons are.

I want parents to know the breadth of what's available. Then from there, moving forward, we really pretty quickly start to hone in on what our green schools are that we're looking at that I think are really good fits.

What I'm doing in that process is helping parents to understand the different nuances. And there are indeed, as you and I know, nuances between the schools because parents can do a Google Internet research and see and find schools. When you really start to kind of get much deeper below the surface, there are differences in learning support from school to school, for example, and what that school's philosophy is around.

For example, discipline. If kids get into trouble, what's the philosophy that can really vary at schools? Or what is the culture around, for example, the residential life. You guys have a fantastic residential life structure because your residential life staff are full-time. They are there to be just doing residential life support for these kids who so need it. Therefore, they don't have what I think sometimes can happen at other schools, some of the fatigue that comes with wearing many different hats.

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

There are nuances and certainly significant differences among the schools. And so, as I take parents through that process, really help them to understand those differences and point them out. I always like to tell people that people will get my name and be interested in learning about becoming an educational consultant.

I feel fortunate because, early in my career, most of my career was consulting, and I worked more for a management strategy firm. But a lot of what I did before is stuff that I do now. I worked with assessments. I'm now working with educational assessments. I'm a certified coach. I'm now doing parent coaching. I worked with the curriculum. I have my master's in education. I'm now working and looking at schools in their curriculum and what are those curriculum paths and that sort of thing.

One of the things I learned early on in my career is that a really good consultant doesn't tell. We don't dictate a good consultant. If I'm doing a good job, I'm really good at asking questions. And I know I want to get parents from point A to point B, but I can't tell them I want to get them from point A to point B.

I need to ask good questions so that they will find their way to point B. It's on their own momentum that they're getting there. But in doing so, we've gotten there together by unearthing through the different questions, concerns, hesitations, and areas of interest to help parents understand and get to know a school. They can get to that point where we all, as parents, have that gut, where we're like, this is the school for my child, and that's great. It happens. If I'm doing a good job, that always happens. But I've been told I'm kind of that horse whisperer, if you will, of when I meet kids, I'm just like, this is the school for them. But I can't tell the parents; I need them to figure that out independently.

Sue Cranford

That is a great way to put it, too, because there's so much intuition that goes into this work, good listening and empathy, and being able to put yourself in another person's shoes. I had that experience yesterday with a family, and they visited, and it was just clear to all of us that this was the school for this family because it's not just a decision about your child. It's also about the family and hoping that its values match the school's values and that everything aligns.

And that's why when you go to visit, you have to listen to your gut, listen to your heart. I mean, that sounds really corny, but it is really true and important. I think for families, too, the clock does start to tick because when you're in elementary school, and you start wondering, maybe there are certain clues about things that are going on, and then you hit middle school, and then like, you said, the older the student gets, that anxiety does start to come in. In so many cases, things can manifest, like you said, in so many different ways.

Then we sometimes have families that only find us once their child is going to be an 11th or a 12th grader. And certainly, we do work with 11th graders sometimes, but I always in a lot of cases, wish that we could have had that student for longer. Once you're launched out of high

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

school, it's hard to gather and to get to know yourself, and it can really change the trajectory of your life, to be really blunt about it. I'm a big believer in confidence as one of the main ingredients students need. I know it was true for my own daughter.

Something else I would like to know if you could talk about is for families who have a child who may be struggling or has not had the best experience in school. What do you think the main ingredients are for success for students who learn differently? Is it learning math or being able to write? Of course, all those things are important, but what are the main ingredients that you think students who learn differently really need to have?

Elizabeth Hall

I always tell parents that I want them to think about the here and now, but I also want them to be thinking about the future. And so when they're looking at a school, what does that runway look like? Is it too short of a runway? Is it long enough of a runway? How will the school prepare them for wherever they might be going next?

And another thing I tell parents is by the time kids get out of middle school, my hope is that the parents get that diagnostic clarity around their student's learning profile. Because when kids are going off into the high school years, they really need to be able to understand their learning profile themselves, and they need to be able to advocate for themselves and ask for things.

But most importantly, they need to be in a place where they can try things to figure out on their own if they're going to work for them or not. Not a teacher or a tutor or learning specialist telling them you have to use this reader, this notetaking app, or whatever it is, but the students need to figure out for themselves, this works for me, or I like the recorded voice on Audible versus learning out.

Whatever it is that will work for a student versus someone telling them they have to use something. Because as you and I know so well, when these students go off to college, and they have learning differences, and they're approved for accommodations, there's no 504 plans, and there's no IEP in college. They have to figure it out themselves, they have to get approved for accommodations themselves, and they have to be advocating themselves.

And so if when they're in their high school years, and they don't have that opportunity to do that, then that's when we get the calls from kids who are falling flat on their face, and things are really not going well. And so back to your question around kind of what is it that kind of talks to that success?

I feel that it's having students be in an educational environment, in a school where they have those small class sizes, where they can access the teachers for help, trying to kind of tweak or learn whatever strategy, tool, assistive, tech, app, whatever it is they're trying to kind of use that's going to help them. It's the opportunity for just that overall access for support and knowing who, I like to refer to it as who's their rock, like who's their person, who's their go-to

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

person so that when they're feeling frustrated, scared, whatever that feeling is, they know they have that person.

It comes back to that self-confidence and that success. If they can start to internalize that and advocate for themselves, then they will rock. They will be so great in college, as you talked about with your daughter. But if they don't have those opportunities, that's again where the boarding schools and the specialized boarding schools provide that opportunity. I feel so conducive to helping diverse learners thrive, and it's just really kind of built into the way that boarding schools that are more specialized support that diverse learner.

Sue Cranford

You made me laugh when you were talking about college because the colleges really don't even want to talk to the parents. Right?

Elizabeth Hall

I mean, not at all.

Sue Cranford

All of a sudden, this giant iron door is slamming shut. And you are absolutely correct. If the student cannot navigate, that is when they really and truly fall. And it's really difficult. And sometimes the parents don't even know that they're failing because you don't get grades.

Elizabeth Hall

You don't get report cards.

Sue Cranford

Oh, no sharing.

Elizabeth Hall

You have no idea.

Sue Cranford

Unless they're willing to give you their login for their portal so that you can spy on them, then you are not going to know what is happening. So, I definitely agree. That's why my daughter is being successful because she is an, I don't know what the word is like, Tasmanian devil when it comes to being in the learning center, asking for help, knowing how to get because there are so many accommodations you can get in college.

Elizabeth Hall

Yes.

Sue Cranford

Literally from residential, do you need a single preferential housing? Early registration for classes, classes in the morning and not in the afternoon, so you'll never have to have a Friday at

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

04:00. Coaching is available in so many schools. And it's funny. We categorize colleges into three different buckets. We don't do the colors, but we do basic support, coordinated support, and comprehensive support, and that really helps families. A

The other cool thing about going to a boarding school that is specialized is the college counseling department. They know the schools and what support the student will need. I mean, maybe you'll disagree with this, but it can be easy to get accepted into a college depending on certain things, but that doesn't mean you're going.

Elizabeth Hall

To be successful at that college.

Sue Cranford

And so, I know that we track not only our acceptances but we track how well the students are doing. Do they matriculate? Do they stay at those schools?

This year, we have a young woman who will be going to Georgetown next year, right, which is obviously a school that will have different kinds of support than a school like a Dean or a Mitchell or a Curry. Even schools like Northeastern have great support. So, you might not even know that, but our college counselors will know.

That was another factor for me with my daughter. I thought that her college outcome would be so much better coming out of a school where people knew her, and the college counseling department knew how to guide her.

Elizabeth Hall

Yes. Well, now so many colleges are test-optional, too. I think that the required standardized entrance testing, the ACT or the SAT, for many kids with learning differences, even with accommodations on it, is challenging for the kids. But these are kids who are so hardworking. I mean, one of the hallmark traits of many kids who have had to work twice as hard is just the tenacity. Persistence is such a part of their profile. Academically, they can do really well. If they understand who they are as a learner and what they need, and they've learned to advocate for themselves, then the sky's the limit. Like you're saying, your student who's graduating, going to Georgetown or whatever school, there are so many wonderful colleges out there for the kids. Still, if they don't have those skills and strategies and that ability to advocate and understand self-moving forward, then that's where it can fall apart. There's much less structure, as we know, at the college level. And the opportunity to kind of not find your rock and not know who your go-to person is, is really different at college.

It's certainly something that is a different landscape. But the wonderful thing is, there are so many great colleges out there and so many different sizes and support programs, and it gets back to that runway analogy and kind of what a student is ready for.

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

I always say to parents, we've been through so much and needed to navigate so much. It's that fear, again, of the unknown and fear that you don't want to push your kid too much. Yet there's a lot of keeping up with the Joneses and all that sort of stuff.

It's okay to push a little bit, but you want it to be an environment where your student is going to feel comfortable. From my perspective, that social-emotional fit is one of the most important things. If a student doesn't feel comfortable and doesn't feel as though they can find their tribe and their friends, it doesn't matter how challenging or less rigorous the academics are. It's not going to be a match.

Sue Cranford

You are 100% correct, and that's a great way to end our time because that really sums it up. The fit is everything. And the social-emotional piece, and like you said, the residential piece where a lot of the social-emotional happens, is so incredibly valuable.

If families want to find you or work with you or learn more about consulting, they know where to find me. I hope that families will feel free to contact me if they want to learn more about Eagle Hill, but also just in general as a professional. But how would they best contact you?

Elizabeth Hall

Absolutely. So, we have a wonderful website, www.halleducationalresources.com.

We're based in the greater Boston area, but we work with families worldwide, so from all around. I'm on LinkedIn, and we also have a Facebook page and Instagram.

But truth be told, most of our kind of social media activity is more along the lines of LinkedIn. I have a wonderful newsletter that we put out each week with lots of different various topics and things. I try to be educational and informative and help parents, but the best way is probably through our website and our contact form.

Sue Cranford

And I just read your you just published one yesterday. It was about boarding schools, right?

Elizabeth Hall

It is *The Top Ten Things to Look for When Working with an Educational Consultant*. But I do have one on boarding schools, too.

Sue Cranford

How you churn out all that content, but you are amazing. So good job. Well, it has been such a pleasure to talk to you today, and I know we'll be seeing each other again soon in person. And until then, be well. And thanks again for being with me today.

Elizabeth Hall

Well, thank you for having me. It's always so fun to catch up with you.

HILL Talks with Elizabeth Hall

Sue Cranford

All right, bye, everybody.