



VIRGINIA & JENNIFER BUSH & ASSOCIATES
INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANTS SINCE 1975

What **50** Years of Boarding School Consulting Has Taught Us.

For more than 50 years, we've had the privilege of helping students from around the world find schools where they can thrive academically, socially, and personally. Along the way, we've seen trends come and go, schools evolve, and the admissions process become increasingly competitive.

But some lessons have remained remarkably consistent. These are the insights we've gained after guiding hundreds of families through the boarding school search.



The Biggest Misconception Parents Have

Many families begin the search believing the goal is to gain admission to the most selective or recognizable school possible. It's an understandable instinct—after all, those schools have earned outstanding reputations.

What we've learned, however, is that there are many exceptional boarding schools. The more important question isn't "Which school is the most prestigious?" It's "Which outstanding school will bring out the best in this particular student?"

That shift in perspective often changes the entire search.

The Biggest Mistake Students Make

Students sometimes assume they need to become a different version of themselves during the admissions process. They worry about saying the "right" thing in interviews or writing what they think admissions officers want to hear.

The strongest applications, however, are usually the ones that feel authentic. Schools aren't simply building a class of high achievers—they're building a community of interesting, engaged young people.

Helping students present themselves honestly and thoughtfully is far more valuable than trying to create a perfect applicant.

What Actually Predicts Success After Enrollment

Families often ask what separates students who truly flourish once they arrive on campus.

In our experience, success is rarely determined by a single factor. Academic preparation certainly matters, but so does a student's willingness to engage with the community, embrace new opportunities, ask for help when needed, and adapt to a new environment.

The right match allows those qualities to develop naturally over time.

What Schools Never Say Publicly

Every boarding school does an excellent job describing its academic programs, facilities, and signature opportunities.

What brochures and websites can't fully capture is the character of a school—the rhythm of campus life, the expectations students place on one another, the relationships between faculty and students, the structure and the overall feel of the community.

These differences are often subtle, but they can have a significant impact on a student's experience.

Why “Fit” Beats Rankings

Rankings and reputation can be useful starting points, but they tell only part of the story.

A student’s boarding school experience is shaped by the campus culture it provides, the academic and extracurricular opportunities on offer, the level of support and structure inherently built into the school fabric, and a student’s sense of belonging. Matching these nuances with the student is far more important than rankings alone.

The most successful students in boarding schools are ones who look beyond rankings and understand where they will feel the most confident, grow personally and academically, contribute, and thrive.

Why Families Regret Some Decisions

When families look back on their boarding school search, they rarely wish they had applied to more schools or chased a higher ranking.

More often, they wish they had spent more time understanding the differences between schools, keeping an open mind, or exploring options they initially overlooked.

The boarding school landscape is broader—and more diverse—than many families realize at the beginning of the process.

The One Question Every Parent Forgets to Ask

Parents naturally ask about academic rigor, college counseling, athletics, arts and music programs, facilities and campus resources.

One question that can provide equally valuable insight is:

“What type of student tends to thrive here?”

The answer often reveals far more about a school’s culture than a list of programs or statistics. It helps families consider what a school might offer in conjunction with who their child is and how their child might experience life on that campus.

Closing Thoughts

After more than 50 years of helping families navigate the boarding school process, one lesson continues to stand out.

There is no single “best” boarding school fit for all students.

There are exceptional schools with different academic and extracurricular strengths, campus cultures, and communities. The most rewarding outcomes happen when a family’s priorities, a student’s personality, and a school’s environment come together in the right way.

That’s why choosing a boarding school is about more than comparing programs or reading rankings. It’s about understanding where your child will be challenged, supported, and inspired to become the best version of themselves.

Every family's journey is different.

For more than 50 years, we've helped families make confident, informed boarding school decisions. If you're wondering where to begin—or simply want an experienced sounding board—we'd love to meet you.

Our team of highly trained and experienced consultants have built trusted relationships with schools and have guided hundreds of families and students to find the best school fits where they can achieve success.

We believe successful boarding school admissions begins with understanding the child—not just the application. That's why our support includes:

- Knowing your child
- Creation of personalized school lists taking into account who the child is socially, emotionally and academically
- Deep knowledge of boarding schools in the U.S.
- Application timeline management
- Interview Preparation
- Essay critiquing
- Advice on standardized testing
- Experienced and honest guidance throughout the admissions process
- Individualized support from your first conversation through enrollment and beyond

Because choosing the best school is about more than getting in—it's about finding the community where your child will feel the most confident, challenged and supported in order to maximize their true growth potential.

Book your complimentary consultation at www.virginiabush.com