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For many of us at ARCH, including ourselves and our instructors who have been through boarding schools, the experience has been transformational in a positive way. Having said that, it may not be the right option for all and we believe it is necessary to evaluate each student on an individual basis in order for us to provide objective advice and comprehensive guidance.

We provide our students with comprehensive support and our global team of professional consultants guide students for admissions into Ivy League, Oxbridge and other top universities and boarding schools. Each consultant team is tailored to the particular region’s and applicants’ needs. The entire counseling process is tailored to each student and leverages ARCH global team, which is headquartered in Hong Kong with partner teams and offices based in US and UK.

For those who have decided boarding school is for them, read on and see how we can help you stay on top of the admissions process. Hopefully this Issue will help our parents and students with their decision-making, planning and preparation. Enjoy!

Jennifer Ma and Jennifer Yu, Founders
Jennifer Ma  Co-Founder and Director of UK Admissions

Jennifer Ma attended St. Paul’s Co-educational College and Benenden School before graduating from Oxford University with First Class Honors in Economics and Management (B.A., Hon M.A.). In addition to academics, Jennifer was the elected President of the then second-largest student-run society, the Guild.

Throughout her 7-year career in Investment Banking, Jennifer remained active in the field of education. Jennifer is involved in the Benenden School Trust as well as the China Oxford Scholarship Foundation – both organizations serve to recruit and fund able scholars from China and Hong Kong to further their studies in the UK. Jennifer achieved her Masters in Education at the University of Hong Kong in 2011.

At ARCH, Jennifer is responsible for curriculum development and is the Head of University Counseling for UK and HK. Jennifer has delivered many workshops and tailored 1-on-1 sessions on statement and interview preparation to students in schools and at ARCH. Jennifer’s areas of expertise include Law, Social Sciences (incl. Economics, Management, Sociology, Politics) and applied Medicine. Jennifer has established a network of highly qualified tutors from all disciplines, who have proven very successful in guiding students through their university application process. Our testimonials, including multiple Oxbridge offers with scholarships, speak for our team efforts!

Together with our counterparts in the UK, Jennifer provides advisory to students interested in UK boarding schools, including assessments and preparatory steps. Beyond university, Jennifer has successfully guided undergraduates in preparing for and attaining professional job offers!

Jennifer Yu  Co-Founder and Director of US Admissions

Jennifer Yu attended German Swiss International School and Choate Rosemary Hall, the well-known preparatory school in the United States. She graduated magna cum laude from Columbia University with a degree in Industrial Engineering Operations Research and a minor in Economics. While at Columbia University, Jennifer demonstrated many diverse and creative talents. She led a number of student groups and activities, including producing the then largest culture and fashion show. She also received corporate recognition for an engineering project in gaming inventions and earned a design license for Columbia.

Upon graduation, Jennifer accepted an analyst position at JP Morgan. She then spent 7 years in the investment banking industry and was an Executive Director at Goldman Sachs in the Fixed Income Currency and Commodities division.

Throughout the years, Jennifer took an interest in students training. In addition to her business responsibilities, she had extensive experience in recruitment and leading summer internship programs as divisional program champion, including conducting interviews, training students, designing program structure and assessment. These engagements helped foster her enthusiasm and ideas for helping young people through education, and inspired her to co-found ARCH Academy. As a graduate from both an elite boarding school and Ivy League university, Jennifer brings a lot of valuable personal experience to share with her students.
Marybeth Hodson  Head of Secondary Placement (US)

Marybeth Hodson has years of experience as a Senior Associate Admissions Director and Coordinator of International Admission at one of Connecticut’s prestigious college preparatory boarding schools (referred to as “prep” schools) and was instrumental in assisting overseas students to enroll in the school. Marybeth has extensive knowledge of New England prep schools, developed through her role as an admissions representative and as parent of three prep school educated children. Her intimate knowledge of these schools has helped students identify schools that best suit them – schools where they would excel, and what admissions officers are looking for enables our team to better facilitate student’s admission preparation. Along with our assigned counselors, Marybeth will assess each student’s academic and language strengths, identify extra-curricular activities, refine their personal statement as well as consult on various ways to enhance each student’s application. With in depth understanding of life in a boarding school, Mrs. Hodson communicates to our students to help them prepare for the transition to living in the USA and for some students living away from home for the first time.

Mrs. Hodson holds a BA from Saint Michael’s College in Colchester, Vermont and a Master’s Degree in Psychology from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. She has worked as a national trainer for a US Government job training program. Additionally, she worked for Educational Training Programs in Windsor, CT. Mrs. Hodson has a passion for Women’s Lacrosse, having founded a successful local youth program and coaching for a competitive boarding school program. She is on the Board of Directors of The Connecticut Lacrosse Foundation, a chapter of US Lacrosse.

Will Orr-Ewing  Director of UK Boarding School Consultation

Will graduated from Oxford University with a degree in History and was a history teacher at Fulham Prep School. He has been tutoring since 2005, and set up Keystone Tutors in January 2007. Through his work both in tuition and mainstream education, Will sees clearly why people seek private tuition. Rather than criticising formal education - or suggesting an alternative - Will sees private tuition as an adjunct to it. It should be integrated within the school approach, and appreciate individual styles of learning.

Will is an increasingly active participant in the education sector and its various debates. He speaks for the The Parent Company at institutions such as Credit Suisse and Freshfields. He also speaks under his own steam at Pushkin House, and writes education comment pieces for publications such as Focus Magazine and The Prep School Magazine.

In collaboration with ARCH, Will’s primary area of expertise is in coordinating our online tutoring platform, Bridgepoint Online Tutors, and UK boarding school assessments.
Our US Admissions Counseling is delivered through a dual-counselor approach where students will be assigned to a local regional counselor and a US based counselor to provide them with holistic support and guidance.

Our **Global Team** of consultants have guided students to gain admissions to **Top US Boarding Schools** such as Andover, Blair, Choate, Concord, Deerfield, Exeter, Groton, Hotchkiss, Kent, Lawrenceville, Middlesex, Miss Porter’s, Northfield Mount Hermon, Peddie, Taft and more!

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**Our 10 Steps Approach:**

1. Extra-Curricular Enhancement
2. Application Timing
3. Standardized Test Planning
4. School Selection
5. Essay Guidance
6. Recommendation Guidance
7. Mock Interviews
8. Waitlist Strategies
9. Enrollment Decision
10. Everything in Between
Our UK Boarding Schools Admissions Counseling Team comprises of a select group of professional consultants (many of whom are former Admissions Tutors at the most reputable boarding schools), as well as guidance counselors whom themselves have graduated from top schools including **Benenden, Eton, Harrow, Tonbridge and Wycombe Abbey**!

100% Success into **Top UK Boarding Schools** in 2013 - 2014 such as

**Benenden, Brighton, Charterhouse, Cheltenham Ladies, Harrow, Tonbridge, Wycombe Abbey** and more!

Our 4 Key Areas:

- Assessments and General Consultation
  - School Selection and Visits
- Academic Tutoring Preparation - Pre-Test 11+, 13+, 16+ Prep
  - Logistics and Administration
Reflections on Harrow School

Will Orr-Ewing, Oxford University; Director of UK Boarding School Consultation

To say that my school days have stayed with me is to speak a dreary platitude… we are all defined by our schooldays. Nonetheless, few schools exert quite such an influence over its old boys than Harrow School. I am not speaking merely as someone who happens to work in education, and is asked about the school on a daily basis. Nor am I referring only to what may seem to be the more superficial legacies of my time there: my smart OH socks, for instance, which can often be seen in the ARCH office, or my zeal for Harrow Songs. No, I say that my Harrow days have stayed with me, and I say it with gratitude, because the school bequeathed me two great and rare gifts. The first is a group of friends, forged as much out of the classroom – in the boarding house, on the sports pitches etc. – as inside it, who I have every confidence will remain friends for life. The second is another lifelong companion: a love of reading. Of course I could have harvested such fruits from other schools, but it was Harrow, fortunate to be able to call upon ancient traditions such as candlelit essay clubs in dusty libraries, or convivial dinners with equally ancient masters, which added an ingredient that was essential at least to my own dull imagination, and which sadly too few schools dare use today: the ingredient of… magic.

Memories from Wycombe Abbey

Emma Humphries, LSE; ARCH Instructor & Senior UK Consultant

Almost all girls boarded at Wycombe, whereby the youngest and eldest year groups are separated into their own houses. During the five years in-between, girls are split into mixed-aged boarding houses. This benefited all; the youngest in the dorm could seek advice and first-hand know how on what to expect at each stage of Wycombe life. As a 16 year old during my GCSE year, balancing revision with overseeing a dorm of six hammered home the true nature of multi-tasking, which was made all the more easier when touchingly presented with chocolate-filled socks, one for each GCSE, from my younger dorm mates.

As the years at Wycombe went by, it became apparent that the pastoral care given by our house mistresses and matrons went far beyond the call of duty. As house mistresses were also our teachers, the relationships built were ones of respect and admiration that continue to this day. With the progression into the next year, independence and opportunities were offered in a way which felt like we had earned them.

The final year of Wycombe was when the year group moved into Clarence, a house set up in a similar way to a university hall of residence. Having a university setting within a closely monitored school environment where we lived on ‘corridors’, collectively decided on how to spend a set weekly food budget, and having to cook dinner for ourselves, gave us skills which proved invaluable in surviving undergraduate life – not to mention the friends made during Fresher’s Week thanks to Mrs. Simmington’s brownie recipe.

What Wycombe does best is to prepare girls for the future. At each stage of our development, what we do is driven by the need to prepare for the next step. For each step of the way, in both academic and personal development, I can confidently attest that Wycombe comes out top.
When did you start thinking about US boarding schools? Why did you decide to apply?

SL: I started thinking about studying in the US at the start of Form 2. Some people I know had gone to boarding school and out of curiosity I browsed some of the schools’ websites. What the schools offered amazed me and I thought boarding schools could give me experiences and opportunities that my current school does not offer.

How did ARCH help you with your initial preparation?

SL: ARCH helped me a lot with extra-curricular suggestions. I went into boarding school consultation with only one or two strong extracurricular activities, but ARCH helped me identify my strengths, interests and hobbies, and encouraged me to develop them into solid extracurricular activities.

Mom: ARCH explained each step of the process very clearly and thoroughly, and also encouraged my daughter to reach for her goals.

Since you took the SSAT course, could you share with us what you found helpful from the class?

SL: The practice questions in class and mock tests were very helpful – I got a taste of what the actual SSAT was like. The vocabulary lists were useful, too, as they helped me pick up essential SSAT vocab quickly.

Mom: My daughter’s took the SSAT a few times and her first score was around 85% after strategies learned from the ARCH class. She continued to build upon what she learned from class and after further self-studying, she reached over 95% in her final exam! She was really motivated to spend more time studying for her last exam.

How did ARCH help you with the consultation process overall?

SL: ARCH provided a lot of guidance, especially with interview prep. Rather than going through specific questions, ARCH helped me understand the interview mentality which encouraged me to self-reflect on my experiences, achievements and how I wanted to present myself. Essay brainstorming was extremely helpful as the discussions helped me narrow down the topics I wanted to write about.

Mom: Parents statements are quite challenging, but ARCH counselors patiently guided me through the preparation. The word limit also restricted what I could include in my statement and ARCH was helpful in advising me on which contents best portrayed my daughter.

How was ARCH able to provide you with global support?

Mom: When we went to the boarding school interviews, we were helped by the staff in the US. We were picked up from the airport and accompanied all the way. This was quite convenient for us, as we had to visit 8-10 schools in a very short time period.

Do you have any tips to share with students who are also interested in applying to boarding school?

SL: Start early and stay focused, especially with writing the essays. The prompts aren’t as easy to write as they appear to be and it takes a lot of time to revise them.

SL was an ARCH student who recently applied to several of the top US boarding schools. As a recent successful applicant, SL and her mom are happy to share their application and guidance experiences with interested parents and students. SL was accepted by many top schools including St Paul’s and Choate.
Through last year’s boarding school application process, have you noticed any new trends among schools?

A trend I am noticing in speaking with admissions officers is the volume of applications and the yield for each expected incoming class. Last year’s yield was higher than expected at many schools, so this year has been even more competitive for fewer spots at the schools. At the beginning of the process, many schools have put in barriers to eliminate the students who are not qualified even before they visit the school. They have asked for official TOEFL and SSAT scores or might require that an independent interview company conduct an interview as a prescreening process, so the quality of the applicants at some schools we visited was really impressive.

What is now becoming the focus is how the kids identify themselves as special outside of academics. Admissions officers are looking for kids who have a unique passion and demonstrated some type of leadership. Knowing that the student has experienced peer leadership before gives the sense that they will contribute to the greater community at the school.

What kinds of student do you think US boarding schools are looking for academically? How do you think that parents can help in these aspects?

In looking at SSAT prep and what parents can do, is to give their kids exposure to those qualities that are valued in Critical Reading. The Critical Reading and Debate programs at ARCH are really helping kids to decipher or recognize what is important in their reading, and to express themselves on paper in a deeper way. Schools get excited about kids who have had an American debating experience; where they are able to express, articulate, and support a certain opinion, because this is really the foundation of all these schools – to be able to sit with all your peers and defend and support why you think what you think.

What would you say is the hardest aspect of the application process for international students?

The hardest part is managing expectations and having a balanced school list. Parents and students also need to go through the tough process of advocating for themselves at these schools as well. The continued advocacy for kids is hard, parents and children must constantly remind the admissions officers and schools about themselves and their interest in the school they are visiting.

How do you think parents can best help students during the application process? Any specific details?

Well, I think the biggest thing that parents can do is to start early in this process. If you look at a student’s profile as three different areas, there are academics, testing, and extracurricular activities. The extracurricular activity part gets the least emphasis, but in the end, everyone who is competing already has good scores and academic talents, so the extracurricular activity becomes a distinguishing factor in who gets a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’. Something that parents can do is actively plan opportunities for students to develop their outside interests and passions over time.

Another pointer is to have parents introduce their kids to adults in social environments. Essentially, an interview is like that – a conversation. Students who are able to hold a conversation, rather than discuss their CV, are much more appealing. Situations where students are able to replicate these types of social interactions with adults gives them practice, poise, and confidence during admissions interviews.

Marybeth Hodson is the Head of Secondary Placement at ARCH and she has personally visited 28 boarding schools in the US this admissions year while accompanying prospective families and students during the interview process. She is here to share with us some insights and latest observations.
**Interview with Will Orr-Ewing, Director of UK Boarding School Consultation**

**Will, what brought you into education?**
I attended quintessential English schools and universities (Summer Fields, Harrow, Oxford) so am a product of the system I promote for a living. In 2006, I set up Keystone Tutors in London, and am proud to call it one of the best tutoring organisations in the United Kingdom.

I started tutoring immediately after leaving Oxford, and felt a deep rapport with it straightaway. I had never done a job that was at once so intellectually challenging and emotionally satisfying. I was struck by tutoring’s antique roots - it’s a far older craft than schoolmastering! At the same time, its opportunities seemed new and exciting – such as the many initiatives we are launching here in HK!

**What are you doing in Hong Kong?**
I have come to Hong Kong to consolidate the fantastic partnership Keystone has been forging with ARCH over the past two years. Along with ARCH, I will be advising on applications to the top UK schools by providing the “on-the-ground” insights, in particular how to prepare for the competitive entrance papers.

**How long do you intend to stay, and what are your hopes for your time out here?**
I have no return ticket! I want to commit the next period of my professional life to Hong Kong at any rate. I want to help make ARCH and Keystone the first destination for parents interested in sending their children to UK schools – boarding or day. At the same time, I want to take advantage of the special opportunities that Hong Kong has to offer: on my first Sunday here, I hiked around the Peak before attending the jaw-droppingly good Hong Kong Chamber Music Festival in the evening, a day which has certainly set the bar high!

**Interview with Jennifer Ma, Head of UK Admissions**

**What’s the difference between ARCH and other centers in providing boarding school advisory?**
There are three main differences. First, ARCH is not a placement agency so we do not represent any particular school. As such, we can achieve our primary aim which is to provide objective feedback and advice on school selection – finding each student the right school as opposed to a school that simply matches his/her academic ability.

Second is our “UK US” team – our expert counseling team includes a number of former admissions tutors who are highly experienced in providing specific insights and tailored guidance. Our on-the-ground UK counselors have all been through top boarding schools themselves (see p. 7-8).

Lastly, we also provide enrichment programs to help students transition into the boarding school learning environment – so we don’t just get them in, but we prepare them to excel.

**Why Keystone Tutors?**
When I was looking for a partner to complement us on-the-ground in the UK, I had sampled up to 15 consultation and tutoring companies. Keystone Tutors was the most impressive based on their own credentials, dedication to curriculum development, and I appreciate their focus on niche not mass – which aligns very much to our own education ethos and expectations. We’ve worked together for two years now and we are excited to formalise our joint establishment in Asia this year!
1. ALWAYS TAKE NOTES

While going over exams with students, I hear sighs when they come across longer reading passages. Fictional, informative, or anything in between, all reading passages can be successfully conquered by making sure to actively take notes while reading. By marking up the important points, keywords, and structures in each passage, students will find it easier to begin identifying answers for the set of questions following the reading.

In the quantitative section of the exam, there is even a space in the booklet marked specifically for students to complete their scratch work on! There are no calculators allowed in the exam, making it absolutely essential to do your work on the booklet. What you write on this exam booklet will not affect your score and will not be graded, so feel free to take notes and complete your math questions on it.

2. TESTING STAMINA AND PACING

At almost three hours long with only two short breaks, the test is not short. For students who may struggle with test-taking stamina, it is recommended that they pace themselves throughout the exam. Avoid spending too much time on one question. Students should check their watches on each section to ensure that they have plenty of time to finish and then double check their answers if time is not up yet.

3. TEST DAY PREPARATION

Before taking the exam, the student should become familiar with the exam structure and understand what types of questions will appear on each section of the exam. It is recommended to try and study as much vocabulary as possible, as the exam is heavily focused on difficult vocabulary, which students may not have encountered in school yet. On the night of the exam, I tell my students not to cram or study late into the night. It is important to get a good night of sleep before the early exam next morning. Make sure to have a healthy breakfast. Pack some light snacks and a water bottle for students so that they may eat and stay hydrated during the short breaks.
Common Entrance is the gold standard examination in the UK independent sector, used by schools such as Wycombe Abbey, Eton and Harrow to select its pupils. This course is highly recommended for anyone considering the UK as a destination for their children at 11+ or 13+. However, its standards are such that it will be an educationally rich experience for any family interested in seeing how their children compare to the top international standards.

Specifically targeted towards students preparing for Common Entrance to Independent schools, this course will equip students not only with knowledge of UK style testing but also the tools to approach these competitive examinations with confidence and skill. We focus on the 3 components:

**Comprehension:** The course aims to fine-tune students’ reading and analytical skills – both their literal as well as their deeper, deductive understanding. The course will teach pupils to analyse texts closely and critically infer meaning, identify and comment on effectiveness of different writing techniques.

**Writing:** Students will be encouraged to organise their imaginative ideas and feelings with effect. They will be made aware of and helped with any of their own issues with grammar, register and structure; and will learn how to use vocabulary in a stylish and imaginative way. Students will look at a number of techniques used in wide ranging genres of writing– from political speeches to classical poetry.

**Exam techniques:** Given that pupils in UK prep schools are rigorously prepared to sit such exams, the course hopes to bridge the gap between the Hong Kong and UK curriculum. The students will be encouraged to practice implementing these techniques in their own writing, and have good grounding to achieve at Common Entrance. We will arm them with a reliable exam technique under timed conditions.

### Part I: Reading Comprehension

- Predictive Reading
- Literal Understanding
- Critical Deductive Thinking
- Writers’ Technique

### Part II: Composition

- Sentence to Paragraph Formation
- Application of Writing Techniques
- Grammar drilling
- Essay Structure

**Ideal for students:**
- Applying to UK Boarding School within one year
- Interested in the Common Entrance Curriculum
Get Results Now with Top Online Tutors

Over 70% of our online tutors have studied at Oxbridge, the Ivy League, and other top institutions!* 

SIGN UP NOW FOR:

Pre-Tests / Common Entrance
11+ / 13+ / 16+
iGCSE / GCSE
A-Level
IBDP
SAT I + SAT II Subject Tests
ACT

Learn Anywhere, Anytime
“Lessons online are just like lessons in person, except more convenient, comfortable and flexible.” (A.Y.)

Our Top Tutors
 “[The tutor]’s profile is very impressive...it is hard to find an experienced tutor like her in Hong Kong.” (K.S.)

The Perfect Match
“He thoroughly enjoyed his lesson [and] thought [the tutor] was ‘so nice’ and helpful and couldn’t wait to practice!” (S.C.)

Constant Feedback, Constant Progress
“My tutor addressed the areas which I had difficulties with. I now know how to answer exam questions with better technique using the correct terminology!” (T.L.)