

Tutors help fill educational gaps

Many parents choose to hire a tutor for a child who is struggling with a portion of his or her school work. Finding the right tutor involves some research. That's because, in addition to the tutor being well versed in his or her area of expertise, he or she should have a connection with the tutored child. Otherwise the child may struggle.

The role of standardized testing has increased in recent years, and a child's test scores are now subject to heightened scrutiny during his or her academic career. No longer just for admittance to college, standardized tests now play a bigger role earlier on in a child's academic career. Tests taken during elementary school may be used to determine where a child attends middle school. Some schools are prepping students strictly for what will be on tests. The resulting gaps in the curriculum can leave students clueless about routine lessons, such as spelling or grammar.

The combination of these factors has led many parents to hire tutors to ensure their children receive a more well-rounded education. According to Eduventures, an educational market research firm, tutoring is now a \$4 billion industry, with revenues increasing by 15 percent each year since 2001. With so many people getting into the tutoring business, the average parent may not know where to look to hire someone for his or her child's needs.

There are a few steps you can take to hire a tutor.

- * Contact your child's teacher or teachers, some of whom may tutor outside of the classroom. If your child responds well to a teacher's methods, consult that teacher about the possibility of your child receiving private tutoring.
- * Visit the guidance department and find out if they recommend tutors who have successfully worked with students at the school in the past. This can help narrow down the number of prospects.
- * Talk to other parents about their experiences with tutors. Those who have been in the same situation may recommend



a tutor or point you in the right direction.

- * Explore the franchised tutoring businesses available in the neighborhood. Most, if not all, tutoring companies have a Web site where you can research options. A quick browsing of the Internet may also yield reviews of particular companies, so you will get a better idea of their track records.
- * Check the newspaper for advertisements. Independent or freelance tutors may advertise their services in the classifieds or even in a church bulletin. The newspaper also may provide information on former teachers or educators acting as volunteer tutors.

- * Visit the library and see if they have a relationship with any local tutors. Or see if any tutors are using the library as a meeting place for tutoring sessions. This way you can make a connection and find out more information.

Once you find the right tutor, be sure to have all policies spelled out in a contract. Make sure the tutoring rate and duration of services is listed as well as any guarantees of student improvement. It is a good idea to do a background check on the tutor to ensure your child's safety. When the student meets with the tutor, make sure it is in a quiet, private location that will facilitate learning without any distractions.

Many parents realize their children can benefit from a tutor offering personalized lessons.

Ready young kids for school

A child's first day of school is a momentous occasion, one that parents and children alike will never forget. For parents, the day might stir memories of their own first day of school all those years ago. For youngsters, the excitement of the first day of school might be accompanied by a little anxiety, as kids don't know what to expect.

Anxiety may decrease as kids grow more acclimated to their school and their classmates, but that first day can be difficult for some youngsters. Here are a few steps parents can take to prepare their children for school.

- * Discuss the schedule with your child. Having a schedule can be a difficult adjustment for youngsters, especially those who have never attended preschool or another structured program. To help kids handle this adjustment, discuss the schedule with your children ahead of time, explaining when school begins and ends each day and how activities are likely to be scheduled during the school day. In the weeks leading up to the first day of school, help kids get in the swing of things by waking them up earlier and scheduling some activities so kids can get used to a more structured environment.

- * Visit the school. The school itself might also be a cause for anxiety. Kids who have never been inside of a school might benefit from a visit to the school in advance of their first day. Arrange a tour with the local school district so

kids can see the bright classrooms and the playgrounds, which should settle any fears they might have about leaving the comforts of home for the classroom.

- * Let kids know their classmates will likely be nervous as well. For youngsters who seem especially nervous about their first day of school, parents can point out that other kids are likely just as nervous. Parents can even share stories of their own anxiety with regard to school and explain to kids how the nervousness was quickly calmed.

- * Remind kids you're just a phone call away. Going to school and becoming independent is an important step for kids, but children might be reassured if their parents remind them Mom and Dad are just a phone call away. Soon enough, kids will adapt to the classroom and won't need that reassurance, but those initial nerves might be calmed if kids are reminded that their parents are still nearby.



There are many ways parents can help nervous youngsters get over the first day of school jitters.

- * Consider carpooling with another family. One thing that's certain to calm a youngster's first-day-of-school jitters is the presence of a fellow friend or neighbor who is also going to school for the first time. Consider carpooling with another family so children forget about their anxiety and spend their

school day mornings talking or playing with a friend. While this might not be feasible on the very first day of school when parents want to cherish the occasion by dropping their kids off themselves and watching them walk into school, it can help going forward.

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