



Is Tutoring Right for Your Child?

Early Warning Indicators

For many parents, the decision to have their child tutored is precipitated by a teacher conference or a report card. Poor grades or problems in the classroom are certainly indicators that a child is struggling academically, but there are often subtler signs that parents can detect. And, in education, as in healthcare, intervention at the first sign of trouble can prevent a deeper crisis. For many children, problems with academic performance may have less to do with learning disabilities than with gaps in the process of building academic skills.

Particularly in the areas of reading and math, skill acquisition and retention is based on a sequential skill building process. Gaps in this process, for whatever reason they may occur, can impede mastery of those skills. Unfortunately, once these "skill gaps" manifest themselves in the classroom, parents cannot always be sure they will be alerted. Often times classroom teachers may be hesitant to call attention to performance problems. "Schools are understandably concerned about being held liable for calling attention to a skill deficit if they don't have the resources to solve it -- and recommending tutoring is in essence an admission that they can't adequately meet a child's needs."

While schools may respond by recommending a specialized curriculum, the problem may have less to do with "what" a child is taught, and his or her basic abilities, and more to do with "how" a child is taught. Through individualized instruction, customized lesson plans that attack specific areas of weakness with skill building exercises, and constant measurement of progress, tutoring programs can help children become more effective learners - and more confident students.

The most common signs that parents should be aware of:

- Lack of motivation. When a child seems unwilling to try, it is a clear sign that the assigned tasks are either too difficult, or that the requisite skills to accomplish them are lacking.
- Homework frustrations. "If parents have to constantly help a child complete his or her homework, or if that child experiences continual frustration, there's a

- problem.” While it is natural for parents to want to minimize their child's frustration, getting into the habit of helping a child complete his or her homework rather than identifying the cause of the frustration and strengthening the learning skills will not help a child become a successful independent learner.
- Inappropriate classroom behavior. Children who "act up" in class or are constantly seeking help from other students may be having deeper problems than being "troublesome" or "lazy". These behaviors may be masking gaps in academic skill building.
 - Weak math skills. Contrary to the belief of some parents, there is no "math gene." Success in math is based largely upon mastery of basic skills - and the critical period for establishing this foundation is between 1st and 8th grade. If a child falls behind during this period, his or her ability to grasp high school algebra is very problematic. One critical pre-algebra skill that can cause major problems is fractions.
 - Inability to read at grade level. The foundation for reading skills is laid down from kindergarten to 3rd grade. If that foundation is shaky, it can affect virtually every other learning skill that children need to acquire.
 - SAT preparedness. High school students need to look at the SAT as not just a test, but as a benchmark of their fundamental learning skills. For this reason, parents should view SAT readiness as a critical indicator of their child's academic foundation. Preparing for the SAT test is not just important in terms of the resulting scores, but as a means of identifying and strengthening problem learning areas. The problem with most SAT classes is that they take a stop-gap approach by teaching 'test taking' skills, rather than focusing on the skills being tested.

While tutoring is an effective means of addressing all of the above, it has an additional underlying value: it sets an expectation for success. "When parents invest in tutoring, they are sending some very important messages to their child," notes Schwartz. "First and foremost, they are telling their child that learning is a priority, and that they are committed to their child's success. They are also demonstrating that learning is a process, not just an outcome. When children learn to master that process, which is what an effective tutoring program should accomplish, they gain a sense of competence and confidence that is ultimately more important than the grade level at which they are reading by the time their tutoring program is complete."

BENEFITS OF TUTORING

There are numerous benefits associated with tutoring. The major benefit of tutoring is not only a greater understanding of the subject matter, but also an improved self-image. Fear of failure is reduced and students are able to correct academic deficiencies. Additionally, a more positive attitude toward the learning process allows them to improve academic performance. Another benefit to individualized tutoring is that it can help your student acquire and improve study skills while guiding him/her through the learning process. Following is a list of benefits:

- diagnostic teaching: bridging the known to the unknown
- individualized, systematic, structured learning experience
- improved academic performance and attitude towards school
- improved existing study habits
- clarification and reinforcement on material learned in class
- preparation for tests and assignments
- improves attitude toward subject area
- improves self-esteem and self confidence
- motivates self-paced and self-directed learning.
- provides intensive practice for students who need it.
- ongoing assessment
- lessons that target specific needs so that instruction is challenging but achievable
- increases mastery of academic skills
- provides emotional support and positive role models
- lessons are tailored to individual students' learning styles and levels of understanding
- instruction free of competition—students' progress at their own pace
- increased praise, feedback, and encouragement
- closer monitoring that maximizes time on task
- skills demonstrated instead of just verbalized

*We believe that all students can learn when provided with appropriate support and learning strategies, and that achievement begins with highly individualized, research-based instructional programs designed to fit individual learning styles and needs. We provide support for all grades and subjects (PK-College). **We can help** your child achieve their full potential.*

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