

Tutoring, Individual Lessons Give Students Cutting Edge

-HEIDI MAE BRATT

Learning never really ends. It goes on at home, with family, with friends, in the schoolyard, at the after-school activity, on a device. There are so many learning opportunities — and teaching moments — to help give our children the maximum opportunity for growing their minds. Sometimes, a boost to a youngster's regular learning schedule can be very helpful. Tutoring in any one of several subjects, or gaining skills proficiency to score well on standardized tests or deepening knowledge through enrichment classes can be just what your child needs to boost their scores, performance and self-confidence. At the six-month-old Mathnasium in Teaneck, for example, students can pump up their mathematical muscles at center, which concentrates on strengthening students' math skills to mastery. It accommodates kindergarten-level math through calculus, says Dan Karp, the owner, who works with center director Jonathan Eskowitz. What distinguishes Mathnasium — a franchise of over 600 centers in the United States and 15 around the globe.

Mr. Karp says, is that each student starts his or her study with an in-depth assessment that homes in on their strengths and weaknesses. The assessment not only identifies the gaps, but also the way in which the student will learn best, for example, if he or she is a visual learning. Then for a monthly membership of \$350 (most students come two to three times a week), the students get a one-on-one teaching experience with appropriate curriculum and work their way towards independence through skill building and the goal of mastery. "The really nice thing about it is that it is for anybody who want to increase their understanding of math," says Mr. Karp. At the new Practice Perfect, a new tutoring service in Tenafly that focuses on the SATs and ACTs, a diagnostic exam right off the bat helps to guide prospective college students into whether they would be better off taking the SAT or the ACT, both standardized examinations required in the college admission process. Once that is squared away, says owner Nathan Kane.

"Sure you can prepare on your own, but I think that the value of a tutoring service like ours is that you get insights into what the tests are looking for, you do at least 40 practice tests and you could get a grade that is 100 points better," says Mr. Kane. There's been a lot of interest this year especially, says Mr. Kane because the SAT is changing its format students are very interested in what that may mean for college admission. "Another thing with a tutoring service like ours is that we help motivate the students to study and most of our tutors are young, in their mid-20s so they can connect with the students," says Mr. Kane. Connecting with the students is something that writing coach and essay tutor Deb Breslow tries to do when she meets with her students to help them with their college essays. In a session that some have described as therapeutic, Ms. Breslow, who visits students in their homes, plumbs their interests to come up with a good essay idea, takes assiduous notes and presents students for them to write their essays. "The essay has taken on a really, really important role in the admission process," says Ms. Breslow. "Just how important the essay is, and how many may be required in the admission to several colleges, can become very overwhelming. "Unfortunately, so many kids still don't know how to write an essay. "When it comes to lessons for bar or bat mitzvah or Judaic studies, Can-tor Barbra Lieberstein visits her clients weekly in their homes in Bergen County as well as Rockland County. Her lessons, which focus on learning Hebrew, prayers and other essentials for the bar and bat mitzvah, are personal and tailored to each student's needs. With some 70 clients, Ms. Lieberstein will now send out some of her trained staff to help prepare students, but when the event nears, she will resume tutoring the students. In addition to her bar and bat mitzvah training work, Ms. Lieberstein also teaches Hebrew in small groups from two to four people, usually clients who are unaffiliated otherwise, but want to have a religious education.

At Fusion Academy, a new progressive private school opening soon in Englewood (currently housed temporarily in Paramus) offers students the ultimate in custom-designed one-on-one learning for those from

6th through 12th grade. Students at Fusion Academy can shape their own schedules and choose their own course and then learn from a teacher in a one-teacher to one-student ratio. "Our philosophy is one of love and connection," says Stephanie Torossian, director of admissions and outreach of the school that was founded in California in 1989 and now boasts 30 campuses throughout the country. "We believe in educating the whole child, academically, socially and emotionally. This approach helps to build motivation and confidence."

In addition to the school, which accommodates students with particular needs but is neither a special education nor therapeutic program, Fusion Academy also offers a separate tutoring program for the greater community to sample or take myriad courses, from yoga to SAT preparation.

(Heidi Mae Bratt is the editor of About Our Children.)