

Finding a tutor for your child

Steps to help you navigate

By Whitney Patterson, NCC, M.Ed.

Obtaining a tutor for your child is a very common way to help increase confidence and achieve academic success. However, choosing whether your child would be a good candidate for a tutor can sometimes cause unneeded worry or stress. Along with perceived costs, sometimes the thought of just not knowing or having any experience finding a tutor is difficult.

The best way to combat these feelings is to make sure you have the right resources available, ask questions, and have support in the process. Since it may be difficult to know where to start, here are a few useful steps on how to navigate finding the right tutor for your child.

Start with the teacher: A good place to start is with the teacher when faced with the decision on whether or not a tutor is right for your child. A teacher can tell you what level help he/she needs, along with particular learning strategies that may or may not be helpful. They will be able to tell you whether homework help would be beneficial, remediation or perhaps putting in extra time.

Since the teacher is with the student every day, they can tell you what learning style might serve him/her best. An example may be how material is absorbed best, such as by reading, listening, touching, moving?

It's also important to understand what may motivate your student and what type of interests they have on the subject they're learning. Sometimes when a student is faced with a subject of low interest, they can find it challenging to learn new material and retain information.

Contact the school counselor: Chances are, the school counselor has met with your student during the school year and/or has monitored their academic progress and has insight related into your child's behavior and personality. School Counselors also keep files related to student interests, standardized test scores, and future goals and planning. In most schools, a counseling office will have a database of tutors that are used and some are in a pamphlet form or bulletin board which is easily accessible to parents.

Be sure to check to see if your school is eligible to take advantage of the SES (Supplemental Educational Service) program, which is a free tutoring program at no cost through Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Consider a peer tutor: In some cases, your child may not need a teacher or outside expert to be tutored, but rather someone in the same class who has mastered the same material. Peer tutors volunteer their time to help explain concepts and can break down material which may be easier to comprehend for some students. Some students also find that studying with another person their own age group helps them feel more connected and involved in the learning process.

Ask the school if there is a peer tutoring program available for your child and the logistics of signing up and selecting someone.

Research tutoring programs: There are many tutoring programs within businesses which can be found by researching the internet, parent publications, local paper and libraries. You can also contact your local YMCA or local university to see what tutoring services they offer. Tutoring services can include help with subject areas, study skills, retention, organization or test preparation.

Ask friends and family for referrals: Sometimes the best referrals come from a trusted source. Someone who has already experienced a tutor from a particular company can give you the insider's perspective and help get you started. It's important to realize that everyone will have a different perspective depending on their experience, so gathering this information beforehand is helpful to decipher what's best for your son or daughter.

Remember to not get discouraged and never be afraid to ask questions



when looking for a tutor for your son or daughter. Take the time to get to know your potential tutor and inquire about their qualifications, cost, references and the logistics of the tutoring experience. Remember to also include your son or daughter in the research process and make sure they play a role in deciding who is a good match. Their confidence and motivational level in the beginning stages will be significant to their overall experience and success in the end. ■

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