

ParentBrief



Tutoring: a one-on-one boost to achievement

It starts at preschool where learning is mostly play-based, then it becomes structured in the primary years and often stressful by secondary. Many kids take to every stage of learning like a duck to water. But there are lots of kids who don't, and this can be for a variety of legitimate reasons, including learning styles that play a significant part in how kids take in information. It might simply be a case of linguistic, logical and sequential learning style vs global, intuitive and hands on. Whatever the reason, kids can quickly get left behind. And when they do, it doesn't take long before they begin to believe they just can't learn. As parents, it's worth talking about tutoring well before 'I can't do it' becomes a belief.

Tutoring is powerful

Tutoring is appropriate intervention for kids of all ages. At primary level, most parents can provide tutoring. For younger kids who may need a boost with numeracy and literacy, a weekly half hour session may be all that's required. At secondary level, it may be advisable to hire a tutor experienced in a particular subject or aspect of the curriculum where your child is having difficulty. Talking with teachers will give you some background as to learning blocks or difficulties, and from this information you can decide whether to home tutor or hire someone outside the home.

Parents as tutors

To be totally effective, the interaction between you and your child needs to be relaxed and supportive. So before you begin tutoring, ensure your child feels good about you and your relationship.

- Nagging, harsh voice or short fuse are sure-fire strategies for failure.
- Spend time listening rather than always giving advice.
- Choose an appropriate place and time for tutoring.
- Use plenty of praise and encouragement.
- Avoid negative comments.
- Expect progress to be slow.
- Check with teachers as regards appropriate material to work with.
- When they're discouraged, don't you be.
- If it isn't working, don't persist. Call in professional help.

Hiring a tutor

If you've decided to call in professional help, look for someone qualified, competent and with good communication skills. To ensure the safety of your child, security checks are essential. An agency will already have vetted their staff, but if you're thinking of hiring privately, make sure the tutor has undergone a Police Check and/or Working with Children check. For more information, contact the Australian Tutoring Association www.ata.edu.au

Building positive Habits of the Mind

Kids need to believe that they are capable. If you're tutoring at home, you can help to reinforce the following positive Habits of the Mind in each session:

- I can do it.
- Just because I'm having difficulty doesn't mean I'll never learn.
- Learning depends on my hard work and trying hard,
- When I learn something, it's because I tried hard to get good at it.
- Hard work may suck, but it has to be done.
- Making mistakes is a natural part of learning and doesn't mean I'm stupid.

Don't try to accomplish too much in the initial tutoring sessions. It's more important that you and your child enjoy each session. Listen to your child and observe his approach to his work without jumping in too quickly. Kids need feedback, so monitor each session and let them know where they're making progress, even if it is painstakingly slow!