

EDUCATIONAL SECTION



# NOTES FROM THE CLASSROOM

By Julie Staley



## Private Tutoring; time well invested

I RECENTLY read a very interesting article in *The Telegraph* which suggested that there is a growing sense that private tuition is the way forward.

Their initial comment 'When you are paying upwards of £15,000 a year to have your child privately educated, the prospect of forking out for extra tuition may not sit well with you' is a valid one. However, this is exactly what is happening as parents strive to help their child progress from whatever level they are now.

It may be early in the academic year, but many of you reading this may be considering or have previously considered engaging a tutor either at home or in an academy for your child. There are varied reasons for engaging extra support and here on the island there are many such individuals who offer these services but it is important to choose wisely. Consider what you want and what you would consider as effective tutoring.

In my position as director of MTA, I often have the opportunity to stand back and observe students arriving for their mid-week tutoring classes. We support students of various ages from 6 years old up to 18 and beyond. Some turn up wearier than others, but the overriding feeling that I always observe is how they are all greeted by the team of tutors here at MTA. Every student is welcomed into the academy with positivity and energy. Even though our tutors are extremely busy their approach continues to exude energy and encourage the student to want to get the best out of and enjoy their learning experience.

Regarding tutoring, several things are becoming even more apparent; the number of students working with tutors continues to grow and working with students on a 1:1 or small group basis is immensely gratifying for both the tutor and the tutee. There is no stigma to be-

ing tutored; all high performing individuals have coaches or private mentors pushing them to their best ability.

However, it is not easy to get the right person for the job. I am extremely proud that the team here fit their roles fantastically well, using their key strengths and abilities to their very best.

Tutors will routinely improve student performance and increase students' efficiency if they are the right person. I have found several consistent factors that continuously make for successful tutors:

### Ability to build strong, personal relationships with their students

- Tutors fill a different role than teachers and parents; that puts them in a unique position to support students. Personal relationships are the foundation to student success; the more connected a student feels to his or her tutor, the more the tutors creates trust and respect. An excellent tutor will spend time listening to his /her student and building their relationship.

A recent study found that 95 percent of students were more likely to increase self-study and homework completion with a tutor who has built a strong personal relationship, whilst 86 percent were more likely to set goals, use a weekly planning agenda and generally improve their organisational skills.

### Ability to communicate at all levels

- Communication and collaboration with all parties are key factors to student success. When tutors focus on goal setting, creating benchmark and planning forwards, this sets students up well. A successful tutor should build an individual learning plan in collaboration with parents, teachers and the

student themselves. When tutors can communicate and gain insight from key adults in students' lives it has been proven that up to 83% are more likely to participate in class.

### Successful tutors have specific content expertise

- A truly successful tutor can make learning real, relevant and rigorous. Such tutors are experts in their academic content - they know the subject's concepts, ideas and problems inside out. Tutors can engage students more fully if they turn assignments into project based activities and relevant to what they have to learn. Where tutors make the learning appropriately rigorous; challenging enough, but not too tough that the student gets frustrated and stops trying, the student will show visible growth and improved academic achievement.

### Ability to teach the student to learn independently

- As a tutor the ultimate goal is to help the student to become an independent learner. He /she will not be there in the examination giving all the answers, the student has to think for themselves. This is probably the most important element of our roles. You must remember we are not miracle workers or solely responsible for the student's progress. This must come from the student themselves. Sometimes this is the hardest part of the tutor's role as most students do not want to take on the responsibility of learning independently.

### Building the ideal partnership works

- In essence we are looking to build the ideal partnership. Excellent tutors recognise the importance of aligning their in-

struction with what is going on in the classroom. Teachers and parents see the student everyday whereas the tutor may only have the opportunity once per week.

The idea is that together we leverage the learning from each other. Teachers do not have time to personalise the learning enough in the classroom; therefore a regular communication between tutor and teacher will not only check progress but review strengths and weaknesses and can identify where key areas for growth are needed.

Parents often set the tone for the student's relationship with a tutor and have the opportunity to reinforce lessons. As a parent you should talk to your child's tutor regularly as well. The learning goes in both directions, from tutor to student, student to parent and back again. Being prepared to ask your child what they have learnt at school or in their tutoring session is a great way to increase understanding.

Some schools, however, do express reservations about private tutoring and believe that parents should be able to rely upon the school entirely. They believe

that children are already under a lot of pressure, it's already a long day and there's a danger that children will lose the love of learning.

However, for those pupils who are struggling, tutoring can boost confidence and give previously underperforming children a new feeling of success. For those students who are already performing well tutoring can offer scope for fine tuning exam and revision techniques. Even something as simple as a change in environment can be an added boost to how they embrace their learning.

In summary many parents have turned to or will in the future turn to private tutoring for their children to improve and develop their skills. It is often an additional expense on top of an already hefty private education bill.

Therefore, my advice is to fully understand what you are getting for your money. Consider what you are expecting, what is being delivered and the overall effect on the academic achievements of your child.

Effective tutoring works but it starts with the right connectivity in the first place.

