

Hire a tutor?

If your child needs extra help in school, private tutoring can be the answer

By Lisa Evans

As summer comes to a close, parents begin to prepare their children for the classroom. For most students, back-to-school shopping involves new clothes, crisp notebooks and sharp pencils. Parents of newcomer children may want to add another item to the shopping list — one that can't be found in a store, but in the classifieds pages and community centre bulletin boards — a tutor.

Private tutoring helps improve grades, build self-esteem, establish positive study habits and can be an invaluable resource for newcomer children who are adjusting to a new school system or for whom English is a second language.

Helen Chen emigrated from China five years ago and hired a tutor for her 11-year-old son, Steven, to help him with his English and French studies. His tutor, a retired schoolteacher Chen met through her church, works with him for one hour per week and has helped Steven improve his grades and develop better work habits.

"The tutor asks him to complete the task in a very short time," says Chen, who has been pleased with the improvements in her son's concentration and focus.

Aimee Oabel is a Grade 7 and 8 teacher in Toronto and works as a private tutor during the evenings. She has seen great improvements in the grades,

concentration and self-confidence of her tutoring students. "You get to work on their specific needs," says Oabel, adding that the one-on-one attention from a tutor often gives shy students the confidence they need to ask the questions they feel uncomfortable asking in front of a class of their peers.

A tutor can also help to clarify difficult concepts by showing them in a different light. "When you have a class of 30 kids, not everybody sees it in the way that it was taught. Kids need another viewpoint and it's not always offered in class," says Oabel.

When hiring a tutor, it's important to have a clear understanding of what they can offer. Oabel says parents can expect tutors to help improve student's dedication, but adds that they aren't miracle workers. "I can give them focus on a particular subject, but they'll have to do some of the work ... and take responsibility as well," says Oabel, who worries that parents may think a tutor can change their child's grades from a D to an A automatically.

A tutor is not only useful to students who suffer from low grades. Oabel says she is often hired simply to provide consistency, ensuring students are getting enough practice in a subject — something that is especially important in mastering concepts in math and languages (like English!). 🍁