



# Teachable moments

## How the use of a tutor can help your child succeed

by JOANNE SALLAY



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### COSTCO CONNECTION

Costco warehouses and Costco.ca carry computers, pens, paper and more to help make the most of tutoring.

**L**ike many parents fearing their kids would fall behind during the pandemic, Costco members Laura and Dave of Aurora, Ontario, began looking at academic options. “We started online tutoring for our son in grade 1 French immersion during the first COVID shutdown, and it was the best decision we could have made,” Dave tells the *Connection*. “When school returned in person, he had not lost any knowledge and had gained language. The biggest impact was his increased confidence using French in the classroom, which translated to becoming fluent.”

As the head of a tutoring service, I want to answer some of the most common questions my team and I receive about both online and in-person support.

#### Does my child need a tutor?

Students of all ages can benefit from tutoring—as young as kindergarten all the way up to grade 12. Children falling behind in class or simply not feeling stimulated enough are clear indicators that tutoring will be helpful. It may also be recommended by a teacher, child psychol-

ogist or other professional who works closely with your child. If your child is asking for help, this is a good sign they are motivated to learn.

#### How does a tutor help?

This answer will vary based on the goals for your child. It’s beneficial to articulate to the tutor what you are looking to accomplish, whether it’s support with homework and test preparation, essay writing, learning strategies or additional practice with reading, writing and numeracy skills. While the amount of time needed will be different for each learner, most providers have minimum requirements for online and in-person sessions.

#### When is the best time to start?

According to Costco member Ron Lancaster, professor emeritus in mathematics education at the University of Toronto’s Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, “It’s better to act earlier versus scrambling before a test. Earlier can mean obtaining help in younger grades or in

the actual course. When students rely on memory alone versus understanding concepts, it’s game over. They may scrape through the test, but a month later they have forgotten it all. Working proactively with a tutor can help [students] build and retain knowledge.”

#### What should I look for when hiring a tutor?

There are many factors to consider, such as subject-matter expertise, teaching style, availability, rate, experience with the curriculum and professional background. This may lead you to a professional tutoring service specialized to find the right match and to monitor academic progress.

#### Time management

The average tutoring session goes by quickly; these tips can help to make the most out of your child’s time:

**Connect with the tutor.**

Ultimately, it’s important to select an educator your child will relate to and enjoy learning with.

#### Are there alternative extra-help options to consider?

While tutoring with a qualified educator is helpful, there are other options that can be explored separately or combined. Additional sources of assistance include extra support offered by the teacher, peer tutors, study buddies, homework clubs and family members.

#### Can tutoring help a child with a learning disability?

Extra support is commonly recommended for students diagnosed with a learning disability and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Tutoring can be helpful for students to develop strategies in time management, planning and organization, which are useful skills to master even for students who do not have a learning disability.

#### What are reasonable and realistic expectations?

Regardless of the student’s age and aspirations, there are no quick fixes. From my experience, the most productive and effective tutoring is consistent and provided a minimum of once per week. For the best results, students will also need to put in sufficient time to practice and study on their own. This is the recipe to see improvement in academic marks and an increase in self-confidence.

As for Laura and Dave, after using a tutor for almost two years, they put it on hold. “Our son was where he needed to be. We decided we will resume tutoring again when we need it,” says Laura. ■



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#### Online tutoring

While there are merits to both in-person and online tutoring, virtual sessions have advantages:

**Best match.** Your tutor doesn’t have to live near you, which is beneficial for specialized needs and requests.

**Tutoring can happen anywhere.** Options include your home, the local library or even a vacation cottage with good Wi-Fi.

**More flexibility.** Online tutoring is less rigid in terms of scheduling and time commitment for sessions.

**Potential cost savings.** Virtual sessions will likely be less expensive than in-person support.

**Digital literacy skills.** Students can practice vital computer skills that can help to prepare them for the future.—JS