

The Thinking Cap

Fall 2009

Volume 1, Issue 3

Alexandra in Tutorland

[alexandra's musings](#)



Goal Setting: Why I will not be the next Serena Williams

After watching the world's best tennis players compete at the US Open this summer, I went home dreaming of a perfect backhand. However, when I found myself on a tennis court several weeks later, I realized that setting my goal at emulating Serena Williams' serve wasn't realistic nor was it productive. I began to think about the importance of setting goals and how to find the right level target. Goals should be ambitious enough to challenge and stimulate you to learn and grow. If goals are too much of a stretch, you can run the risk of being discouraged and getting stuck, and possibly losing motivation. It is important to think about what you want to accomplish and set challenging, but realistic goals that you can feel inspired to reach. Think about these tips as you continue to formulate personal and academic goals for this school year:

1. Set multilayer goals.

Make goals based on broad desires so that you have a reaching point. Then set smaller, more specific goals that will help you feel a sense of accomplishment. For example, if you want to improve your grade in science, plan specific goals such as re-reading your notes daily and meeting with your teacher once a week.

2. Write it down.

Deciding that you want to improve your homework track record is a good place to start. Writing a daily note to remind yourself of the goal will help you focus on that task. The note will also hold you accountable to yourself.

3. Give yourself time.

Changes in your behavior don't happen overnight. If you expect that you'll alter your behavior quickly, you've either set the bar too low or you've set yourself up to get stuck in a motivational rut. Give yourself a realistic timeframe for reaching your goal.

Send your questions to:

info@thinkingcapstutoring.com

Sense and Sensibility

you ask, we answer

Q: Sometimes I have trouble focusing while reading, especially when it's from a textbook, like history. What is the best way for me to stay focused when the material is so boring I can't concentrate?

A: Try reading in intervals, like 15 minutes at a time, and taking 5 minute breaks in between. For example, history books are often divided into sections with bold headings. Try reading 2-3 sections at a time and then taking a break. When you finish each section, try to think about the bigger picture. In between sessions, get a glass of water, send a quick text and then get back to work.

Inside this Issue

A Tale of One Tutor

Great Expectations

Sense and Sensibility

The (academic) Odyssey

Much Ado About Learning

Cat's Cradle

Great Expectations

ü Check out Alexandra's article in the October issue of Teens&Twins

ü Join the new Thinking Caps Tutoring Facebook group

ü New York Cares October 17th, 2009

ü ACT October 24, 2009 December 12, 2009

ü SAT October 10, 2009 November 7, 2009 December 5, 2009



Much Ado About Learning

our tips and helpful hints

Here is what we do to stay focused during study time.

I'm a big fan of music while studying, and constantly making and updating to-do lists and outlines. Writing everything out while I'm reading really helps me learn things faster.

—Denny Simon

The way that stay focused when I study is by taking a lot of breaks. I set goals for myself as I study, and when I get something done I reward myself with a break. For example, if I map it out that I have three things to do, after I finish one I will take a half hour break and then do the second.

—Sam Matson

To stay focused when I'm studying, I separate myself from all my gadgets (laptop, cell phone, iPod...) and settle into a comfy spot with a bottle of water or some tea. Then I go at it until I feel my mind starting to wander, at that point I'll give myself a quick break and then get back to work.

—Ali Cardia

I make a to-do list that breaks down my assignments so I that I can cross things off and feel productive! I listen to music, munch on grapes and carrots, and take short breaks between tasks. When I write a paper, I do my outline, then take a shower or go for a run before writing the rest of my paper.

—Nasha Patel

If I'm having trouble getting into whatever it is I'm doing, I start "reading out loud" - by this, I mean that I literally start mouthing or mentally saying whatever it is to myself, including directions, History or English passages, Spanish vocabulary, or even Math problems.

—Ana McGann

The (academic) Odyssey

review of education news

Jill Lauren, learning specialist and author, sits down with *The Thinking Cap* to chat about her new book *That's Like Me!*

TC: What inspired you to write *That's Like Me!*?

Jill: After verbally sharing success stories with one of my students who had been feeling like she was the only one who struggled, she suggested, "There should be a book about these stories." I agreed, and then set out to meet people with whom most kids could identify, rather than super stars.

TC: What motivated you to work with kids with learning differences?

Jill: Since I was in first grade I wanted to be a teacher. In college, I learned about the paradox of dyslexia, which is the most prevalent learning difference, and I became fascinated and excited by the challenge of teaching smart people who had trouble learning to read and write.

TC: Why is it important for students to learn about LD and hear stories of other individuals with LD?

Jill: Students who have difficulty in school often harbor a secret fear that they are not smart. By talking about learning differences and sharing stories of others' difficulties in school and strategies for success, kids learn that they, too, can find ways to face a challenge and develop an area of strength. They also might begin to consider that learning differently is not something of which to be ashamed, and, oftentimes, the difference can be used to one's advantage.

TC: We love the "Write Your Own Story" chapter. We're curious to know about a time when school was hard for you.

Jill: School was hard for me when I didn't do my homework! It took until college for me to learn how to manage my time properly.





A Tale of One Tutor

lessons we learned along the way



The time that even recess bored me.

The tradition in my big family was to walk to school every morning together. Even before I was old enough to go to school, I walked with my mom and older sisters every day. By the time I was ready to go to kindergarten, I knew the route like the back of my hand.

When I started school, like most kids, my favorite part of the day was recess. One day I was outside for recess when I suddenly realized that I was the only one still on the playground. Anxiously, I wondered where all of my classmates had gone, and where my teacher was. I got scared, thinking

the worst had happened to my teachers and classmates: what if they've all been kidnapped or I've been kicked out of school? Or maybe they just didn't like me anymore. *If they didn't want me to go inside with them, I must be allowed to leave.* As I saw it, there was nothing much for me to do at school with everyone gone, and so I decided on the natural choice of any kid: to walk home.

Just as I had practiced for so many years, I walked left out of the school's driveway, down the street three blocks, turned left onto my street and showed up in front of my door. My mom, who had happily dropped me off at school just a few hours earlier opened the door,

surprised: "What in the world are you doing here!?" I don't remember this part, but as my mom recalls, I looked up at her and said "I was outside at recess, and there wasn't anything to do!"

My mom promptly marched me right back up to school. When we got to my classroom my teacher was shocked and extremely relieved as apparently there was a minor search going on for my body. As far as I'm concerned, I had made my recess that day a bit more interesting.

—Sophia M Lerdahl



Cat's Cradle

tantalizing brain ticklers

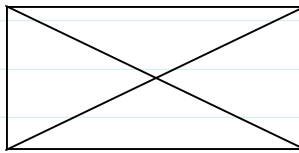
Math madness.

1. I walk home from school in 30 minutes and my brother takes 40 minutes. My brother left 5 minutes before I did. In how many minutes will I overtake him?

2. Make these 3 lines into 6, no breaking into pieces



3. How many triangles are there?



4. A man spent (in this order) a third of his life to date in the US, a sixth of it in India, 12 years in Egypt, half the remainder of his time in Australia, and as long in Canada as he spent in India.

Where did he spend his fortieth birthday?

5. Arrange the digits 1—6 to make the statement correct.

$$\bigcirc \bigcirc \bigcirc + \bigcirc \bigcirc = \bigcirc$$

1 2 3

4 5 6

6. When written as a word; what is the smallest positive whole number with the letter "a" in it?



Thinking Caps Tutoring is an innovative, after-school educational company that helps students acquire the skills and confidence needed to succeed in school, college, and beyond. TCT, through an individualized, descriptive screening process, matches students with student tutors best capable of overcoming a child's weak points and emphasizing strengths. Services provided at TCT include subject tutoring, skills coaching, homework support, standardized test prep and more.

For more information about TCT or any of the programs, please call us at 917.779.8183 or send an email to info@thinkingcapstutoring.com.

© Thinking Caps 2008. All rights reserved.

If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please email info@thinkingcapstutoring.com with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line.