

# The Thinking Cap

Fall 2011

Volume 3, Issue 4

## Alexandra in Tutorland

[alexandra's musings](#)



### What's New at Thinking Caps Tutoring?

Glad you asked! We have been working really hard to prepare for the new academic year. Although we had initially planned to kick back and have a relaxing summer, July and August turned into a whirlwind of activity. We were thrilled to work with many wonderful students in New York, the Hamptons, and Austin, TX. Meanwhile, back at 'home base' we dedicated much of the summer to updating our SAT training course, putting the finishing touches on our expanded Study Skills Program, and welcoming new members to our team. We are excited for the new school year and wanted to share with you some information on what's coming up:

- \* TCT is teaming up with JCC Austin for **Homework Heroes**
  - \* We're proud to announce the publication of our **SAT Demystified** workbook (McGraw-Hill, 2011)
  - \* Expanding on our popular college offerings, we will now be working with families on comprehensive college applications support through **Thinking Caps College Guidance**
- We also continue to offer our full line-up of unique academic programs including:
- \* **Academic Subjects** *Writing, Science, Mathematics, Foreign Language, History*
  - \* **Exam Preparation** *ISEE/SSAT, SHSAT, TAKS, Regents, SAT, SAT Subject Tests, ACT, AP*
  - \* **Study Skills Coaching:** *Organization, Time Management, and Study Skills*

Pease join us for another productive and fun season.  
Happy back-to-school, everyone!

Send your questions to:  
[info@thinkingcapstutoring.com](mailto:info@thinkingcapstutoring.com)

## Sense and Sensibility

[you ask, we answer](#)

**Question:** I think I'm overcommitting myself. The year hasn't even started and I'm feeling stressed by the classes and extracurriculars. I don't know what to do.

**Answer:** Finding a balance is important. Although you probably enjoy all the activities you've committed yourself to, it is important to consider your schedule and budget your time and energy. If you're going into the school year feeling overwhelmed then the schedule you've set for yourself is not realistic. You will ultimately feel like you cannot do a good job on all of your activities. Think about how much time you have, prioritize your activities, and plan out your time. By allowing enough energy for the responsibilities you select, you'll be able to focus and accomplish more.

### Inside this Issue

- A Tale of One Tutor
- Great Expectations
- Sense and Sensibility
- Adventures of an Austinite
- Much Ado About Learning
- Cat's Cradle

### Great Expectations

ü Check out Alexandra's tips on study skills in September's *Parenting*.

ü The TCT's *SAT Demystified* (McGraw-Hill, 2011) is in bookstores now. Get your copy!

ü We're holding workshops for parents and students. Check our [schedule](#) for upcoming events.

ü Join us at Austin's JCC for our new study skills class: Homework Heroes.

ü Good Luck to our Fall test takers!





## Much Ado About Learning

### our tips and helpful hints

**Getting psyched for the new year. Here's what we do.**

I always put a bunch of new music on my iPod the night before the first day of school. This "walking to/from school mix" would always get me excited for the upcoming year while making it, and certainly proved equally stimulating in the mornings before school as I set out on foot to go learn.

—Max Savage

The first day of school is just around the corner, and guess what...no more lazy mornings. It's time to get back on a proper sleep schedule! A few weeks before school starts, I set my wake-up time and stick to it like glue (yes, even on the weekends); immediately after waking up, I expose myself to 20 minutes of bright light. I follow these two steps to make sure I wake up alert and on time, every time!

—John Cuenca

Remember the good times from last year. Take out those fantastic school projects you did that have been tucked away for the summer. Open them up and remind yourself of the new, fun times ahead!

—Elaine Kovacs

New school years--like new friends, new ideas, and new years--are a chance to learn something unique. Find something you are passionate about and make it your drive to push you through a school year. Allow yourself to find new perspectives.

—Elisa Quiroz

To get ready for the new school year, I like to plan out a weekly calendar for myself of my new class schedule and activities. This plan not only helps to get me organized but gets me pumped for all of the things I am going to experience, do, and learn with the start of a new academic year!

—Parisa Parsafar



## Adventures of an Austinite

### keep Austin learning

Greetings from Austin, Texas! This past summer I, like many other Texans, quickly found my way to the nearest source of cool water (though they are few and far between). I spent countless hours enjoying the delicious respite without a care or concern in the world. Peering up into the cloudless sky, I often wondered how I could transfer that feeling of peace and serenity into the new school year.

Back to school is an exciting yet often stressful and chaotic time for students. The anxiety of new teachers, alarm clocks, and homework is enough to make even the most committed scholars cringe. As I made my way down through the calm current of the Guadalupe River, I came to realize that back to school didn't have to be all stress and no fun.

By following a few of the tips below, you too can enjoy the new semester without all of the worries and concerns.

- Two weeks before school starts begin to set your alarm clock back to "school time"
- Collaboratively create a calendar to indicate time dedicated to homework, dinner, sports, and fun
- The best back to school deals are often reserved for the early birds. Carve out some shopping time to pick up supplies in early-mid August

The new academic year always brings much surprise and excitement. Remember, TCT will be there every step of the way



rooting for your child to succeed and achieve his/her full academic potential. As always, we will be offering individualized one-on-one support to students grades 2-12. For families interested in small-group learning, check out our new "Homework Heroes" afterschool study hall located conveniently at the Jewish Community Center (7500 Hart Lane).

We look forward to another successful academic year in Austin!





# The (academic) Odyssey

review of education news

## 3 Non-Verbal Behavior Tips for Teachers and Parents

In the age of digital communication, it is becoming harder and harder for students to connect with teachers and parents. As teens and kids spend more time looking at screens and communicating through devices, social literacy skills are waning. One of the skills I have learned to use to counter-balance sometimes hard to reach students is to read and react to their non-verbal behavior. Reading non-verbal behavior not only allows me to connect and understand what is going on for uncommunicative students, but also teach them how important it is to use person-to-person communication. Here are my three favorite non-verbal cues:

- **Battle Stance.** When teens often feel defensive, attacked or aggressive they subconsciously go into 'battle stance.' This is when their legs are spread wide apart and their hands are in fists on their hips. When in this position our body is literally preparing to fight. When you see this you instantly know where the student is coming from. Disarming is as simple as having them sit down or change body positions by moving to another room. This will often put them instantly into a more open frame of mind.
- **Object Blocking.** When kids are anxious they often place barriers in front of them as a way to protect themselves. You often see kids hug notebooks to their chest or pull their backpack to them. Know that when this happens your student is afraid of what you have to tell them. Tell them not to worry and stay calm.
- **One-sided mouth raise.** When someone lifts one side of their mouth in what is called a smirk, this is actually a facial expression for contempt. Many confuse this with happiness. Be aware of this expression and when you see it ask your child what they are feeling contemptuous about.



I like to be transparent about using these techniques with students. When students are shocked at my ability to pick up on their mood or upset I tell them that I am paying attention to their non-verbal cues. This always piques their interest and then I explain how important it is to have real life communication because you cannot read body language on IM or Facebook. This encourages kids to bring fights, discussions and relationships offline.

—Vanessa Van Petten

Vanessa Van Petten is an author and Youthologist. She created RadicalParenting.com —the only parenting advice website written by kids and teens. She specializes in using non-verbal behavior and human lie-detection techniques for parenting.

## Cat's Cradle

tantalizing brain ticklers

*I never knew...*

Maine is the only state with a one-syllable name.

The poison arrow frogs of South and Central America are the most poisonous animals in the world.

The Nile is the longest river in the world.

Since a diamond is the hardest known substance, the only thing that can cut a diamond is a diamond.

**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](mailto:info@thinkingcapstutoring.com).



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