

# The Thinking Cap

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## Alexandra in Tutorland

[alexandra's musings](#)



### A Great Way to Start the New (School) Year

With a new school year upon us, many of us are making big plans and setting the bar high for expectations. A clean slate is in front of us and we have major goals for ourselves. Unfortunately, sometimes with big goals there can be big disappointments. It is easy to get ahead of yourself; dreaming big without laying out careful plans on how to reach your goals. So as the new school year begins and we start filling out our to-do lists, here are some tips for making your big goals happen:

1. **Think big.** Don't be afraid to set serious goals for yourself. What do you want to improve on for this year? What's something that you did really well last year and want to knock out of the ballpark? No matter how big your goal is, you'll be able to reach it with careful planning.
2. **Start small.** Once you've set the big target, break the goal down into manageable pieces. Although big goals are very motivating, it is easier to work through smaller, more manageable tasks. Think about the steps you need to take to reach your main objective. Make a list of to-dos that build up toward your goal.
3. **Set deadlines.** Thinking about achieving a big goal is easy. Actually reaching that goal can be difficult. You are now equipped with doable tasks that will bring you to your big goal. Give yourself deadlines or "due dates" to complete each of the mini-goals. As you work through your list, cross off

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**Send your questions to:**

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

## Sense and Sensibility

**you ask, we answer**

**Question:** I'm going into 11<sup>th</sup> grade and everyone is talking about test prep. I've heard that some students score higher on the ACT and others on the SAT. Which test should I take?

**Answer:** It is great to hear that you are thinking about which test will be a better fit for you. We'll start by saying that there is no one test you *must* take – most colleges accept both exams – so it is your choice to make. There is a lot of information out there about the differences between the tests and the types of tests suitable for specific exam takers. However, the most important consideration is which test is right for you based on results and how the tests *feel*. If you haven't already, take a diagnostic in as realistic conditions as possible. Compare the results of the tests as well as which exam feels easier, which experience causes less stress, and how you feel about the time constraints of each exam. Pick the test that feels the most comfortable and start prepping!

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### Great Expectations

ü Hey Houston! Alexandra will be speaking at Neuhaus on 9/21. Stop by for tips on *Parents as Study Partners*.

ü Check out *Tutor in a Book* for tips on starting off the school year on the right foot.

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

ü Good Luck to our Fall test takers!

[Have questions?](#)

Let's chat!

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## Much Ado About Learning

### our tips and helpful hints



#### **Our favorite supplies for back-to-school.**

My favorite school supply is the FiveStar Flex NoteBinder because it is a binder and spiral all in one! I can keep multiple subjects in one notebook and store lots of handouts too. The notebook/binder holds up really well, so I can use it for the whole year!

—Hannah James, Austin

Our favorite school supply is Post-It Notes! For keeping track of to-dos to taking concise notes, the colorful, sticky pads are perfect. We love having a bunch of them in assorted colors - it keeps what we are writing interesting and the smaller size make our to-do lists seem smaller than they really are; making tasks more manageable.

—Nicole Rivera Perez and Holley David, New York

My most cherished school supply has always been a day planner. If I didn't write down all of my assignments and due dates and plan for long-term deadlines, I would surely forget some assignments and miss some deadlines entirely. I wouldn't spend a day without my planner.

—Karrin Varucene, New York

My most cherished school supply is the be a mini-stapler. There are so many instances where you forget to staple that two-page report, and you don't want to bother to ask a teacher for it lest you look unprepared! Having a mini stapler in your backpack will save you countless times, and even win you some friends who also forgot to staple their homework!

—Kathy Kougentakis, New York

A compass can be an extremely valuable tool for any high school student. I find that a high quality compass with a center wheel for adjustment makes a huge difference for a student struggling with geometric constructions.

—James Farre, Austin

I love the Papermate pencils that have a rotating replaceable big erasers because I go through erasers so quickly, it is nice to have one that lasts longer.

—Kerrie Wesley, Houston



## A Tale of One Tutor

### lessons we learned along the way

#### **Inspiring teachers.**

My high school teachers strongly influenced the way I approach tutoring and teaching. I went to a small independent school, The Urban School in San Francisco, that valued original thinking, community, and kindness as much as academic rigor and achievement. As a teenager, I probably took my high school experience somewhat for granted, but I realize now, as a teacher and graduate student, how special and important it was. My high school took the goal to "educate the whole person" seriously. I remember my US history teacher being as enthusiastic at our tennis team matches as he was about the material in class,

where he would literally stand on his desk and jump up and down with fervor over our discussions of the Civil Rights movement. My English teacher was just as supportive about my senior year art show as he was about my creative writing in his class; I remember him discussing the connections between the two, and making me think more broadly about myself as a critical thinker. As a future English teacher, calculus was not my strongest subject in high school, but my teacher tried to get me to see it visually, and to talk about the ideas behind the numbers; she relentlessly tried to find an angle that fit with my own

interests and learning style. My high school teachers genuinely valued students' individual personalities and they took us seriously. I distinctly remember one classmate who was a little withdrawn freshman year. He had a mohawk that he would hold up everyday with glue. At other schools, his awkward personality and glue-encrusted mohawk may not have been appreciated, and he may have drifted into the background. But at Urban, the teachers took time to get to know him and to nurture his different interests and talents. By senior year, everyone at school was familiar with his wry humor and illustrations

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# The (academic) Odyssey

review of education news

## Understanding and Managing Anxiety

Know thyself. The ancient Greek aphorism still holds true today. Understanding our own minds, especially our patterns of thinking and feeling, enables us to more successfully navigate the world. Learning how to better understand and regulate our worries is of particular importance. With the new school year, concerns range from “what will I wear?” and “will I fit in?” to “will I do well enough academically?” and “will my unique challenges hold me back?”

Parents play a big role in helping their children develop the abilities to identify, label, and regulate their anxiety. One way parents can do this is by modeling a reflective stance on their own thoughts and feelings. As the school year begins, parents can explicitly model the ways they deal with stress in their work lives. Another way is directly and empathically asking children about the things that make them anxious and then discussing those topics with their children in an age appropriate manner. The goal of such conversations is to clarify what makes children anxious and brainstorm ways to regulate that anxiety. Helping children recognize that anxiety can be managed by being discussed and addressed is an important lesson in life.

Teenagers may be more resistant to opening up about their anxiety. One strategy parents may try is voicing some of the anxiety they had when they were younger and that they believe may be pertinent to their children currently. Teenagers may feel that their parents are simply walking down memory lane when they see them casually reflect on past anxiety and the ways in which that anxiety was managed. Yet such an approach may lower the guard of some teenagers, who may then feel more comfortable opening up about some of their own anxiety. A goal for parents is to subtly normalize some of the anxiety their children are experiencing and making that anxiety something that can be better understood and more effectively managed.

The beginning of the new school year is a great time to start having conversations with your child about his/her concerns. Starting these dialogues and applying age-appropriate strategies will help children identify and regulate their anxiety in positive and healthy ways.

—Ronald Wasser, Ph.D.

Dr. Wasser is a licensed clinical psychologist in New York and New Jersey providing adolescents and adults with practical, insight-oriented psychotherapy. You can learn more by visiting [dronaldwasser.com](http://dronaldwasser.com).

## A Great Way to Start the New (School) Year

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your achievements. By seeing your progress, you'll continue to keep yourself motivated.

4. **Reward yourself.** Congratulations! You've reached your big goal. Now it is time to celebrate. Often, by the time we achieve success, we quickly move onto the next task. Instead, take some time to celebrate all the great work you've done. Give yourself a little reward – a day off, a trip to the movies, or whatever makes you feel even better about your accomplishments. Not only is it fun to enjoy the success, but the positive experience will help you stay motivated for whatever next big goal you set for yourself.

Welcome back to another exciting school year!

## Inspiring teachers.

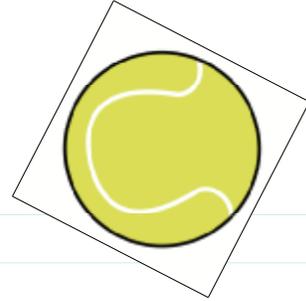
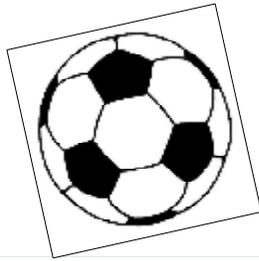
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from the comic books he produced in Studio Art.

In many ways, my high school teachers had a greater impact on me than my college or graduate school

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**Inspiring teachers.**

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professors. I try to follow their approach, and to take their acceptance and appreciation for all our idiosyncrasies, talents, bad moods, and challenges with me into my classroom or tutoring session. I think that knowing my Thinking Caps students as people and learning about their interests and personalities—one student's obsession with the Knicks or another's dry sense of humor-- is just as important, and indeed connected to, supporting their academic goals.

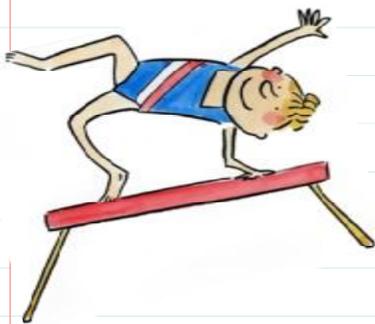


—Nicole Berkin, New York

## Cat's Cradle

**tantalizing brain ticklers**

***We studied-up on sports during the summer Olympics. How many answers do you know to our Olympics trivia questions?***



1. What sport features strikers and sweepers?
2. What racket sport involves bashing a bird?
3. Britain and which other country have won gold in every Summer Games?
4. What apparatus do male gymnasts refer to as "the pig"?
5. What year was the first summer Olympiad televised live?
6. How many minutes does an Olympic basketball game last?

**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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