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The ES Difference

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PAGE 30



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The **ES** Difference

For nearly five decades, Educational Services has been taking a customized approach to helping local students prepare for the next chapter of their lives

by LINDSEY GETZ | photography by ALLURE WEST STUDIOS

For many, even the thought of standardized testing is enough to induce a cold sweat. After all, the final score of these timed tests could literally make or break a college application. It is stressful, yet it is also a necessary part of the college admission process.

As colleges continue to give increasing attention to standardized test scores, the tutoring business has really grown. Educational Services—ES for short—has been in business for 46 years, and it continues to employ the go-to experts in the field. Offering training for the SATs, ACTs, ISEEs, GREs, subject tests and more, ES provides one-on-one instruction, whereby each

student learns from a skilled professional who is expertly matched to his or her needs.

“As we work with each student, we home in on the problems where they are struggling most,” says Avery Snyder, the founder of ES, which has offices in St. Davids, Chadds Ford and Wyndmoor. “We teach students traps, tricks, shortcuts and strategies to pick up time and accuracy. Oftentimes what the student needs most is repetition—just a lot of practice. And everything they work on in our offices is something that has appeared on a real test. We don’t simulate questions. We provide actual previous test questions. With that repetition and practice, students start to get it.”

The SAT changes over in March to a redesigned format, and ES is well equipped to handle the transition.

“All of our instructors are well versed and fully trained to handle the changes in the redesigned test,” says Snyder. “At this point, many families are asking us how to determine which test to take since the redesigned SAT is much more similar to the ACT.”

To resolve this common question, ES expanded its offerings to include ACT and SAT diagnostic testing—eliminating the guesswork can help reassure parents that course time is used wisely on a test that will better suit the student’s academic abilities and bring success.

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Snyder says ES does not do “one size fits all,” and this customized approach makes the tutoring incredibly effective. All students are different as individuals, according to Snyder.

“We try to keep the staff half male and half female,” he adds. “Most of the staff is in their 20s and 30s and come to work wearing casual attire. The instructors work with students on a first-name basis, and the idea is to make students comfortable. Our instructors are relatable and not at all intimidating. It’s a very comfortable environment.”

Under Pressure

Feeling comfortable is important when a student is training for a high-pressure test. Helping students work through that anxiety is a big part of the process, according to Alexandra McIlvaine, director of ES’s St. Davids office.

“Many students are nervous, even when taking the practice tests we offer,” she says. “Getting past those nerves is part of the process. But the more practice they do, the better. By the time they take the official test, they’re very comfortable with it.”

“Careless errors” are some of the biggest mistakes students make, McIlvaine says, as most students feel under pressure to rush through the test. Through practice, ES teaches students to take their time and pace themselves.

“The practice tests we offer every Saturday and Sunday are something additional—free of charge—but that sets us apart,” Snyder says. “While we do send students home with practice tests as homework, this is similar to the actual experience because you’re taking the test under timed conditions and in a room with other students.”

This true-to-life practice scenario helps students not only get used to taking the test while the clock is ticking but also helps them adjust to the full-fatigue factor and to simple distractions, such as nose blowing, coughing or pencil tap-



ping. While ES aims to replicate the actual test-taking experience, there is one significant difference that most students don’t mind. In fact, they consider it a special treat.

“We serve home-made brownies, hot from the oven, during testing breaks,” Snyder says. “It’s a small gesture, but something we find students really look forward to. It all goes back to making them feel more comfortable and at ease as they get used to taking the test.”

Though one might think these services are only for students who are struggling, the fact is that ES prepares students across the entire spectrum of test-taking abilities.

“We may see students with a low score, who have a very specific goal in mind in order to be able to play sports or just get into their first-choice school,” McIlvaine says. “And we may see students who already have a high score but are going for perfect [scores]. We’re also well equipped to deal with students who have all ranges of learning differences. We’re able to work with all levels of academic ability.”

One 11th-grade student from King of Prussia experienced what has become known as “the ES difference.” The student came in with straight A’s but wanted to do even better, according to the student’s father, Lawrence Deuber.

“In the end, [my son] was able to raise his test score by 240 points, putting him at a 2320 and making him incredibly competitive,” he says. “That can be the difference between being Ivy League competitive or not.”

Deuber says his son was particularly happy with the weekend testing opportunity. “The act of sitting in the special conference room, taking the SAT prep test, made [my son] feel prepared for the real thing.

Avery runs it by regulation, including the time breaks,” Deuber says of the experience. “For [my son], that was really helpful. I can say without a doubt that the system works. He got the increased score he went in for.”

A Passion that Shows

When students first come into ES, they can expect to be paired with a tutor who best suits his or her learning style.

“We have tutors with many different backgrounds, though they have all worked in classrooms,” adds McIlvaine, who, herself, started out as a teacher. “Our tutors have backgrounds ranging from psychology to Spanish and, of course, math, English and science.”

While McIlvaine enjoyed her time at the front of the classroom, she considers the one-on-one experience with students more up her alley. It’s a lot of work, she says, but it’s also very rewarding.

“When you have a student get that test score they’ve been working toward and they’re so proud to get into the college of their dreams, you can’t help but feel good,” McIlvaine says. “It’s incredibly gratifying. We all feel very passionate about what we do here, and I think that shows.”

Deuber says he could certainly feel that passion. He was impressed to learn that Snyder routinely sits for these tests himself—and requires his tutors to do the same—in order to stay abreast of the latest trends. Deuber says it wasn’t only SAT knowledge that his son came away with. As a parent, he felt he got a lot out of the experience as well.

“There were so many little tips and tricks that Avery shared that I found to be invaluable,” Deuber says. “He knew so much about the admission process, including financial aid, and as a parent, I found it incredibly helpful. He’s like the captain of a ship: You know he’s going to steer you in the right direction.” ■



For more information on ES locations throughout the area, visit www.PrepWithES.com or call 610-687-0627.