



Laura George Consulting tutor Laura Hagglund works with BHS student Michael Andrews on ACT math.



Laura George

Making the Grade

FOR COLLEGE-BOUND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, INDIVIDUALIZED TUTORING CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Laura George Consulting, LLC recently opened a new office in Barrington. We reached out to its founder, Laura George, to learn about the many ways she and her tutors can help students (and their parents) navigate challenges regarding ACT/SAT prep and the college admissions process.

For parents, what are noticeable signs that their student needs tutoring help?

With respect to ACT or SAT prep, students are often exposed to the PSAT during their sophomore year. If their results are lower than expected or not in line with their grades, this is often the first indication that a student could benefit from assistance with formal test prep. For most students, this nearly three-hour test is the longest one they have ever taken in one sitting, and its structure is unfamiliar. As a result, students often suffer from mental fatigue and lack the innate ability to utilize the pacing and strategies necessary to master this type of standardized test. Content is also a

stumbling block for many students, so they need to be taught what type of material is on the test and understand how to answer the questions in various subjects.

For other students, the signal to seek additional help comes after they have tried to prepare on their own and may even have taken a few SAT or ACT tests, but are not increasing their scores or attaining their target scores.

While some signs are straightforward in terms of looking at ACT/SAT test results, frustration and an aura of defeat are the strongest clues that a student is struggling to improve on his or her own. Some students will voice this with statements

such as, “I guess I’m just a bad test taker.” Others will not communicate directly with their parents about their struggles but will resist further preparation or show signs of stress and anxiety when the topic comes up. Some students are self-aware and actively request that their parents seek tutoring to help them improve.

What about challenges with student essay writing or applications?

Students will often procrastinate because they don’t know how to refine their target list of colleges or begin their main Common App essay. Some will write several drafts and have trouble choosing one, or may not be able to get past the first paragraph. Others feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of work that needs to be done with respect to requesting teacher recommendations, filling out the Common App, and writing multiple essays. They need help breaking the tasks into manageable chunks and staying on track. Others will not listen to their parents’ suggestions, but will work productively with an outside expert. Students who are making no progress, have multiple questions while filling out applications, or are butting heads with their parents on essay topics and content may benefit from essay and application consulting services.

What percentage of your student-clients have an IEP?

We routinely work with students who have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) for a wide range of reasons. Approximately 15-20 percent of

our students have an IEP and benefit from accommodations on the ACT and SAT. We also advise parents on when and how to seek accommodations if their child does not have them in place and we perceive that a student would benefit from extended time, a multiple-day test, or other support.

When is the best time for a college-bound student to connect with your services?

Most students start with us as sophomores. The second semester of this school year is the ideal time to pursue diagnostic testing and determine if the ACT or SAT is a better fit to maximize a student's score. While every public school student in Illinois must take an SAT to graduate, this test does not have to be the one submitted for college applications. All colleges that require a standardized test score will accept the ACT or SAT with no preference. Students choose which scores to send to colleges, so other than for the handful of very selective schools that require the submission of all test scores, students can elect to send most schools only their highest score (or super score).

Some families are seeking our advice earlier as their children plan to enter high school to understand the types of coursework they should be pursuing, the level of rigor that is appropriate for their goals, and the way in which they should approach extracurricular activities.

Are there certifications or standards that your staff have as tutors?

Each of our tutors has an educational background that is directly tied to their area of subject matter expertise. I have personally trained each tutor as well.

How would you describe their tutoring style?

Our tutors are kind and encouraging. They are equal parts instructor and mentor. We get to know each student as an individual and customize our methods to enable students to learn the material, develop their individual protocols for taking the test, and increase their confidence in themselves and their abilities. We are both teachers and cheerleaders. We are invested in the process of empowering each student to achieve his or her full potential.

Where is the greatest student tutoring need right now for your clients?

In our area, where students benefit from excellent schools and resources, I have seen a rise in the pressure to excel and to get into the "right" college.

Students routinely mention to me that they sleep four hours a night. Anxiety is prevalent.

In this culture of constant pressure, students need to find a support system that allows them to understand what they can do to improve their test skills and how to do this in the most efficient manner. They also need people who truly believe in them and empower them to reach their full potential.



Laura George Consulting tutor Christine Kluiszo and Hayden Kraus review ACT science topics.


On the practical side, students can benefit from skills they may not develop in school. We find that students often lack adequate knowledge of English grammar and punctuation rules. They read less and less so their speed and comprehension are compromised. They are typically not taught to use the full range of functions and applications in their calculators to assist them in math strategies and pacing that will allow them to maximize their scores on the ACT or SAT. Students rarely have to take three-hour tests, so they tend to lack mental stamina. We teach these skills to students and stress that the tutoring process is a two-way street. We ensure they complete homework so they can solidify and replicate their learning. We also give full tests as a part of our tutoring protocol to help students strengthen their mental stamina.

How can your services bring relief to high pressures?

We teach students the rules and underlying thought processes they need to employ on the various portions of the ACT or SAT, so they feel confident in their abilities to apply these on test day. We help them identify and formulate their personalized strategies and pacing that will help them maximize their scores so they can focus on their procedures on test day and drown out the anxiety and noise.

We offer constant encouragement and support and help students find a new way to approach a problem when they encounter a challenge in their learning process. We are available to parents and students for questions at any time; we truly partner with families in a holistic manner to provide not only tutoring, but also a comprehensive support system to relieve stress and provide clarity for the entire family.

What prompted you to start your business?

When my oldest son (of four!) was born in 2002, I decided to combine my entrepreneurial spirit with my passion for mentoring students and formed Get it Write Consulting. I served as a full-time student member of the Admissions Committee during my two years at Kellogg and had learned to review applications. I also trained to become an ACT/SAT tutor and started to tutor individual students in my area. In 2016, I incorporated as Laura George Consulting, LLC to devote more of my time to serving the needs of area high school students as an ACT/SAT tutor, college essay coach, and application specialist. I started with one table in a small office in Lincolnshire as the sole employee. Today, I have nine experienced ACT/SAT tutors and three Parent Liaisons, and we have a spacious office in Lincolnshire, as well as a newly-opened location in downtown Barrington. 

Laura George Consulting offers individualized ACT/SAT tutoring and guidance for developing effective college essays and applications. They have an office in Lincolnshire and are now in Barrington at the Ice House Mall, 200 Applebee St., Suite 211. For more information, call 847-363-6780 or visit: www.laurageorgeconsulting.com. Join their FB group for information on the entire college application process at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ParentsofCollegeBoundKids/>