

Meet Tom Clements, Tutor Extraordinaire

By Sarah Henningsen, Campolindo

In an affluent community like Lamorinda, the pressure among youth and teenagers to excel is high, especially when it comes to academics. And with college admissions becoming increasingly competitive year after year, students often feel the need to spend extra time outside of school to improve their SAT scores and maintain solid grade point averages. The various tutoring businesses that have sprung up throughout Lamorinda in recent years help to ease the stress and pressures high school students deal with daily. From small enterprises within the home to large-scale organizations that cater to hundreds of students, tutoring businesses are booming and helping many Lamorinda students receive the extra personalized attention they seek.

Private tutors are common in Lamorinda but usually only advertised by word-of-mouth. Moraga resident Tom Clements assists dozens of high school students from Campolindo and Miramonte high schools. Providing classes ranging from physics and chemistry to advanced calculus and SAT II preparation, Tom is versatile tutor who is knowledgeable in many subjects taught in the Acalanes District. Tom's 4-6 person group tutorials have proven to be extremely effective and worthwhile, in comparison to traditional one-on-one tutoring. He commented, "My approach is much different than standard tutoring, which tends to focus on solving specific homework problems. I present material in lecture format,



Tom Clements with wife Michi

summarizing the main concepts of the chapter we happen to be going over for the week, clarifying the difficult sections and pointing out strategies for problem-solving. My teaching style is casual, comprehensive and straight-forward, a style high school kids can relate to. Also, by teaching kids in small groups, a team spirit evolves and kids benefit from the questions and comments brought up by other students in the group. I enjoy the interaction myself and that's one of the main reasons I teach group sessions."

A former Saint Mary's English teacher and freelance writer, Tom brings special expertise to the writing and grammar sections of the SAT. His strategies for acing the essay portion of the new SAT test have helped numerous students receive perfect scores to boost their overall total. By laying out several simple steps in crafting a strong essay, students have been able to

begin the test with calmness and ease. In addition, Tom is currently working on a new book, *How to Write a Killer SAT Essay in 25 Minutes or Less*, which is scheduled for publication in the upcoming months.

Tutoring is no longer just for failing students who need a leg up and some extra support outside the classroom environment—Lamorinda students of all ages, even those with already stellar records, spend hours with private tutors or in group sessions to help them maintain solid grades. As Clements commented, "It's unfortunate, but competition is unavoidable these days. That's one reason why tutors are in such demand; parents know that high grade-point averages and good SAT scores are paramount in determining which school their son or daughter gains admission to. In a perfect world, it would be otherwise. As it is, both parents and students have to deal with the reality.

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