

Using Precision Teaching to Prepare Students with Learning Differences for the SAT

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Guided Tutoring of Greater Atlanta is an educational consulting company that specializes in preparing students with learning differences for the SAT. The course uses a variety of teaching techniques including Precision Teaching, Diagnostic and Prescriptive Teaching, and Direct Instruction to teach high school students the skills and strategies necessary to improve on both the Verbal and Math portions of the SAT.

According to the Princeton Review, a national test-preparation company, the Verbal SAT is mostly a test of vocabulary and gives a list of the most likely occurring words. We teach these vocabulary words at Guided Tutoring by using SAFMEDS (Say All Fast a Minute Every Day Shuffled) combined with Precision Teaching. The students make flashcards with the vocabulary word on one side and the definition on the other. During the 1-minute timings the students see the vocabulary word and say the definition.

Steve Graf (SAFMEDS of the Web) suggests that learners should be able to reach 50 counts per minute correct, depending on the characteristics of the cards. Since the learners are seeing the word and stating the definition, our goal is 30-35 definitions correct per minute. Once baseline is established students are taught to study the vocabulary words using a "folding-in" technique. They separate the words into known and unknown piles. At the beginning of each practice session, if the student can state each of the definitions in their known pile correctly within 3 seconds, they add 2 of the unknown words into the known pile and continue to practice until fluent. If students are fluent on all the words at the beginning of the next practice session they add 2 more words and so on. There is limited study time during class time, so students are instructed to study for brief 5-10 minute sessions each day of the week.

This chart is an example of how we monitor every students' acquisition and fluency of vocabulary words. This chart represents Lauren's progress. Lauren was in our course preparing for the March 27, 2004 SAT. She is a 17-year old junior diagnosed with dyslexia. Lauren attended class twice a week for eight weeks. Sonia Lewis taught the course of eight students. The dots on the chart show the number of definitions correct per minute and the X's show the number of unknown or incorrect definitions per minute. Lauren improved

from 2 definitions correct per minute on February 4, 2004 to 25 definitions correct per minute on March 10, 2004. Her celeration rate was $\times 1.5$.

Since the Verbal SAT is mostly a test of vocabulary, as vocabulary acquisition increases we would hope to see this correlate to higher scores on the Verbal SAT. Lauren's initial SAT on January 31, 2004 was 330 points. On March 27, 2004 her Verbal score was 460, an increase of 130 points. (A score of 500 is considered average.)

