

Who is Harriet Broder, Principal of BreakThrough Test Prep?

Harriet Broder has been involved with standardized test preparation since 1978. She has been the co-founder and founder of three test prep companies, the most recent being Breakthrough Test Prep™. Through the years, she and her instructors have literally worked with thousands of students from the Ivy-League bound former President's daughter to the struggling student challenged by her critical reading and math skills. Harriet is not only the go-to person for helping students improve their scores, she has also created the programs and curriculum and even serves as a trusted advisor/confidante to the parents of her students.

How did you come to be an expert in test preparation?

To answer this question, I'm going to put it right out there. I was not a born test-taker – far from it! In fact, I did NOT test well when I took the SAT in high school, though I got excellent grades. Why the dichotomy? I knew I was intelligent, but my test scores said I wasn't. Clearly there was something I was not getting about myself. Finally, I came to realize that it was about understanding what the test was truly testing and how I got in my own way.

That's what attracted me to test preparation. When I had figured it out for myself, I knew I had to share this wisdom with others. Once I had broken the tests down – the level of language and skill sets tested, the types of passages presented, as well as the repetitive patterns and themes – strategies evolved and techniques came into fruition. The foundation of it all was when I created the mindset to success. This all evolved into the BreakThrough Test Prep System™.

How long have you been doing test preparation and what is your history?

My degree is in special education, but I began doing test preparation as director of a private one-on-one academy in Houston, TX in 1974. It was there I developed a system for teaching students how to learn and remember vocabulary which would become an essential part of my verbal test prep program. (At that time antonyms as well as analogies were on the SAT – much more vocabulary based than now.)

Upon coming back to the DC area in 1978, I got the position as director of the reading and study skills program for a local company. Test prep was very new and they were wanting to hire someone that not only could teach reading and study skills – reflective of my prior teaching positions – but could get their burgeoning SAT program (and speed reading programs) off the ground. And that I did.

In 1982, a colleague and I formed a test prep company in Bethesda which held its first classes in my parents' basement. The business grew exponentially – primarily through referrals. I eventually sold that company to my partner and formed Harriet Broder & Associates, in 1994. I have been focusing on one-on-one PSAT/SAT, ACT and SSAT prep, since 1994. The SAT has gone through about five iterations since I began in the business – the antonyms and analogies have gone, the TSWE – grammar section – left but has returned as the Writing section. The reading passages now constitute more than 70% of the test, whereas when I first started they were less than 30%.

When the antonyms were removed in 1994, I began to merge the basics of what I was teaching in my speed reading classes into my all of my test prep programs. In fact, no one was or is teaching students those techniques to improve standardized test scores.

The results were amazing. I became known as the 'go-to' person to teach students how to improve their scores on the reading comprehension passages. And why did it work so well? Not

only did I teach my students about how to read more efficiently, but I also gave them a very accessible strategy – the Post-It Note Technique – as to how to approach the passages. Recently, I have incorporated what I have learned in holistic health training and have added anxiety reducing techniques into the programs as well as an understanding of foods and supplements that can aid in attention and focus.

All of the above have come together to form the BreakThrough Test Prep System™ – the system that teaches students not only breakthrough strategies but how to breakthrough subliminal barriers to successful test-taking.

As the years have gone on, I have made a commitment keep on doing what I love – helping my students develop the requisite skills and mindset to succeed on standardized tests. The bonus is that these are life skills and carry over into their being stronger students overall. Thousands of students later, it's still working! (And yes, in case you're wondering, I am a much better test taker as well!)

How are your BreakThrough Test Prep techniques and strategies different from those of other programs?

Unlike many of the test prep offerings out there, what Breakthrough Test Prep™ offers are step-by-step breakthrough strategies in critical reading, problem-solving, vocabulary development as well as the requisite mindset transformation.

Have you ever heard the saying, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over, but expecting different results"? Unfortunately, most programs whether group or even on-on-one are primarily about rote memorization of words and taking practice test after practice test without teaching the mandatory FOUNDATION SKILLS: how to learn and remember vocabulary and how to read more efficiently and analytically.

Also not typically addressed are understanding how an author has developed his point, the steps to improve analytical thinking and problem-solving, and most importantly how to get into the confidence mindset of being the successful test-taker. Once this is all imparted then the essential strategies are taught – ie, the Post-it Note and Reframing techniques for the critical reading, plugging in for the both the math and sentence completions, the Synonym Elimination technique on the sentence completions, learning what the (ACT) science is truly testing, and when to skip based on a student's score goal – just to name a few.

Yes. Rote, random memorization of vocabulary helps minimally and practice testing is essential as pacing is key on these exams – but if new ways of thinking and approach are not also taught, even minimal improvement is not likely to occur for too many students.

available for working with delinquent and potentially delinquent youth.

Over and above all the human factors cited, the case for community-based programs is further strengthened when cost is considered. While more progressive correctional programs such as all-day probation, remedial education, and job training can be costly, they are nowhere near as expensive as traditional incarceration. It has been estimated that it costs more to keep a youth in prison for a year than it would to send him to an expensive, private college for the same period of time. The continuing increase in juvenile delinquency rates only serves to heighten the drastic under-financing, the lack of adequately trained staff, and the severe shortage of manpower that characterize virtually every juvenile correction system.