

Advise parents about educating their kids

A tutor broker since 2001, Laurie Hurley is founder of Bright Apple Tutoring Service, based in Ventura County in southern California. She matches qualified tutors with students of any grade or age. By now, she has personally matched over 1,000 students and tutors. Hurley has also launched a consulting business to advise people about how to start their own tutor brokerages.

If you're dismissing this niche as too narrow, better go back to school.

Private tutoring services now generate about \$2 billion in annual revenue, according to Eduventures, a Boston researcher that tracks education businesses. That figure doesn't even include the entire test preparation industry. In addition, the No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law in 2002, has earmarked millions of dollars for tutoring services to help states meet the guidelines. So tutoring services can tap into both private and public funding.

Traditional learning centers like Sylvan and Huntington are growing as well, of course. But often, says Hurley, "parents don't want to waste time taking their children back and forth somewhere after school." Plus, learning centers often rely on their own curriculum rather than a student's particular schoolwork or textbooks.

All of that makes in-home tutoring, while more expensive, presumably more time- and cost-effective. "Tutoring in the student's home provides freedom from peer pressure and allows a dedicated, professional tutor to work one-on-one," says Hurley.

"A tutor broker screens all tutors, conducts extensive background and reference checks and can feel comfortable that the tutor selected for their child will be just the right match," says Hurley. She typically charges a commission that's 50% of the tutoring fee. You're also responsible for recruiting clients, marketing the services and keeping on top of paperwork and finances.

Like Hurley, you can recruit a network of in-home tutors among local teachers looking to supplement their income. With so many educational systems shrinking and cutting back, most areas offer a good choice. Or, you can research and then buy one of the home-tutoring franchises that are springing up. Make sure to check out the firms carefully before putting down your dollars.

If you're ready to run your own show, there are lots of funding and advisory services just waiting to help. Just don't forget — love what you do.

Joanna Krotz

Joanna L. Krotz writes about small-business marketing and management issues. She is the co-author of the "[Microsoft Small Business Kit](#)" and runs [Muse2Muse Productions](#), a New York City-based custom publisher.