

TIPS FOR ENSURING AN EFFECTIVE TUTORING SESSION

There are a lot of different ways in which you can positively affect a student's learning during tutoring. A few helpful tips are provided below that can be incorporated into each tutoring session.

Making the student feel comfortable

Get to know your student by talking to them. Ask the student their name, their age, favorite color etc. Smile when talking to the student as this builds the student's confidence. If you already know the student, you could ask them about their day or previous lesson and what they liked about what they had learnt.

Aiding learning by personalizing

During the course of tutoring, you could relate content of the tutoring lesson to your own experiences e.g.

If you are reading a story about a baking a cake, you could tell the student about a time when you baked a cake or helped your Mom, sister or Aunt to bake a cake when you were young.

If you are reading a story about a horse, you could tell about a time when you rode a horse or saw a beautiful horse.

Encouraging the student

Provide appropriate praise when the student answers a question correctly or is able to solve a problem. Use alternative methods to increase the student's understanding when the student is unable to solve a problem with the initial information provided. Asking relevant open talking through an example are some ways to help the student gain a better understanding.

Ending the tutoring session

Thank the student for participating in the tutoring session. Let them know that they did a good job and also let the student know that you look forward to tutoring them again where appropriate.

Helping Tips for Tutoring Literacy

Rooting in Previous Knowledge

When reading or writing, students draw from knowledge they already have about a subject. Tutors can help students root in information they already know before asking them to process new information. For example, before reading about photosynthesis, a tutor could ask the student to talk about what they know about plants and how they work, etc. Use a Brainstorming or KWL chart.

Brainstorming

Using brainstorming, students can see how much they already know about a subject. It can also help the tutor see what areas in which the student is strongest and weakest. Use a Brainstorming chart. Allow the student plenty of time to think and respond. Provide some ideas to get the brainstorming started.

The First Reading Concepts

Students need to be taught even the most fundamental reading concepts, such as:

Holding the book right side up

Identifying the cover and title of the book

Knowing that letters and words have meanings

Distinguishing between capital and lower case letters

Understanding punctuation

The difference between letters, words and sentences

Following left to right

Improving Fluency

Struggling readers often lack the ability to read fluidly. Try reading aloud to your student to model how punctuation and meaning affect the way you read something. Re-read favorite books to build confidence and increase exposure to certain vocabulary. Read aloud together to make your student less intimidated than reading by themselves.

Building a Relationship with Your Tutee

Make sure that you take time to get to know your student. Conversation

builds literacy skills, as well as helping you build a trusting relationship. Ask about hobbies and interests. Keep those things in mind during your tutoring sessions.

Honoring the Tutee's Home Culture

It is very important to honor a student's home culture while being careful not to make assumptions about a child. Every family is unique. Whether working with English Language Learners or native speakers, the best way to learn about a student's culture is to ask. Asking questions will help a student feel valued as an individual and help develop a positive tutoring relationship.

Initial Assessment

The first time you work with a student, it is important to recognize his/her habits, strengths and struggles. When reading, does the student look at the cover of the book or the pictures to draw meaning and make predictions? How does the student feel about the subject you are working on? Confident? Hesitant? Is the student actually comprehending the information or just going through the motions?

Initial Assessment with English Language Learners

It's important to gauge a student's comfort with and ability to communicate in English. Have informal conversations, look through a picture book and talk about the story. Remember that the student may be so focused on vocabulary that they lack overall comprehension.

Making Connections

Help you tutee understand connections between what they are reading and their own experiences. Model by pointing out parts of the story the remind you of your life. Explore parallels between the story and the world. Ask the student to draw and write out connections they see.

Offering Choices

Giving children choices supports their development, increases their independence and builds their sense of responsibility for and personal investment in learning. However, a tutor must use careful language when offering choices. Avoid asking yes or no questions unless 'no' is really an option. For example, "Would you like to read today?" No is not an acceptable answer. Instead, ask the student which book he/she would like to read today.

If you have a specific task to accomplish, present it as a plan rather than a choice. For example, "Now we're going to play a game," rather than,

"Would you like to play this matching game with me?"

Organization

Helping a student become more organized is the first step to helping that student take charge of his/her own learning. Students who struggle to keep track of their assignments are less prepared for class and have lower homework completion scores. You can help the student develop a system to manage their assignments and other materials. Target one area for organization, such as a binder or clipboard. Develop checklists to activate memory. Create time-planning tools and schedules.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness is one of the five skills identified by the National Reading Panel as integral to early literacy development. It is the ability to understand and hear that a word is made up of a series of sounds, or phonemes. For example, the word 'did' is made up of three phonemes - d.i.d. This skills allows students to break down words.

Picture Walk

Before actually reading a book, walk through the book's pictures in order to set up expectations and form predictions about the text. This can reinforce the strategy of relying on visual cues while reading. It also gives the tutor and tutee time to talk about prior knowledge on the subject and discuss vocabulary words that will appear in the story.

Poetry

Poetry is excellent material for developing readers because reading it is a multi-sensory experience. Good readers can see, hear, feel, taste and even smell the images that are created by descriptive and figurative language. This immersion helps them comprehend what they are reading. Listening to and reading poetry engages children and encourages them to connect with the text.

Predictions

Good readers continually ask themselves questions about what they red. What will happen next? What would I do in this situation? Tutors can help support the student by helping to summarize the story so far and helping to activate prior knowledge. Try putting the questions in the form of statements, such as, "I wonder..." or "Let's think about..."

Reading Non-Fiction

Often students have difficulty reading non-fiction for various reasons, such

as their lack of exposure to this type of writing, lack of background knowledge about the subject, difficult vocabulary and unfamiliarity with the structure and use of charts, headings, etc. Try using a Brainstorming or KWL chart. Practice reading supporting materials, such as charts and diagrams. Encourage note-taking and writing out summaries.

Recognizing Accomplishments

Providing students with information about how they have progressed can make them feel more responsible for their learning and can be an incentive towards improving. Give concrete, specific praise rather than just saying, "Good job." Give students an opportunity to see their progress through a portfolio or an oral recap of what you've done. Go back to a previous Brainstorming chart to show how much more they know now.

Shifting Gears

Every tutor and teacher experiences moments when the planned activity goes awry. Perhaps the chosen book is too simple or challenging, the student is not engaged, the learning goal is not being met and the student is becoming confused by the material. To avoid frustration, it's okay to make spontaneous changes. Often, it's beneficial to shift gears rather than sticking to a plan that isn't working

Stretch!

Children can get restless after sitting for a long period. They can also be more antsy and distracted when a vacation or weekend is approaching. Minimize restlessness by varying the structure of lessons by adding games, activities and art projects. Sometimes it helps to just get up and stretch or take a short walk.

Visualization

Creating mental images deepen tutees' understanding by helping them see what is happening. Struggling readers do not automatically create these images. Reading aloud to your students is a good way to help them visualize. Ask the student to describe the scene they are picturing. Make sure their visualizations involve all the sense. Your student can use drawing as an aid.