

Our Children – Our Future Volunteer Tutor Training

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WELCOME / HOUSEKEEPING / INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome. Thank you for answering the call for volunteer tutors.

Address housekeeping items:

- *restrooms*
- *breaks*
- *smoking*
- *emergency procedures*
- *other*

Introduce program staff. Explain notebooks and contact information.

REVIEW TRAINING AGENDA

Today's training is intended to give you the tools and information that you will need to begin tutoring. You will get a lot of information in a very short time. Please don't let that overwhelm you. You will also get a notebook that will help you prepare for your tutoring sessions and give you a place to refer back to for information. And by the end of the training you will realize that we are here to support you and that we want to do everything possible to make your tutoring experience a success.

This training session is divided into two parts. The first hour will focus on what it means to be a part of Our Children – Our Future, your role as a tutor and tips for being an effective tutor and volunteer. We will also review the volunteer procedures; things like recording your hours and communicating with teachers.

Then after a short break you will divide into groups to focus on the specific academic area and grade level that you have chosen to tutor. Here you will be working with the reading or math specialist to review the tutoring curriculum and activities.

Ask for questions.



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OVERVIEW OF OUR CHILDREN – OUR FUTURE

Many students in our city schools face a variety of academic and nonacademic barriers to getting a good education. We know that children who do not read well at the very start of their education often suffer adversely both personally and professionally throughout their lives. The majority of these students can master the required skills if they are provided additional resources and more opportunities to learn and practice applying the basic concepts. Often the classroom teacher cannot provide the needed one-on-one attention.

Research consistently shows that one-on-one tutoring has a significant and long-term impact on student achievement. That is why Memphis City Schools with support from the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis initiated Our Children – Our Future, calling upon the entire community to come together to form a safety net of academic support.

Our Children – Our Future is the Memphis City Schools volunteer tutoring program. This year it will be in more than 30 city schools. Last year 500+ volunteers served 700 students. While the statistical evaluation of last years test scores has not yet been received we know from students, parents, teachers and principals that the tutoring has been effective. Students have gone from D's and F's to C's and on occasion even advanced to honor role status. One principal reported a conversation with a tearful parent, where the parent shared that her son read her a book, which was something neither she nor her parents was able to do. The stories go on and on.

We believe that by providing significant ongoing support and additional time on task all participating students will improve their academic performance, gain confidence in their ability to learn and significantly increase their future opportunities.

This is where you come in. Tutoring is a great way for adults to help children learn. One-on-one tutoring offers undivided attention and focused support that is not always available in the classroom.

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OUR CHILDREN – OUR FUTURE PURPOSE

The primary purpose of tutoring and of this project is to **improve the academic achievement** of the student. We want to help the students that may be performing marginally to reach their potential.

In addition to improving student performance, contact with a caring, concerned adult in a tutoring relationship will:

- Improve the student's attitude toward school
- Enhance student confidence and pride in accomplishment
- Provide a positive role model
- Broaden the experiences of both the tutor and the child.

The Team

A lot of people have worked very hard to put this program together and to manage it effectively. As a tutor you are a part of a team working to support this student. You will work with the Principal, the teacher, the school site coordinator and the Program Manager to provide the greatest possible opportunity for student learning. Your main contact for this program is the School Site Coordinator. A Site Coordinator has been designated for each school. You will get the coordinator's name when you receive your school assignment.

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BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE TUTOR

Now that you are a little more familiar with the background of this program, let's look what it takes to be an effective tutor.

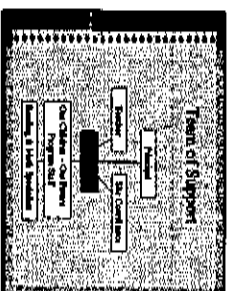
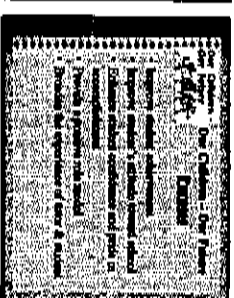
To become an effective student it will help to take a look at the students you will be tutoring.

Who are our students?

- **Children "on the brink of success"** This group has been identified as students that can most benefit from a one-on-one tutoring relationship with a volunteer tutor. The students are selected for tutoring according to their standardized test scores and classroom participation.

These students are performing below grade level and are at serious risk of falling further behind. (Students with serious learning and behavioral disabilities will not be included in this project, as they generally need the support of professional education specialists.)

- **Living in poverty or single parent homes.** 71% of Children in Memphis City Schools qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. Children of poverty start out in life at a disadvantage. Early childhood learning and preschool experiences may be inadequate. Poor families are highly



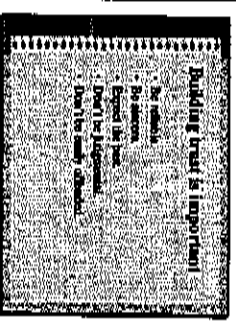
- mobile and may lack the emotional and physical security that is conducive to learning.
- **Have caregivers with limited education.** This often means that caregivers are unable, not unwilling, to provide the academic support that students need. It may also mean that students have few books and educational resources available to them outside of school.
 - **Have limited exposure to people or experiences outside their own neighborhood.** The cultural norms for many students make it difficult for them to understand and adapt to the rules of school. The expectations of behavior and achievement must be learned. For example: children with limited experience outside their own culture generally develop traditional speech patterns handed down from one generation to the next. Yet when they reach school age they are expected to conform to a more standardized speech. By understanding this, you as a tutor can help your student to learn and to integrate various styles of speech as appropriate.

Building trust

The development of trust is critical to any relationship. Children will learn best from an adult they trust.

Ways of building trust:

- **Be reliable.** Be a consistent and dependable figure in the child's life. When you make a commitment realize that it is serious investment in your student. Children are easily disappointed.
- **Be sincere and caring.** Make sure the child knows that you truly care about her.
- **Expect the best from your child.** Just because a child is considered "at risk" doesn't mean that he is incapable of learning. Your having and showing confidence in his ability and his effort will help him to develop confidence in his learning and it will strengthen your relationship.
- **Don't be judgmental.** Recognize that your student may come from an environment or culture very different from yours. Respect his experiences. Look for and share similarities from your life and experiences.
- **Don't be easily offended.** Children are naturally curious. They may ask questions or say things that could be considered inappropriate.



Getting to know your student

To begin building a strong bond between you and the child spend time getting to know your child during the first few sessions.

1. Learn the student's name and its correct pronunciation immediately.
2. Make sure the student knows your name. You may even want to write it down for him/her. Be sure to introduce yourself again the next time.
3. Go through the **student orientation checklist**.
4. Complete assessments as instructed.
5. Talk about interests. Share things you like to do. Talk about TV shows or favorite books. There is a handout in your notebook that will give you some ideas of how to start a conversation with your child. Be sure to keep your conversation general without asking questions that might be too personal.

Tutor Coaching Strategies

Your role is not to replace the work of the teacher. You are a coach helping to extend and support the learning that is going on in the classroom.

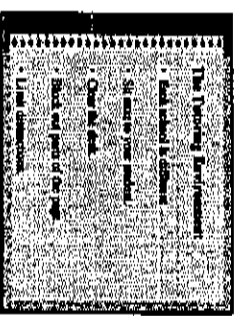
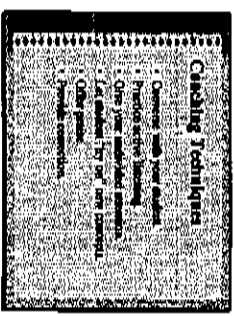
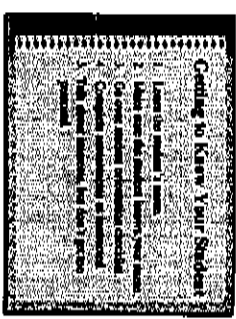
Coaching techniques include:

- Converse with your student. Build a give and take dialogue with your student.
- Practice active listening
- Give your undivided attention
- Let the student "try on" new learning concepts
- Offer praise
- Provide correction

The Tutoring Environment

Each school is different. Schools are busy places, sometimes coming up with space for tutoring is difficult. Some schools have designated rooms for tutoring and at other school you may find yourself tutoring in the library or hallway. Unfortunately, your physical environment may not be ideal for tutoring. Here are some things that you can do to help keep the focus on learning.

- **Sit next to your student**, rather than across the table. This way both of you can see the book or other materials.
- **Clear the desk** of other materials so that the student can focus on the subject at hand. Put books and activities that you might use later out of sight until you need them.
- **Block out parts of the page.** Some students might even benefit if you physically block out parts of the page, focusing on small pieces at a time.

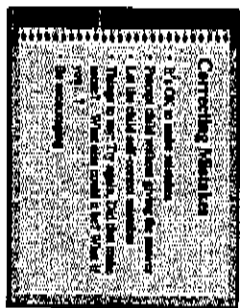


- **Limit distractions.** If your student seems distracted by others in the room, people coming in and out or the view out the window, you may be able to turn your table or put your backs to the distraction. Turning off your cell phone or pager will also help to limit distractions.

Correcting Mistakes

As we mentioned earlier it is essential that students feel comfortable enough to make mistakes.

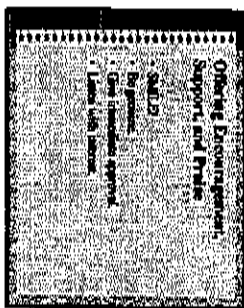
- Students need to know that it's OK to make mistakes. It is how we learn.
- Try to prompt the student without giving them all the answers or over-explaining the concept. Give hints.
- Encourage the child to self-correct mistakes.
- Things to say: try that again, that was a good answer, but what else can it be, did that sound right, did that make sense, what if you do this ...
- Be encouraging



Offering Encouragement, Support and Praise

The most effective way to show support and encouragement is to be dependable. Make your student a priority. Encourage your student to do his/her own thinking. Be patient and full of praise. Some tips for offering encouragement, support and praise are:

- **SMILE.** Smiling eases tension. Smiling encourages your student to continue. Smiling shows approval. Smiling makes it more fun!
- **Be genuine.** Don't praise things that aren't worthy of praise. Instead look for something valid that you can compliment, especially when your student is struggling with an assignment. You may have to acknowledge the effort and not the outcome. For example you may say " I like how hard you are trying" even if the student has not successfully accomplished the task.
- **Give immediate approval.** Smile, nod and give verbal approval. Without interpreting the student's sentence of thought, say things like: good answer, right, you got it, excellent, I like that... These small tokens of praise will encourage the student to continue. It also shows that you are paying attention.
- **Listen with interest.** Having an adult that really listens to you can be a powerful motivator to a young student.



Closing the Tutoring Session

Each tutoring session should close with a time for you and your child to review what you completed during that session.

Discuss what went well and what you can continue to work on together in the next session.

- Summarize successes. Success is an extremely motivating factor in all our lives. We tend to repeat things that make us feel successful. Summarizing the successes of each session will work to motivate the tutor and the student to continue.
- When appropriate let the student know what you will be reporting to their teacher.
- End on a positive note.

Tutor Responsibilities

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Tutor Schedules and Time Commitment

Tutoring will begin in September and run through early May.

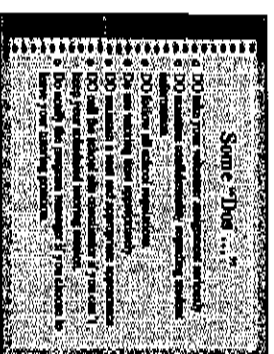
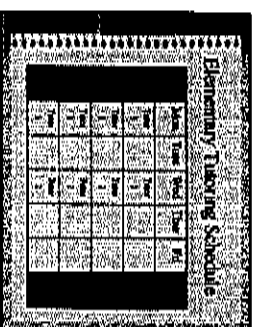
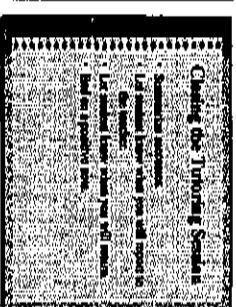
Show calendar and explain.

Elementary Tutors: For individual volunteers we ask that you give at least one hour a week. You will meet with two students for 30-minutes each. Unless you choose to volunteer twice a week another volunteer will work with your students on the second tutoring day. (Elementary tutoring teams are responsible for all of the tutoring sessions for the assigned child. You will rotate among yourselves to cover both day.)

Middle and High School Tutors: Tutors will meet with only one student for 45-minutes to one hour. Middle and High School students are tutored once each week. You will be the only tutor assigned to the student.

Some Dos...

- **DO take your volunteer assignment seriously.** Meet as scheduled (weekly) with your assigned student.
- **DO maintain confidentiality.** We want you to feel free to share your experiences with others but please do so without giving specific personal or academic information about the student. From time to time students may share very sensitive personal feelings or experiences with you. Remember your role is that of tutor, not social worker or counselor. If your student shares personal information that is disturbing or concerns you, Notify the School Program Coordinator or the Our Children –Our Future Program Manager as soon as possible so that they may take appropriate action.



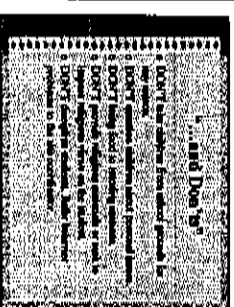
- **Do follow all school parking and security regulations.** Be sure to sign in and out at the office. Remember these procedures are in place to protect the students and you as a visitor to the school.
- **DO use the tutoring time appropriately.** Use the techniques and materials provided in this training to structure the most effective tutoring session.
- **DO maintain a neat and appropriate appearance.** Remember that you are setting an example for the students.
- **DO call the school site coordinator if you can't keep your scheduled tutoring session.** Your student will be counting on you and the teacher may be structuring the student's work to accommodate the tutoring time.
- **DO notify the program manager if you choose to leave your tutoring position.** By signing this agreement you are making a commitment of your time. But more importantly you are making a commitment to a student. **If you find that you cannot give the amount of time or that this volunteer position just isn't for you, let us know as soon as possible.** Please do not just stop coming. We want to make sure that your student doesn't take your not showing up as a personal rejection. We can also work to find a replacement tutor to make sure that the student doesn't miss out of critical learning time.

Some Don'ts

- **DON'T meet children or take children off school grounds for any reason.**
- **DON'T question children about personal issues.**
- **DON'T bring food or gifts to students.**
- **DON'T provide religious materials or seek to impose religious views on the student.**
- **DON'T discipline students.** Refer behavior problems to the site coordinator.

Refer to Volunteer Tutor Agreement

Ask participants to print their name, sign the Tutor Agreement and turn it in. A second copy will remain in their notebook.



Some Things to Remember

- **Tutoring isn't a "quick fix"**. Don't expect instant success or major improvement right away. Don't be discouraged if YOU can't see the changes; often parents and teachers will see things that you don't.
- **Older students might have an "attitude"**. "Attitude" is often just a coping mechanism or a way of covering up feelings of insecurity
- **Be patient with school staff and facilities**. Tutoring is only one of many things going on at the school. The school has arranged the best place for tutoring given limited space that is available. The site coordinator will try to notify you of schedule and program changes, but sometimes things are overlooked. Please be patient and flexible.
- **What YOU are doing is very important. You time interest and attention can make lasting changing in the life of your student. It will take time and patience to see the difference you are making.**

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VOLUNTEER PROCEDURES AND FORMS

Procedures

Safety

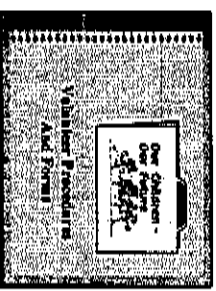
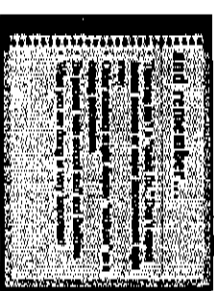
We can't stress enough, that while you are providing an invaluable service you are still a guest of the school and to some extent a stranger to the students and school personnel. You must follow the parking, check-in and other safety procedures of the school.

As you know, prior to placing a volunteer tutor a criminal background check will be completed. But as an added safety precaution tutoring times and locations have been arranged so that more than one volunteer tutor will be working with their student in common area. Volunteers should not be alone with the student in an unsupervised setting.

The safety of our students and volunteers is of utmost importance. Please let us know if you have any concerns.

School Orientations

You will receive a brief orientation to the school on your first visit. The School Program Coordinator will cover the school procedures for how you will meet your student, where tutoring will be held and emergency evacuation requirements. If you have questions be sure to ask.



Forms

We have tried to make things as simple as possible:

Sign-in Sheet / Sign-in Notebook

Please sign-in for each student that you tutor. This is critical to the record keeping and evaluation process. We need to know how often and for how long each student is tutored in order to evaluate what was required for improvement.

Tutor Notes

Use this form to communicate with the classroom teacher. One copy is returned to the teacher and the other placed in the student folder. This form will be covered more specifically in the Curriculum part of today's training.

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Student Folders

Each student will have a folder. This folder will keep track of the Tutor Notes and the student progress.

Tutor Comment Card

Copies of this card are kept in the Sign-In Notebook. This one method to make it easy for you to communicate with the Our Children – Our Future Program Manager. Please let us know of any concerns you have. The sooner they are identified the sooner things can be changed.

WHAT'S NEXT

Once you complete today's training and sign the tutor agreement your information will be submitted for the criminal background check.

After that has been accepted your tutoring assignment will be made. You will receive a confirmation packet in the mail. This will include the school, times and school contact person. You will also get a map and instructions on what to do your first day. Tutoring will begin the week of September 16.

CLOSING

We have covered a great deal of information in a short period of time. As you begin to prepare for your first tutoring visit you may think of questions please feel free to call or email the Program Coordinator or me.

Now we will take a 10-minute break. When you return you will meet with the reading or math specialist to review the tutoring materials.

BREAK

