



The Tufts Literacy Corps  
America Reads/America Counts at Tufts University

## Guidelines for Working with Children

- **Be reliable.** Your students will quickly become fond of you and will look forward to your sessions. Teachers and parents, too, will grow to rely on you and expect



you to be there for the children. Regular attendance is CRITICAL. A contagious illness is the ONLY reason you should ever cancel a session, and this should not happen more than twice during the entire academic year. If you must miss a school session, call the school and leave a message for the classroom teacher, who can let your student know about your absence in advance. If you have to cancel tutoring for a child you see on campus, contact the parents at least 24 hours in advance, if at all possible.

- **Arrive at tutoring sessions prepared** and leave enough time before sessions to go over your lesson plans before you begin. Plan your sessions so that they use the time efficiently, but match the child's speed (i.e. don't rush through things at a pace too fast for your young students).
- **Be friendly and warm but do not hesitate to set limits.** Children must follow school rules when they are with you (find out what they are from the classroom teacher). You, too, should follow the school rules (e.g., don't run down the hall if you are late). If you are tutoring in the Tisch Library, explain behavioral expectations to your tutee. You can say, for example, that "this library is full of Tufts students who need quiet to focus on their work. We have to talk softly as we work together."
- **Use a collaborative approach** to all activities and tasks you engage in with the student. Take turns reading pages, sorting pictures, spelling words, and so on. Let your math tutee make up problems for you (your tutee may be delighted by the chance to find and correct your mistakes!) This will make the session more fun for the children and will enable you to model the behavior you are seeking.
- If you are working with a younger child, **give her choices but do not leave the possibilities entirely open-ended.** You might say, "Would you like to read *A Bad Case of Stripes* or *Wolves in the Walls*?" This allows the child to choose from two wonderful books, and makes it clear that the agenda is to read. If you simply ask if she wants to read *A Bad Case of Stripes*, she may say "no."

## Guidelines for Working with Children– page 2

- When working with students of any age, **focus on what they do right**. Encourage them when they need it and always remain positive. Learn how to respond by finding the children's "good thinking" rather than by focusing on what was wrong with their answers. Emphasizing the positive does wonders for fostering self-esteem and for making it easier for children to correct their mistakes without feeling like they failed.

Example 1: Your first grader reads "flap" as "flat." You might say, "Yes! That word has the same 'fl' that you see in 'flat'. It also has an a that says /a/. Let's take another look at that last letter."

Example 2: Your 7<sup>th</sup> grade student solves for x:

After making sure your student checks her answer, you might say, "You know, you did *almost* everything correctly, and it shows that you understand the process. It was a good move to add the 10 and 15 right away. Let's take another look at the next thing you did, when you subtracted 5.

Child's Work

$$2x - 5 = 10 + 15$$
$$(-5) \quad 2x - 5 = 35 \quad (-5)$$
$$(x \frac{1}{2}) \quad 2x = 30 \quad (x \frac{1}{2})$$
$$x = 15$$

- **Be patient.** Give the children time to figure things out for themselves without being too quick to correct their mistakes. If your student comes to an unfamiliar word and seems to be working it out in her head, don't jump in right away. She may well work it out independently. Or if your math tutee makes a calculation mistake but seems to understand what she is doing – wait and see if she catches the mistake herself. Help your students before they become frustrated, however.
- Use the first session to get to know your student – but make sure you introduce the year's agenda. Use the ice breaking game. Be funny. Find out what he or she thinks of your topic (reading, writing or math). If you are tutoring in math, though, make sure to address the homework or classroom worksheet your student brings to tutoring. If you are a literacy tutor, take a book or introductory writing activity – or both. It's important that your students know you are there to help them with academics.

### Logistics:

It is your responsibility to keep track of the schedule! The school calendars for Somerville and Medford will be posted on the TLC website, along with the TLC fall and spring schedules. Please mark your own calendar with school vacation weeks and holidays, so you know when the children are in school.