

SCHOOLS WHERE ALL THRIVE TUTOR-MENTOR ORIENTATION GUIDE



WELCOME!

Thank you for coming on board to become a Tutor/Mentor in our program. It couldn't happen without the generous and timely contributions of community-minded individuals like you. We know you have plenty to do with your time, so we want to express our gratitude up front, for your willingness to take on one more commitment in your full and meaningful life in the community. As things move along, we at **The Senior Hub** will continue finding ways to express our profound gratitude, and we encourage both the schools and children who benefit from your fine efforts, to express their appreciation to you as well.

SWAT Tutor-Mentor Mission:

"We team up to provide the personal and collective resources of our mature adulthood to equip and inspire children to learn, achieve, dream and care."

SWAT Tutor-Mentor Core Values:

Gratitude, Hope and Optimism: We believe that each child can learn and achieve, even when their past deficiencies and failures *keep them from believing it themselves*. By this time in our lives, we've learned we can engage negative situations and help replace some of the negatives with positives. We gratefully recall the dedication of those who patiently coached and helped us with difficult pieces of our learning when we were young. We're on board to now provide the able assistance, mentoring and encouragement to help these children overcome their obstacles and thrive. We can imagine each of these struggling children, one day walking across the stage, diploma in hand!



Respect: Children arrive at our schools from a variety of communities, family structures, and life circumstances that may be radically different from our own. We might wish for them a different set of circumstances, but we respect this diversity and do our best to nurture the seeds planted in each child. No matter what their circumstances, our contributions will help render them a valuable asset to their families, school and larger community.

Teamwork: This unique program was built on the belief that we're stronger when we share our gifts and energies, and offer each other support and encouragement in a team effort. You will grow as a Tutor-Mentor, and come to support and complement the efforts of your teammates to bring the best combined resources to the needs of children.

Guiding Principles:

Communication: All positive relationships are built on trust, and trust happens when there's plenty of face-to-face, honest two-way communication. Teams function best when each member can be forthright about his/her ideas, needs and any difficulties that may occur. Good communication helps prevent problems and conflicts before they happen. Your Program Coordinator expends every effort to achieve this kind of openness and honesty with volunteers and with all school personnel.

Confidentiality: Working on site during the school day, we're given somewhat of a "privileged access" to schools & classroom operations well beyond that of the general public. We see the personalities, strengths and deficiencies of teachers and other school leaders, as well as the children. While we may discuss these matters among ourselves away from those affected, we pledge to maintain strict confidentiality *and refuse to gossip or handle any of this privileged information in a careless manner with the larger community*.

Change Management: The fast pace of change today may challenge our comfort zones, but throughout our life-span we've learned that new experiences stretch us to be bigger, more capable individuals. Working with kids will certainly bring plenty of new experiences! We face any of our challenges with hope and optimism, and we pitch in to assist each other so together we can help children adapt to the changes and challenges in their lives.



WHY OUR HELP IS NEEDED

A growing concern all across the country is the number of youth who fail to graduate high school—the gateway to most all the significant continued learning that results in well-paying 21-century jobs. Nation-wide, roughly 25% of students fail to graduate high school on time. This loss has been calculated at \$4.5 billion annually in lost earnings alone, to say nothing of the cost to the US economy and the big social costs to communities when drop-outs turn to destructive behaviors like crime, substance abuse, early pregnancies, etc

We've finally come to realize that the root causes of this back-end failure are cultivated during the child's earlier years at school. The leaders of our community and state have begun to focus on the deficiencies and inequities in school readiness and early childhood learning as big contributors to the problem of kids later dropping out. A child entering 4th grade not reading at grade-level, faces *four times the risk of dropping out before graduating high school.* Good research from the **Colorado Children's Campaign** shows that 43-45% of Adams County children enter 4th Grade not proficient in Reading—one of the 3 lowest counties in Colorado. The state-wide average is 34.7% not proficient.

This is critical, because Fourth Grade is when children essentially cease “learning to read,” and begin “reading to learn,” so their learning depends heavily on their reading proficiency. Many with poor reading skills will disengage, lose interest and stop trying. Their poor attendance and misbehavior reflect these reading deficiencies. “*At-risk*” is an accurate label: based on grades and school attendance alone, *by 6th Grade* researchers can predict—with *88% accuracy, a child's likelihood of graduating high school!*

As both tutors *and* mentors, we support the broad goal of cultivating learners *who achieve in school because they know they can, and eagerly come to school because they want to!* We undertake the challenge of helping build scaffolds to address these deficiencies in at-risk children before they worsen. It is heartbreaking to see 7 & 8-year-olds so eager to

learn but struggling to read at grade level because they started at a much a different place. Many entered school without the good basic learning prep from kindergarten or Head Start. Tight school budgets have eliminated lots of the previous “catch-up measures” such as teacher's aides working with individuals or small groups of those needing the extra help.

Family poverty is often a potent influence, and in a later learning package we'll cover some of the entrenched blockages of kids from the worst economic circumstances. This SWAT experience may bring you closer to the realities of poverty than you've ever encountered before. Stories the children share, often give some good clues as to family attitudes about their learning away from school. Many children lack good support at home, with no one to sit down and read with them each night, or discuss their experiences and TV viewing in a way that enriches their vocabulary and general learning in the time away from school..

"Kids on the Brink of Success!"

If this has painted a somewhat dismal picture, we're happy to announce that *there is hope, and you're a part of it!* Some good national research counters the easy conclusion that *all* children born of low-income parents are doomed to a life of low achievement, crime, and more poverty. A recent Pew Research Report shows that only 36% of children born to parents in the bottom 20% of US incomes, grew up to remain there. The rest moved into one of the higher income groups, *and 7% of them even moved into the top income group!* Conversely, about 36% of children born to parents in the very top income group, stayed there after becoming adults. The rest *moved down to a lower income quintile, and 11% of these more privileged ones ended up with incomes in the bottom 20%!*

We may wish for better parental support, but realize that these children come from homes where parents care about them and encourage their success at school as best they can. The above research shows that many kids do catch fire from the committed efforts of teachers and other significant people in their lives who promote learning. Our aim is to bring the most positive influences to bear on each child's situation, so alongside the “at-risk” label, it's helpful—and accurate—to also think of them as *“children on the brink of success!”*

Since the program began, SWAT volunteers have proved they can play a vital role in bridging these gaps. Data collected during our two full years of operation, show that 75-80% of “our” kids achieved at least a full year's growth in Literacy skills. Some special in-depth before-and-after test data at one of our schools, showed *upwards of half achieving growth of two years or more!* Beyond measures of reading skill, teachers reported that *fully 90%* of SWAT kids showed improvements in one or more of these key behavioral areas: *confidence & self-esteem, classroom participation, willingness to read when called on, improved school attendance, and decreases in non-productive behaviors like acting out or withdrawing.*

We know the program is working. You can take some pride in the fact that you are performing a vital, unpaid community service by gaining the essential helping tools and contributing your valuable time for the sake of kids' futures.

Wanted: People Who Like Working With Boys

In this age of political correctness, we'll take the risk to expose a big silent issue of the new century: that's the deteriorating academic performance of boys and young men. For over a decade now reports have surfaced showing boys and men falling behind in general academic achievement and the interest and motivation for higher education.



Currently women comprise 57% of college graduates. Females now represent 51% of Ph.D.'s and are coming to outnumber men in preparation for most professions that require graduate degrees. By any measure, these are serious educational deficiencies with young men that do not bode well for America's future.

This is not to say that a 4-to-6 year college education *is the only avenue to a fulfilling or high paying future job*. Many careers can be had with specific technical skills training offered by community colleges and technical schools. Futurists project a shortage of several hundred-thousand workers for good skilled-labor jobs in the next 2 decades. More young men and women need to consider those avenues of post-secondary learning and career preparation, as high costs are causing students and families to question the value of a college degree.

Why does any of this matter? Today technology is making all jobs more complex, and In a global economy, each country's success depends on having a smart, well-prepared workforce. We here in the U.S. *cannot afford to ignore and waste the potential contributions of any group! That includes children living in poverty, boys and men, disadvantaged women, new immigrants or any other segment of our society*. The gains of one group can't offset the losses to the economy and society, of other lagging groups. We're all in this together!

This lagging pattern with boys can start in elementary school where many find themselves at odds with much of the learning environment. Boys' Reading scores are—on average, below that of girls. Boys' rowdy behavior and need for action-oriented learning is often seen as "acting out," and many teachers are poorly equipped to re-direct their energies in a positive way. Boys usually make up the majority of students in Special Ed, as they're three times more likely to be diagnosed with learning disabilities. The same is true of the "emotionally disturbed" and the ADHD (Attention deficit & hyperactivity disorder) labels. Currently about six million children in the US are diagnosed ADHD—that's 11% of all those between the ages of 4-17! Some 75-80% of the world's production of methylphenidate (the generic name for Ritalin) is prescribed for boys.

Through the eyes of a male child you could easily get the idea that "this education-thing" is the domain of females. You would see few adult males working in schools. Girls seem to be favored; they do better, and are rewarded more often than boys. A select group of boys excel at school, but if you're not among them you may come to feel you don't fit. If you don't like your teacher or don't have one who knows how to engage you, it's easier to withdraw from difficult class activities and just entertain your peers, rather than continue the painful struggle to keep up. All too often this just becomes a standard expectation from teachers, as large classes dictate that they spend most of their time with more highly engaged kids.

At home it's the mother who usually deals with the school. Men—to the extent that they're present in many lower-income homes, work at jobs involving physical labor and perhaps danger. Boys' favorite entertainment features men doing active, exciting and dangerous things. They see their male heroes triumph over obstacles by using violence or cunning and street-smarts—not by gaining a good education, the social graces and quiet obedience.

It's great that more men are choosing careers in elementary education. The growth of STEM-emphasis schools and curricula is ushering in more active, hands-on learning that's attractive to boys as well as some girls. They still need to see other men associated with learning. They need more acceptance of their more-active learning styles and energy levels. Since few boys from disadvantaged backgrounds, see fathers and brothers reading at home, male mentors have high value in building a positive view of reading and learning. We value any efforts to help us find and motivate more good men to join up with the program.

Altogether we believe that boys' motivation for learning can come alive with *any caring adult* who communicates warm acceptance and appreciation of them and their efforts. Over the past two years, both men and women in our program have reported some real turn-arounds and the feeling they've made a big difference. We like to share any good "success stories" as we keep looking for the best tips and tools we can find for working with boys.

College is a great goal, but we support the many different post-secondary learning paths that these great kids may take. The USA is still a land of opportunity. We mature adults know *the American Dream is still alive*—that upward mobility is still the reality for those who overcome their early learning deficiencies and come to embrace the education enterprise.

Your Other Role as a Trusted Mentor

Children learn via supportive relationships in a safe environment. In the simplest terms, being a mentor means focusing on the friendship and caring factors in your work with the kids. For children of our target age group, this means overtly and consistently putting out the messages that *I like you and I care about you. I believe in you and your abilities.* Weekly installments of these vital messages assure the child that you're a safe person who is there for their good.



This can build an amazing bond of trust that makes the child willing to try harder and not give up so easily. Such a concentrated caring effort may be lacking in their home environment—or even *at school*, as large class sizes don't permit much individualized attention from the teacher!

Earlier we cited research showing that 64% of those from disadvantaged backgrounds, still managed to rise to escape poverty. No doubt some of these were blessed to have good mentors who made the big difference. We keep delivering the “yes, *you can*”-message by

sharing earlier struggles, life experiences and careers. Our tool kits will help you initiate various kinds of targeted conversations, but *just being a regular caring, positive person who shows up in their lives every week* is a huge part of what mentoring is all about..

This climate of caring also helps cultivate good character and life skills that lead to a more hopeful future. *Many of these children will be at-risk for much or most of the following 9-10 years of their school experience.* When you make this a pleasant experience at this young age, you're making it easier for them to later reach out to another caring mentor in middle and high school, when the challenges and stakes are bigger.

Research by *Big Brothers/Big Sisters* shows that the more significant adults there are in a child's life, the better they do. Their studies reveal that kids having relationships with three or more non-parent adults in their lives, have higher levels of self esteem and a more positive view of their futures. Young people between the ages of 10-16 who were mentored in their program, had significantly better school attendance and performance. They were less likely to engage in violence, use alcohol and drugs or engage in teen sexual activity.

Recall a portion of our mission statement is *"to inspire kids . . . to dream and care!"* The above research further shows that these kids having healthy relationships with non-parent adults were much more likely to develop the caring asset within themselves. When they feel cared for by other adults, young people are more likely to care about themselves and others. Kids who feel valued and valuable, are more likely to contribute value to the lives of others and to the greater community.

YOUR MENTAL & EMOTIONAL PREPARATION

New experiences require us to use some "new muscles" and resources within ourselves that haven't been exercised in awhile! As you begin working with these young people, you'll likely encounter some new challenges as well as new joys. Working within our team model may present a new challenge. One way or the other, we're embarking on a new adventure of learning together.



We've assembled a diverse group of the most caring adults available, of all ages. A few may have worked with children before in school or church. Some didn't attend or finish college, or may be somewhere shy of a high school diploma. That's OK. The only *degree you need is a degree in caring!* We can teach you the main helping skills to be an effective Tutor-Mentor at this level. Regularly showing up and making the effort for them, is a precious gift and boost to their confidence that they can indeed learn and succeed.

We work with many Spanish-language children, as well as those who speak a different native language. Bilingual-English-Spanish volunteers are valuable to the program, but don't feel in any way handicapped if you don't know Spanish. The same is true if you feel

you speak *less-than-perfect "textbook English,"* or speak with a slight accent. The children gain from hearing English spoken by a variety of people beyond the classroom.

YOUR BIGGEST ASSETS:

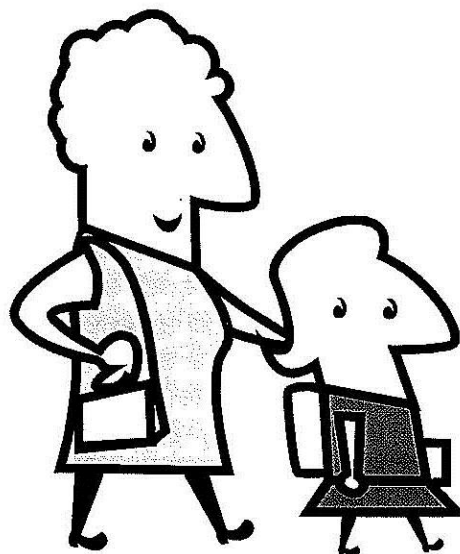
You may start off wondering how well you're equipped for this task, and whether you'll know enough about the latest philosophies, tricks and techniques for teaching Reading to kids. Relax! *This task is not all that difficult!* Just like the kids, you'll gain confidence as you practice the basic helping tools we'll give you. But from the beginning, realize that you have lots to offer!

- **Experience:** Your years of working with other people of all ages has given you more "people skills" than you may realize. Children at this age are less complicated, and you've learned how to try many things to motivate others
- **Motivation and Personal Commitment:** This is something you *want to do-not something you're taking on out of guilt or obligation,* or general boredom with your life. You've chosen this new challenge to be an engaged co-learner with kids.
- **Realistic Expectations:** We believe in a child's ability, competence and potential. We meet kids where they are, and then with gentle coaching we keep setting the bar a bit higher for them. We motivate and celebrate their increments of growth.
- **Flexibility:** Our ideas about children and youth are not set in stone. We're willing to adapt to different children, and learn new possibilities from each other. We're not too proud *to ask other team members for their help when we need it!*
- **Good Listening Skills:** We provide a safe environment where others can talk to us—particularly timid, vulnerable children. Some may be facing their very first experience of trusting another adult beyond their teacher and a tight family circle. We respond in ways that affirm each child's worth and potential, and we *always seek to overturn negatives with positives.*
- **Patience!** By now we've learned that *people and circumstances can indeed change!* Change takes time, and we've learned to be gentle with ourselves and with others struggling with new things. We've learned how to break big challenges down into bite-sized chunks, and celebrate small progress. No doubt working with children will further test and enliven that virtue of patience with each of us!

The skills you'll learn for helping kids in the Literacy area are rather basic. You'll soon learn to keep looking for ways break things down to their simplest parts for young minds. The Literacy instruction we provide here is simplified, so you'll grasp and use the new tools fairly quickly. Like your team members, we at **the Senior Hub** want to hear of your successes and "break-throughs" for their inspirational and teaching value for others.

Shifting Gears to Get on Their Level:

We may need to be reminded of how much learning and relating with young children *happens by way of their feelings and emotions*. Your early-on challenge will be to create an emotional connection with each of the 4-5 children you'll work with regularly. Put yourself back into your own childhood, and recall how—when meeting a new adult, the first big, automatic questions in your mind were “*is this person nice to me?*” *Does this person like me?*” This may dictate that you perhaps overdo it a bit, to establish those basics up front with your children during the first meetings with them.



Those connections gain strength as you continue to show up in the child's life each week. The durable trust bond that gets created with any new teacher, coach, tutor and mentor, takes time to unfold. It doesn't happen overnight, but once in place, it has slaying power to influence greater effort and confidence.

Body language is one of the more important forms of communication with children. Watch what the child's body is telling you. Their face and posture say a lot about their comfort level with you. Those cues tell when to back away a bit, lighten up and ask fewer questions, or talk about easier topics. Their body language also signals frustration levels and time-on-task thresholds. Watch those signals to know when it's time to rest a bit or change activities.

Eye contact is also key. *Constant "high-beams" early on can cause the child to feel very self-conscious*. Some cultures don't maintain prolonged, intense eye contact, which can be considered an act of disrespect toward the older person. Also the Native American, Latino and Asian children will force us to become careful listeners, as they usually speak in much softer vocal tones than those to which we are accustomed

Sometimes the beauty and vulnerability of a particular child can stir up strong feelings of affection in us, such that we want to reach out and hug them, just like a dear child in our own family. It's very easy to overwhelm a child without intending to. Children from another culture, may show some shyness in the presence of a new person who's different from them. They may move back a bit, or appear to turn away to avoid such a direct encounter. They need their space, and more time to become comfortable with you.

Turning on the "Positive Reinforcement Filter"

Many among our targeted children are likely well aware they're not keeping up with the rest of their age group. They generally get little positive recognition and praise; they see most of that going to the brightest and best in the class. Recall your own experience: children are very good at figuring out where they rank in their class or group. Higher-performing children can be cruel when dealing with their lower-performing peers, so our *children who need a*

little extra help, may have endured put-downs for their inability to keep up. Teachers and other adults at school do their best to keep this from happening, but it's inevitable. In some cases the child may even hear such put-down from their parents.

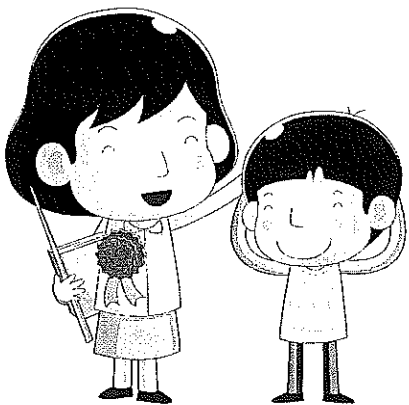
If vulnerable children don't get their share of warm, personalized attention from their teacher, they may conclude that she/he has given up on them or doesn't see them as being capable. When encountering difficulties, it's easy for a vulnerable child to internalize this judgment and tell themselves, *"I'm just a Dummy. I'm too stupid to learn this,"*

The good news is that the positive friendship and coaching we bring is just the kind of gift they need for building confidence in their capabilities. Our positive attitude and mental preparation, helps to reverse such negative self-talk. That may seem easy, but it's the really small things that can trip you up. Be careful how you comment about any supposedly-easy words. Example: *"Everyone knows 'moon.'"* If the child doesn't know it, they can hear this as another put-down and tell themselves, *"Oh, so you think I'm a Dummy too!"* Instead we give him/her the tools to learn it. ***It's critical that we stay on guard so that NOTHING we say even casually, reinforces that negative message with the child.***

Again we affirm the necessity of a good, all-around positive attitude as a major tool for this task. Working with this young age needing such a deliberate effort toward the positive can be a stretch. You may wonder if you'll find it tiring to be *"On" all the time* you're with them.

By now we've learned that attitude is a choice, and the negative is always the easy default. We get tugged in the direction of the negative with our own fears about losses associated with aging. We can find lots to criticize about the schools, or the less-than stellar performance of a particular principal or teacher. (You're not putting in full six-hour days of it, *like these folks do!*) It's just 2 hours each week—perhaps the most vital two hours you'll spend, creating real value for a child! The team effort also helps. The code-phrase ***"Filters-ON"*** is a good prompt as you start the session, plus when anything surfaces that a child may hear as a put-down. It's an easy reminder to filter our own thoughts and words, and stay very positive.

The Deliberate, Creative Use of Praise:



When it comes to the use of praise and positive recognition, we probably grew up in homes and families that fitted one of the following two major patterns:

In some homes, parents who want the best for their children are lavish with attention and praise. They go out of their way to note and reward any positive contribution or improvement—from the baby's first words and actions, the first time at bats in Little League, and even routine chores like setting the table or mowing the lawn. Making the team or getting an "A" in school is a real cause for celebration. Children even receive praise for lower grades in difficult subjects.

Other families, wanting the best for their children, use praise more sparingly. Their attention takes the shape of lots of correction and the details of what needs to be improved. "A's" were just expected, and perfection is the standard, so the child is not extended "partial credit" for effort or slight improvements. In those families, hearing "*Great job,*" may not come until a big milestone is reached, like graduating from high school or college, or finishing a tour of duty in the military!

Both approaches are well intentioned. Whatever extreme we experienced growing up, most of us in adulthood probably fashioned some balance of the two with our own children. Some who didn't experience much praise, grow up to be very hard on themselves and their own children. If that's the description of you and your pattern of doling out positives, then you're probably in store for a major "re-tooling" in order to be effective with this population of young children who're suffering a big deficiency in the positive reinforcement area.

We call you *Tutor-Mentors* because in many ways the roles are inseparable in providing the "scaffolding" to support that attitude of "*Yes, I can*" with the child. Part of that package involves reviewing word attack and retention skills, and another part is encouragement and praise. As part of your "**Filters-ON**" mode, try to always start and end each session on a positive note, and look for even the simplest ways to acknowledge progress and build the child's confidence.

In the first minutes of "warming up" each time, ask them to tell you something good that has happened since last time. Some children are rather talkative so you'll need to strike a balance of free conversation and "being on task," but conversation is a valid form of Literacy practice; they're learning to better express themselves, and taking in new words and sentence construction from you. Continue your positive expectations as you move into the day's tasks: "*I bet you can tell me what's happening in this book!*" As your session is ending, probe them about things they're looking forward to for the week/weekend.

On Day-One, a good ice-breaker can be something as simple as "*I like your shoes!*" Or "*what a great blue shirt-blue is my favorite color.*" This may not feel natural to you, or in keeping with your personality. Consider it one of the ways you're getting stretched-to be in somewhat of an exaggerated mode that helps kids feel good about learning.

Praise Even the *Small Successes*:

"Do you realize that you've read that whole page without any help! That's Great!"

'That was a pretty hard page. You only needed my help with a couple words.'

"Wow—you got all those story details right! You're doing great!"

"Great job. You've finished half of your homework sheet already."

These children with a deficit of positive attention, will also come to tell when praise is insincere and overdone. As you get to know each of your students better during the first few sessions, you'll develop a sense of the right times and ways to dish out the "Atta-boys" for

their successes. You'll note the ones who can be prodded toward a bigger effort by holding off with the praise until you feel they've made their very best attempts. In this regard no two children are wired the same, so stay attuned for small signals and be willing to adapt as your 4 or 5 children, each become more comfortable with you and show individual growth.

Watch for the child's reaction to your encouraging words, to get a sense of how it's working. If the child is beaming with pride at the end of the session, that's a clear sign it's really working. If you can't detect much of a reaction, don't be discouraged. The child may not be very expressive, or just a bit slow in trusting you. Try varying the kinds of positive reinforcement. Praise needs to be specific to the effort and task at hand, to be seen as sincere. If you're constantly giving unearned compliments, the child may come to dismiss you as someone who's too anxious to please.

Too Easy? Too Hard? The Concept of "Hang-time."

Most of the materials you'll use are chosen and provided by the teacher, whether a work sheet, learning game, or selection of books in the target range of difficulty. Sometimes the child will have the opportunity to choose from a group of books that they'll read to you.

It may seem like a waste of your time when you hear them read things that seem too easy, because you're expecting to always be helping them with difficult words. We will have more to say about this in the Literacy Toolkit section, under "fluency." It can be very motivational and confidence-building for usually-slow readers to read a familiar book through for you without any mistakes. By being aware of that value, you can respond with a healthy dose of praise, before gently moving them to a slightly more challenging selection.



An important tutoring skill is finding your own comfort level in seeing the child engage in some healthy struggle before offering help. This is called "hang-time," or the time you wait before jumping in with prompts and suggestions. Struggle in reasonable proportions helps the child recall and use the learning tools they've been taught, that you're hoping to reinforce. The more the child takes responsibility for their efforts, the better they feel about the results. *"Hang-time" is good for you as well*, because it let's you think about the sequence of things you might suggest, after you've first asked, "What have we tried so far?"

A child with a low stress and frustration threshold may test your ability to keep them on task. The trick is to find the balance point where the child can manage the frustration because your encouragement and praise let's them know they're succeeding. As you get to know each individual child and their patterns, you'll recognize the places where your assistance will be most effective. Be prepared to make some adjustments, as things may appear to differ from one meeting to the next. Everyone has an off-day now and then.

Give it Time!

We've found that it's quite normal to come to a place of some frustration yourself, and wonder whether "your kids" are really receiving any benefit from your efforts. This is particularly true during the first couple months. Keep looking for the small positives. Talk freely about overall progress with other team members. We keep working on simple feedback tools whereby the teachers can update you on Improvements in the child's reading, as well as other positive behavioral effects.

Keep on encouraging the child to talk—to lay out the steps to approaching a new book, and to review what they've just learned. Encourage sharing about what's happening in their lives at school and away from school. Literacy is more than reading—it's hearing and manipulating language to create meaning, so conversations are important basic ways children learn to manipulate the language and process new words. Keep reminding yourself that in a few weeks both of you will be much more comfortable with each other, and you yourself will be more confident of your own helping skills. Give it time.

SUMMARY:

As we think back to the massive amounts of learning that has happened throughout our lives, we realize that some of it involved challenges and frustrations. Learning to be an effective tutor is something new that you may not master right away. Don't be too hard on yourselves; again, consider how the brains of impoverished young children function so differently, compared to your own formal and well-established patterns for processing information, and the way you may have worked with your own children. The big challenge here is *learning to adapt and relate to each child where they are, and persevering in your efforts*, even though you're not seeing process, or you're dealing with one or more of your 4 children, who may not appear to like or trust you very much up front!

Both you and the child are engaged in some new learning processes. You will grow as a tutor as you keep adapting and developing effective "tool-kits" for breaking things down to simpler pieces, and talking through those steps. Your aim is helping the child develop and use his/her *own effective tool kits* that will serve them well when you're not around. Trust that the child will come to have some small and large break-throughs and feel proud that something is no longer difficult for them. That may very well happen at home or later during the week at school, when the child remembers some little trick you offered during your session.

You are fortunate to be working in teams, where you can share insights with each other and stay current with what's working. With the help and support of your colleagues, you'll find ways to overcome your challenges. We will be checking in with you to collect your experiences and insights from time to time, and use them as valuable learning aides to other volunteers coming on board. Beyond those temporary frustrations, you can take some pride in the knowledge that this cycle of new learning enriches your life, as well as the lives of some precious children.

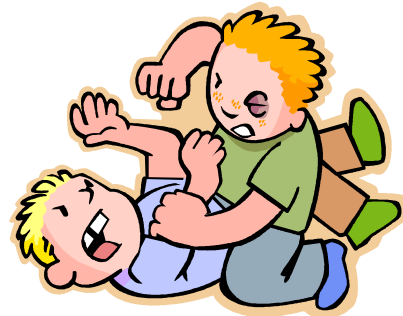
A FEW PROCEDURAL MATTERS:

The **SCHOOLS WHERE ALL THRIVE** program functions as a special partnership between the SENIOR HUB RSVP and the Adams County districts and schools that welcome us. We recruit, screen and equip the best available volunteers, and facilitate team assignments into schools willing to collaborate with us. While we maintain general oversight, our teams serve under the direct on-site supervision of the school's paid professional staff—the Principal, classroom teachers, instructional coaches and reading specialists.

Schools each have different rules and cultures. Each school will cover their own key procedural matters during the team's "*Welcome and Orientation Visit*." We always attend these to help clarify important items for you, but don't hesitate to raise your own questions.

We maintain excellent school relations by observing the following:

- Get and read a copy of the school's volunteer handbook if available, to know the particular policies that apply to you.
- Follow the school's sign-in and out with the school office each week. Also, wear the school's Visitor badge—if provided, along with your Senior Hub name-tag.
- Keep up your RSVP-SWAT Time Sheet! Count each day's hours, arrival to departure rounded up to the nearest quarter-hour. The clipboard with time sheets is usually kept in the front office. On each new sheet you'll print your name on one line, and then sign it on the next line beneath it. Then go across and log your hours under the correct day.
- As models of good behavior and citizenship, we dress and act appropriately at all times. We use language appropriate for these young ones and filter out anything that imitates cursing or vulgarity. Kids are very anxious to imitate adults.
- Fill out and keep up-to-date an ***Emergency Contact Information Card*** provided by the school, so they can quickly contact the right person if the need should arise.
- Take care to check out and return any materials you may borrow from the teacher or Media Center, to assist in your own preparation.
- Safeguarding confidentiality of student records now is a matter of law. We naturally seek out as much information as possible about "our" students but don't feel slighted if some sensitive information is refused you or not voluntarily shared with you.
- Never undertake to discipline a child or group! This is the responsibility of the school's paid staff. A very rare exception might be when you are the adult closest to a dangerous situation requiring someone to act quickly for another child's safety.



- Be sure someone discusses the school's policy regarding touching and hugging children. This may seem natural to those of us growing up in a different era, but now there are many more restrictions on what's acceptable in this area.
- It is never a part of your job to dismiss students from class or school. This can only be done by the teacher and office staff.
- A volunteer is prohibited from taking a child off campus. You may want to drive the child home, to the mall, etc. but realize that this involves serious liability issues, so we strongly support this policy for your protection.
- Given the risks of HIV and other communicable diseases, we need to observe the universal precautions and avoid contact with any bodily fluids. Treat them as potentially infectious, and report them immediately to the teacher or nurse.
- The use of tobacco, alcohol and controlled substances is expressly forbidden while on school grounds—or prior to arrival.
- Become familiar with the school's harassment and non-discrimination policies, and report any infractions you observe or experience.
- Call your Team Lead any day you are sick and unable to be present, so he/she will notify the school contact if necessary, and make arrangements for each of your assigned children to work with a sub or join up with another Tutor-Mentor during their session.
- For planned absences (travel, extended medical recovery, etc.) please report these to your Team Lead as early-on as possible, so substitute coverage can be arranged.
- Take care to get and keep a copy of the school's calendar to be aware of *vacation days, holidays, teacher conference days, etc. and not come on those days*. Your school contact and Team Lead will also keep you abreast of periodic testing schedules and other days when the team won't be needed.
- We do not intend that our tutor-mentors have any additional contact with a child beyond the supervised time spent on-site at the school. *This is for your protection*, as there are potential liability issues that could come forth from accidents or small incidents that could result in false accusations, etc. in the simplest of events like a tutor-mentor taking a child to a mall, Saturday baseball game, etc. so just don't do it!. We're looking out for you!
- Please do not bring and attempt to distribute advertising or promotional material *for any kind of commercial, political or religious campaign, effort or topic while you're at the school*. This includes business cards, catalogs, brochures, etc. meant for marketing and promoting things like Arbonne, Amway, Avon, your church, etc. Items of religious jewelry such as a Christian cross, Star of David necklace, etc. is fine, but don't wear pins, caps & clothing that advertise a product or religious or political cause.
- With all this seriousness, remember that you'll last longer if you set about to enjoy this, and *take a fun and "actively-curious" approach to viewing and experiencing things through the fresh eyes of a child!*

Relating to Teachers/School Personnel

This special partnership between the SENIOR HUB RSVP and the schools that welcome us, operates on that same positive attitude-principle we've stressed throughout. It especially applies to how we interact with the on-site school personnel involved with our program. In many of the set-ups you'll have very limited interactions with teachers and Principal; in others you may see them on a daily basis.

Elementary schools have an interesting variety of individuals who've set about to dedicate their lives to educating children. Generally we're working with much younger people at a point that's fairly early-on in their teaching or administrative careers. Compare that to the grossly unequal footing and confidence levels of a group of retirees that are seen to be highly accomplished individuals in the community. If we put ourselves in their shoes, *it's easy to see how they could feel quite intimidated by the kinds of individuals that the SWAT program has brought together to work as a team at their school.*

That's why—when dealing with school personnel—we deliberately choose to make every effort to lessen that distance in human relations that automatically comes with big differences in *age, class* and *rank*. That may seem like a tall order, but it's really just *another expression of respect*, for younger strivers in their field who are somewhere behind us in age and accomplishment. We mature adults don't need to accentuate our *presumed superiority in any aspect*. This is merely another adjustment we make—in much the same way we adapt ourselves to the big distances between ourselves and the young children.

Working as an Effective Team Member

Our SWAT program began via a *Senior Corps* grant to experiment with this team approach as a fresh innovation in working with children struggling to read. Only a few team tutoring or mentoring programs exist anywhere in the country, and they are used with high school & college students. Our model brings together the strengths and commitment of 3-6 adults to offer support continued learning. Most of our volunteers did not spend their careers teaching children, so this approach offers to help grow each team member's skills and confidence in providing these children that extra "boost" to catch up.

Tutor-Mentors each bring a unique personal background to this interaction. One loves crossword puzzles and building vocabulary, while another is good at writing and poetry. Others bring strong Science, military or business backgrounds that are useful in motivating the "why" of learning with children lacking broad exposure to mainstream career options. Some Tutor-Mentors may have a gift for drawing out shy and withdrawn pupils, while others enjoy engaging fidgety little boys.

This mix of interests and backgrounds enriches the learning process of both our volunteers and the children. Teaming permits the cross-fertilization of experiences. What's working with a particular child or situation can be shared to benefit of the rest of the team. And those special "teaching moments" can be shared to expand the tool box of tricks and techniques of all the others. We're stronger performers altogether when we team up.

Even though everyone strives for faithful attendance in working with these children, we realize that the occasional absence is unavoidable. When someone needs to be absent, their “regular kids” aren’t deprived of their regular tutoring experience for that day. The Team Lead helps decide how to “double up” with the other team members so no child misses out.

There will be days when "everything's clicking" and the team celebrates their successes. There may be other times when it seems that little is getting accomplished. Team members have each other for support. We recommend spending a bit of “Check-Out” time sharing the day’s experiences and affirming the good "accidental learning" and experimentation that has taken place. *Together we’re stronger!*

Relating to Your Team Lead

You will be working in groups of 2-5 other individuals, with one person designated *Team Lead*, who has agreed to take on a few additional responsibilities. That person may be younger than you—or all the others in the group. *Age-seniority is not the criteria!* Team Leads are generally chosen based on their experience with the program and the particular school where you are assigned, and their willingness to assume a leadership role.

A few Team Leads are former teachers or school employees, and others may have experience working with children in other venues. They can assist you by sharing their insights into the program and school culture, or tasks and challenges we face.

There’s no big hierarchy here; Team Leads fulfill the same tutoring load as the others, and in addition they are the main point of contact with the school and with The Senior Hub. They track time sheets, and they’re the one to whom you report an illness and any planned absences. Beyond that, they may provide some brief inspirational thoughts when you get together upon arrival each day, so all begin with a positive attitude. Anyone can bring and share quotations and *brief stories*. All team members can share in keeping things very up-beat and positive. After things get up and running in the Fall, a team may choose to rotate the Team Lead duties around in the Spring semester.

The schools are all somewhat different in how they’re set up to have Tutor-Mentors work with children. Some have us working in pairs inside individual classrooms. Others have “pull-outs,” where the team works in the same place like the Media Center (library) or in a conference room. The children come to them with materials to fill up most of a 25-30 minute time block. Then they return and the next ones come. In some situations, Team Leads may come early to receive materials and teachers’ instructions to distribute to the others.

New Team Leads are needed very year to work with fresh volunteers in a new school. You can begin to grow into the role by observing and volunteering to assist your Team Lead whenever a need arises, as in when he/she needs to be absent. At the close of the school year, be sure to inform your Program Coordinator that you’re interested in becoming a Team Lead next year.