

ONE TO ONE LITERACY - 2015 Volunteer Tutor Coffee Chat Notes

The discussion at our 5 Coffee Chats varied from session to session, so here is a recap of some of the points that arose:

First tutoring session

- First tutoring session can be overwhelming. It takes a while to settle into the role.
- A good idea - spend the first session shadowing an experienced tutor. They were also encouraged to ask for support from their liaison.

Time constraints

- Some tutors find it hard to stick to 30 minutes.
- Suggestion: place a watch or phone timer on the desk in front of you to help with time management.

Student information from teachers

- Some tutors feel that they did not receive much in the way of information about the students.
- Some tutors mentioned that they communicate directly with the teachers via email. It was suggested to tutors that they would need to ask their liaison to check with the school coordinator to see if this is something that their teachers would want. It was recognized that every school is different.
- Many tutors generally find it hard to communicate with the teachers. Some talk to teachers in the staff room at recess, some talk at the end of the day, some leave notes and some find it hard to talk at all. It was suggested that they ask their school coordinator what is the preferred method of communication with class teachers in their school.

Collection/return of students from class

- Tutor mentioned that they find it hard to collect children from the school as it is very big and it takes up a lot of tutoring time. Asked if it was ok for the students to make their own way. Please check with the school coordinator to make the decision on this issue and that it is something that could be made clear during the orientation session. The liaison would need to be aware of this as well.

Emergency procedures

- A tutor was recently part of a lock down drill. She found it a difficult experience. This led to a general discussion on emergency procedures and tutors were encouraged to ask their school coordinator for guidance if they had not received any. Emergency procedures should be part of the orientation to the school.

How do we get books for older kids?

- Ask librarian, student selects their own book of interest
- 5 finger rule - if mistakes are made on more than 5 words per page, book is too hard.

How to keep the attention of students?

- Refer to handout (available on website)
- Offer a stretch break, stamp feet
- Sit in other places, lie on the floor, stand up, stand on one foot
- Read to the student, then choose 1 word. Write it out. Student reads the word (use white board).
- Other 'standing while reading challenges'
- Find a topic of interest to the student is very important.
- Make the session fun by using games, clapping games, stretch breaks and dancing were mentioned as fun activities.
- A card game called scrabble slam was recommended as an excellent card game to use with students.
- Use incentives such as reading a favourite book to the student after they have completed some reading.
- A set of books called 'The Magic Tree house' as being very engaging for older students. Several tutors mentioned that they would like more books for boys – non-fiction about animals/dinosaurs/monsters/construction etc. Also referred to the website for ideas about games and tutoring tips.
- Some tutors allow the children to use a fidget (item that the child can hold), some had stretch breaks.
- Break the session into small chunks with a mix of reading and games. The magnetic letters and whiteboards are useful.
- Check and let their liaison know if they cannot find them book box items.
- The website is a good spot for ideas about games and tutoring tips.

How do to approach students who don't want to go?

- For older students, call the classroom and have teacher send student (less attention than going to get student).
- Speak directly with older students about whether they want to be there.
- Have teacher ask if other students are interested in going.
- Talk to teacher about how they approach the program and refer to it in class, ensure it is framed as a positive experience for students.
- When picking up an 'alternate' student, have teacher ask who would like to go and ready. If the 'regulars' see others are interested, they might become more interested.
- Tutor mentioned working with a student who gives very little response during the session. This led to a general discussion about how to help put the student at ease and encourage interaction. One tutor mentioned that she learned a few phrases from the child's first language and after that the child really began to respond. Tutors mentioned trying to find books that would interest the student. There was also a good discussion about helping the student to understand that it is fine to make mistakes.

Forms

- Students fill in date/title/list of hard words. They fill in level as well to track progress.
- Would appreciate a spot on the form to fill in 'last page read' (not just how many pages)
- Note taking – some tutors worry about how much to write and one tutor was unsure of what to report as regards student progress. They were reassured that the note taking should be kept manageable.
- Tutors don't always have time to mark down in the student records which new words the student learned that day, so have the student help. Ask them which words they learned and the tutor can then write them in the student log.
- Teachers sometimes ask tutors to work with children on school assignments. This is not ONE TO ONE policy and tutors are directed to speak with their Liaison.
- The book list template is helpful so children can keep track of what they read.

Sharing Tricks and Tips

- Use 300 most common sight words. They read a column. Then ask student to write on whiteboard. Review weekly.
- Use Snakes and Ladders game, in the Book Box as incentive for achieving certain 'amount' of reading.
- Offer incentives. Do 5 minutes of this and then we will do 1 minute of that.
- Take turns reading aloud with student.
- Read books in reverse.
- One school has readers pick a few books from library and puts choices in a bin for ONE TO ONE, checked out by librarian.
- Play Go Fish using the Dolch words. Create 2 sets of 8 -12 cards of each word (Dolch word list available on the website). Shuffle them together and deal 5 cards to each player (volunteer and student). Review the list of words first to ensure the student is familiar with all of them, then begin the game. The student asks first for a certain word and the volunteer either gives him/her the card if it's in his/her hand, or tells the student to go fish. Once a match is made, place the pairs in front of the player who won them. Play until all cards are matched.
- To work on sentence structure, especially for students who don't yet have the concept of how a sentence is put together, type out a sentence, e.g. "I went to school today." And cut each word into a difference piece. Have the student put the pieces together to form the correct sentence.
- To help students track words as they read, get a witch's finger or a finger point and, for fun, have them use that as they read.
- Some suggested good books – Scaredy Squirrel series, Fly Guys, Zack Power
- Make sure there is scrap paper in the ONE TO ONE space for a student to draw pictures or write out new words.
- Tutors are encouraged to check on the school calendar and try to stay ahead of events that might disrupt their tutor schedule.

Working with Early Level Readers

- Many tutors mentioned that they were working with pre level 4 readers and that they are struggling for resources and ideas.

- There are good songs, rhymes on the internet (“Alphabet Rap).
- Encouraged to let their liaison know if they need some early level reading books and also to ask the school coordinator for help with this.
- Bob books were mentioned as an excellent resource by one tutor and also Pirate Pat Books by Usbourne.

Suggestions for ONE TO ONE

****Suggestions are passed on to the ONE TO ONE Program Committee for consideration**

- Add graphic novels to Book Boxes
- More National Geographic books
- Add suggested titles to website, tutors can ask Librarians if they are available (A Book With No Pictures).
- Check out Carrie Gelson's blog: www.thereisabookforthat.com
- More silly books, rhyming books, humour to build fluency
- More 'pop culture' titles including LEGO, Star Wars, PAW Patrol, Disney etc.
- Re-stock dry erase pens
- ONE TO ONE has some word games like this that we plan to copy and distribute to each school in the coming months.
- Tutors would appreciate more books in each levelled envelope so children don't become bored of the same titles.
- Share some Reader Theatre scripts
- Ensure reading options are culturally sensitive and provide opportunities for children from around the world to have material they can relate to (pictures or words)
- ESL / ELL kids are not part of the ONE TO ONE mandate but it is increasingly happening that they are included in the program – tutors wanted to check in that this was happening with other tutors. ONE TO ONE will discuss this trend with regard to our program.