

## General Tutor Support Meeting

April 3, 2012 5:30-7pm



### Topics discussed

#### **1. When is it time to end a student/tutor partnership?**

Most often, a student will simply decide that they are done. There is usually an event or situation that precipitates their decision – a move to another town, new job, new class schedule, new baby etc. Sadly, sometimes it is the result of their mental or physical health. We currently have no exit interview for students as they often disappear without warning. However, it would be helpful to do them whenever it is possible. (Thanks for this thought!)

#### **2. Sounding out words vs just memorizing them.**

It is hard to know sometimes if a student simply lacks that ability to connect the letter/sound relationship, or if there is some way that they would be able to finally get it. Remember that phonics instruction (as illustrated in your Tutor Handbook) should always be brief. If a student seems overly frustrated by phonics exercises then perhaps allowing them to memorize most words as sight words will be more effective. Often our students have developed very good memories as they have had to learn to compensate for their lack of ability in reading. It is ok to let them use their own strategies for learning.

#### **3. It doesn't seem like there have been any great successes/goals reached by my student.**

It is very exciting when a student gets a job, promotion or drivers' license, obtains their citizenship, or passes an important exam. Those milestones are a big deal for most people in general. However, what we might view as a small advance for most people, may be a big advance for our particular student – getting a library card, finishing a book or writing a letter. It may be that just showing up for an appointment is an accomplishment, making eye contact, or being comfortable enough that they are willing to extend themselves and possibly make a mistake.

Any time your student steps out of their comfort zone is a success. Imagine if someone asked you to swim with sharks! It isn't a big deal for people in that profession, but it would be extremely intimidating for most of us! Remember that our students may initially feel that we are asking them to swim with sharks.

#### **4. My student reads too fast.**

The problem with reading too fast is that almost always it ends with little/no comprehension. Students may want to read fast because they want to "get it over with" but they may think that reading fast is a sign of a good reader. Remind them that good readers don't read fast; good readers understand what they read! This is also a very good reason for you to spend some time reading to your student – use expression in your voice, pause often, think out loud (comment on a passage – "Wow! I really like the way they described that!" or "Gee, I wonder what that means?") Model good reading strategies and your student will automatically pick some up.

#### **5. Using audio books**

The LVA library currently has a few books on tape. I took a second look this morning and they are not as dated as I had assumed – in fact, they are pretty nice! Most have the book included and they are in good shape and have decent spacing between the lines. The biggest potential issue is that the person on the cassette reads quickly so it might be difficult for a new reader to

follow along. However, it is a nice option for a student to simply listen to a book being read to them. (The LVA library also has cassette players that may be borrowed.) There are also a couple of websites that offer “talking books” where words are highlighted as they are read. I am looking into the cost of these to see if LVA may be able to purchase a subscription for all of our tutors. You may also be able to find some audio books on You Tube. Stay tuned!

#### **6. Making connections – author videos, TV documentaries, you tube**

One way to make reading a book more interesting is to engage your student more – look up the author on-line to see a picture of the writer; sometimes there is a video interview with the author. Remember “The Fonz”? Henry Wrinkler, (who admits having a learning disability himself) has written a series of books featuring *Hank Zipster* that are fun to read, especially when you understand that the main character is patterned after himself.

You can sometimes find documentaries on TV about various authors – Donn Fendler, author of *Lost on a Mountain in Maine* recently was on MPBN (Donn also has an on-line video talking about his experience.) And of course, there is You Tube!

#### **7. Ideas for meaningful writing with your student.**

Writing a letter can be a very powerful and empowering experience. If your student has an issue with a purchase, or an unpleasant experience as a customer, suggest writing a letter. Often the experience of writing will help make them feel more in control of a situation. And if they receive a reply – they will know that their words made a real difference.

Writing a letter to the editor is another example of showing your student the impact of their writing – imagine how validated anyone feels if the newspaper actually prints their very own words in a real newspaper!

You can also go to [www.kionline.com](http://www.kionline.com) and directly comment on an article! This can be especially fun as others can get into an online discussion with you, providing immediate feedback.

Often now, obituaries will have on-line guest books. If your student knows someone who has passed away, writing a note in the guest book can be very comforting. It is exciting when they then see & read their own words in the guestbook. They have made a difference!

#### **8. Utilizing real materials**

Remember to use real materials! Workbooks have their time & place but adult learners need material which is relevant to them. Learning how to look up a phone number in a phone book or a word in a dictionary is useful to almost everyone. Understanding how those types of publications are organized is important – there are many times when lists are in alphabetical order. Just understanding this can make a difference.

#### **9. Using Tactile materials**

Learning doesn’t always need to happen while sitting at a table! Remember our discussions in tutor training about learning styles? Many people with disabilities are tactile learners. They need the stimulation of touch and movement to absorb information.

Use Scrabble tiles or sticky notes with letters or groups of letters to make words

Games such as Upwards, Blurt, Wheel of Fortune (all in the LVA library)

Bend Wiki sticks or pipe cleaners into letter shapes