

MARC Tutor Tips

**University of
Wisconsin - La
Crosse**

Office of Multicultural Student Services

PRECOLLEGE PROGRAMS

WHAT IS MARC?

The Precollege academic year offerings provide local youth with weekly tutoring and enrichment opportunities. Our outreach efforts serve African-American, Native American, Latino, and Hmong youth from around the area. Over 125 UW-L undergraduate students from diverse ethnic backgrounds serve as tutors and mentors each semester. Participants and college mentors within these programs constitute a unique community of cross-age, cross-cultural learners brought together for the purpose of educational advancement, cultural acknowledgment and social enrichment.

Sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Student Services at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, The Mentoring and Readiness for College (MARC) program provides academic year tutoring and enrichment for multicultural and low-income students in the La Crosse and surrounding communities.

The purpose of this program is to assist youth in specific academic subjects to help youth develop more effective study skills and to provide enrichment and recreational activities. College students and local professionals will promote understanding, self-awareness, cultural awareness, and appreciation among participating youth. Our college student staff members, volunteers, and adult professionals are from various backgrounds and include positive role models who have the future of our youth as their highest priority.

Through a combination of tutoring, enrichment, and communication, our Mentoring and Readiness for College (MARC) program is designed to inspire students to attend college and become active members in their community, while taking a proactive role in their life choices. Part of our success is due to our low tutor to student ratio, while other strengths of this program reside outside the classroom. Beyond academics, this mentorship also exposes students to a number of opportunities, organizations within the community, and events on local campuses. We also strive to meet the academic needs of our students by communicating and collaborating with parents, teachers, and school administrators.

PROGRAM SITES

Norwalk – Mondays

Staff members are from various cultural backgrounds and will include strong Latino/Hispanic adults and college students who will have the future of our youth as their highest priority. We partner with the Community Learning Center to provide tutoring services to 55 students.

When: Mondays, 3:00-5:15 PM

Where: Brookwood School

Grade Level: 1-8

Sparta - Tuesdays

Staff members are from various cultural backgrounds and will include strong Latino/Hispanic adults and college students who will have the future of our youth as their highest priority. We partner with the Community Learning Center to provide tutoring services to 40 students.

When: Tuesdays, 3:00-5:15 PM

Where: Lawrence Lawson and Meadowview in the Sparta School District.

Grade Level: Lawson (1-3) and Meadowview (4-6)

Emerson – Tuesdays

Our program at Emerson is a smaller program, maintaining a one-to-one student/mentor ratio. Focused on providing the students with, not only a tutor, but someone to connect with, look up to, and learn from. Many of the student/mentor relationships are on-going and have been as lengthy as five years or more. In order to maintain the low student/mentor ratio, this program cannot exceed 28 students and there is often a waiting list to participate.

When: Tuesdays, 5:00-7:30 PM

Where: Emerson Elementary School

Grade Level: K-12

Tomah – Wednesdays

We partner with the Ho-Chunk Youth and Learning Center to provide tutoring services to 40-50 students.

When: Wednesdays, 3:00-5:15 PM

Where: Ho-Chunk Youth and Learning Center in Tomah

Grade Level: K-12

Holmen – Wednesdays

This program has grown tremendously over the past ten years, going from less than ten students in 1999 to more than 55 students enrolled in the spring of 2014. Academically focused, this program aims at providing demanding courses necessary to be successful in college.

When: Wednesdays, 2:45-5:15 PM

Grade Level: 6-12

Where: Holmen Middle School. High School students are picked up from school and transported to the Middle School.

UWL Girls and Boys

Each Thursday afternoon, students in the La Crosse and Onalaska area arrive on campus for programming. Serving primarily Hmong female students, there is a total of 40 students enrolled in the program. UW-L college students from various cultural backgrounds serve as tutors and mentors.

When: Thursdays, 5:00-7:30 PM and 6:00-8:30 PM

Where: UW-L Campus

Grade Level: 4-12

TUTOR JOB DESCRIPTION

Responsibilities and Expectations

- Attend and participate in all staff training, tutoring and enrichment activities, and evaluations sessions
- Provide motivation and enthusiasm to tutees through leadership role modeling
- Assist tutee with individual and group homework assignments, projects and activities
- Collaborate with other staff in planning, coordinating and leading enrichment activities
- Establish goals for yourself and tutee
- Evaluate and keep track of student progress with the completion of tutoring logs
- Keep project coordinator informed of significant events, developments, and problems of tutees
- Be energized, aware, present, and prepared
- Be with your students from their arrival until the end
- You should know where your student is at all times
- Promote safe, smart, responsible behaviors
- Support one another
- Ask questions
- Report all injuries!
- Actively assess needs (areas of improvement, challenge, etc.) of students and procure related academic materials/activities for students to work on
- Ensure students are completing all homework assignments accurately, and that students always have something academic to work on during tutoring sessions.
- Tutors should not be working on their homework, checking emails or using electronic devices (phones, laptops, etc.) during programming.
- Schedule and attend biweekly one-on-one meetings with Site Supervisor.
- Other related-duties as determined by Site Supervisor

MARC PROGRAM RULES FOR STUDENTS

- Walk instead of run (unless of course it is part of an enrichment activity)
- Keep the volume down!
- Be honest
- Respect yourself (don't give yourself put downs!)
- Respect others (if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say it at all)
- Manners Matter! Please & Thank you's!
- Put things back where you found them
- Appropriate language!
- Do your best!
- Always have something academic to work on!

WHAT IS A TUTOR?

Appropriate Roles for a Tutor

CHALLENGER

- Encourage youth to set goals and help them make plans to achieve them.
- Provide incentive for youth to do well and to try new things on their own.
- Give honest feedback to youth when, and if, they act in a socially inappropriate manner. Try at all times to remain respectful and to allow everyone involved to maintain a sense of dignity.
- Engage youth in increasingly complex activities but remember that growth comes in small increments. Have realistic expectations.

SUPPORTER

- Convey warmth and caring about youth.
- Give support to youth's efforts, both in and out of school.
- Listen to youth's ideas and concerns and provide feedback.
- Express belief in youth's abilities and innate worth.
- Be responsible! Don't volunteer to help if you know you're already overextended.

COMPANION

- Share interests and experiences with youth, especially as they relate to your career or educational plans.
- Spend time talking and working one-one-one with youth.
- Participate actively in each part of the evening.

RESOURCE PERSON

- Introduce youth to new people, interests, and ideas.
- Help youth acquire the knowledge, skills, and information they will need to continue to be successful.
- Suggest new sources of information.
- Encourage youth to approach other people as resources. Foster an environment where everyone (including YOU!) feels comfortable saying, "I don't know."

Inappropriate Roles for a Tutor

SOCIAL WORKER

- Social Work is a profession, not a hobby. If you are confronted with a situation where you feel it requires more attention than you are qualified to give, please refer it to your supervisor as soon as possible.

CHILD SAVIOR

- It is unhealthy to allow youth to become too dependent on you, especially if you are committed to the program for only a semester. The danger in playing this role is that you may unintentionally alienate the youth's parent(s) or guardian(s), thereby endangering an important relationship.

PEER

- Both you and your students will be happier and healthier with friends selected from your respective peer groups.
- While it can sometimes be tempting to do otherwise, limiting your relationship to that of a tutor-student will be more beneficial in the long run.

ACTOR/ACTRESS

- It is neither necessary nor recommended that you attempt to be "up beat" every time you are with youth, who are sensitive to falseness in tutors.
- It is critical that youth perceive you as a person. Rather than masking emotions or suppressing them, try expressing them openly and appropriately.

BOUNDARIES

A boundary can be thought of as a protective barrier that helps to keep us safe. They need to be applied on a consistent and ongoing basis. Boundaries teach children what healthy relationships look like and allow them to be children.

Who needs boundaries?

All of us can benefit from having healthy boundaries in our relationships. Exercising your ability to set and maintain those boundaries throughout your mentoring relationship will provide you with an opportunity to challenge your own personal growth.

Although all children need boundaries, they are particularly important for youth who:

1. Come from chaotic and unpredictable environments
2. Have been the victim of abuse
3. Have to take care of the adults in their lives and as a result have not had their own needs met

How do I prevent my boundaries from being violated?

You should decide what boundaries are important to you before meeting with your student and certainly before being confronted with a difficult situation. Planning in advance will help prevent being caught off guard and will also help you plan and rehearse your desired response. Some specific areas where boundaries are important include:

1. Behavior: What would I do if my mentee uses foul language, mistreats others, steals or is disrespectful to me during one of our sessions?
2. Self-disclosure: How would I respond if my student asks me about personal, and private, things?

Are there any guidelines I can use to help guide my actions when confronted with situations that challenge healthy boundaries?

Here is a three-step approach you can apply when trying to decide how to handle a difficult scenario:

1. In tutoring, the relationship is the formula, the strategy, and the intervention. How can you respond to this situation in a way that protects the well-being of the tutor-tutee relationship?
2. The implications of your response are as important as the response itself. What are the short-term and long-term consequences of the way you choose to handle the situation?
3. Communicate from a place of personal honesty. How can you effectively communicate with your tutee the importance of the boundary in question in a way that honors your needs without blaming or shaming your tutee?

EFFECTIVE TUTORING TIPS

Five Steps to Being an Effective Tutor

Step 1: Know What is Expected of You as a Tutor

Tutoring is the process of getting students to become independent through questioning. Tutoring should help students develop self-confidence and improve study skills. Tutoring is a well-balanced question/information exchange in which parties participate and, therefore, both benefit. Tutoring provides the practice and drill in specific course material needed by the student, while giving the tutor valuable review opportunities and the chance to develop and sharpen educational and communication skills.

Tutoring is not teaching. There are important differences between the role of the tutor and that of the classroom teacher. Approaches, relationships, and techniques are different. The tutor works in very close proximity with the student, usually one-on-one. The student may not be accustomed to the close contact and the interchange that occurs during a tutoring session. The tutor may have to consciously strive to develop a good rapport with the student within this environment.

Step 2: Setting Up the Tutoring Session

It is important to shape the tutoring environment. This can be difficult; however, if you follow these simple procedures, you will have a successful session.

- Prepare yourself for the tutoring session
 - Find out what the student needs to work on
 - Bring pen/ pencil, notepad, other resources? (e.g., textbook?)
- Prepare a greeting and review expectations
 - *When you meet for the first time*
 - Introduce yourself and confirm the student's name.
 - Get to know the student a bit (e.g. Why did you choose to study this language? How are you feeling about it?)
 - Discuss their overall goals for working with a tutor
 - Identify specific goals for that particular session
 - *During the session*
 - Sit next to (rather than across from) your student, so the two of you can work together
 - Learn a bit about how things are going with the class and the assignment before "jumping in."
 - Make sure student work matches the expectations for the assignment!!
 - Ask questions and offer clues, rather than simply providing answers.
 - Give clear explanations and feedback.
 - Be prepared for potential problems

Step Three: Meeting Your Student's Needs

Assess the student's understanding of the subject by asking questions. Determine the student's need for them to succeed in the subject. Strategies will vary, but do remember to engage the student. Try not to lecture and attempt to use:

- Use good questioning and listening techniques
 - Listen to what the client is asking for.
 - Look at the client not just at the paper
 - Ask for explanations of answers- particularly incorrect ones.
 - Observe and use nonverbal cues (body language, tone of voice, etc.)
 - Know when to answer student questions regarding social, academic, personal issues, and when to direct the student to another resource.
- Positive ways of correcting students
 - Give correction in ways that motivate them to be better or do a better job.
 - Always see yourself as the coach who is helping someone improve.
 - Show you care. Express concern about sharing ways that they can improve.
 - Pick the right moment to offer corrections. You should be responding and not reacting to the situation.
 - Avoid giving the impression that you're more concerned with seeing your ideas put into practice rather than helping the student improve.
 - Give specific suggestions for improvement.
- Positive problem solving
 - Try Asking: 'What Do You Understand?'
 - One of the most difficult questions a student has to answer after hearing a lesson is: "What don't you understand?" Students dread this question and many learn to never admit that they're confused.
 - If students knew what they didn't comprehend, they wouldn't be lost. They can form coherent questions only if they understand the whole lesson.
 - The solution is to ask instead, "What did you understand?" The student gets a positive start on the problem by telling you what he or she knows. The tutor can sort out the areas that have caused the student confusion.
 - Use Encouragement to Motivate
 - You have the opportunity to praise the work of your students and this will give them recognition for a job well done. This is a comment that focuses on the student. You can say, "You are so organized." The tutor can also motivate the student through encouragement by saying, "Your essay showed great organization. Each idea was clearly developed."
 - Other examples of the difference between praise and encouragement:
 - Praise: "You're a great writer."
 - Encouragement: "This story is great. Your characters are so real."

- Praise: "You are super. You always get these problems right."
- Encouragement: "Your hard work on solving word problems really shows."
- Cultivate independence
 - Demonstrate HOW to do something, and then ask the student to re-teach you.
 - Make sure the student is the one actually doing the work (i.e. don't just take over!)
 - Offer additional examples/ questions to "quiz" the student
 - Bring something to read/ work on in case the student needs space to practice
 - Aim for improvement and long-term growth- not perfection!
 - Help them do the best work THEY can do (not the best YOU can do)

Step Four: The Ingredients of a Good Tutoring Session

The following are some of the necessary ingredients for a good session:

- Greet your Student and give them your undivided attention
- Have empathy with your Student's problems
- Be honest with your tutee
- Set the Agenda
- Have a sense of humor
- Have the ability to "lighten up" a situation
- Have a good interaction with your Student, a good give-and-take
- Know your Student's strengths and weaknesses
- Work through your Student's strengths to improve his/her weaknesses
- Make your Student feel good about him/herself and his/her accomplishments
- Know when to stop a session
- End the session on a positive note

Step Five: Ending the Tutoring Session

Do not just say "good-bye" when the session is over. You should:

- Positively assess the work that was done during the session
- Do any necessary tutor paperwork
- Always end the session with a positive comment

More Tutoring Tips

- Give children limited and sensible choices - we need to work on ____ and _____today. Which do you want to start with?
- Have a work plan. Today we are going to __ and ____. Give the child the opportunity to add to the plan. Write it down and let the child check things off as they get done.
- Vary the sessions.

- Respond to the child's interest. Bring a book about football or animals.
- Acknowledge when things aren't going well. This is hard - that's okay. Involve the child in the problem-solving process.
- Assume that when a child doesn't understand something you have to find a better way to explain it. If a child is really stuck - move on. Often the more you stay on one point, the more anxious it makes the child. Children learn best in an environment they perceive to be safe.
- When you know a child is pressing your buttons be an actress and don't let on. Once you are in a power struggle, you have lost even though you might win.
- Articulate the issues for the child. "I have noticed that it takes you a while to settle down. Why don't we spend the first few minutes talking about your favorite TV show or something fun you have done recently?" Remember that reading is a language-based skill. Any time spent talking with a child is helpful.
- If a child comes to tutoring and is obviously upset about something, ask her if she wants to talk about it. Acknowledge the feelings the child may be expressing.

BEHAVIORAL MANAGEMENT

Effective teaching is a loving caring adult who reaches out with words and actions to help students/children master their behaviors.

Dealing calmly, honestly, and confidently with unacceptable behavior will create a warm, comfortable climate and this will help the student/child to master his impulses to direct his/her behavior. This is using authority in constructive ways and not creating fear in children. Students/Children should not be allowed to walk all over us, nor should they be in fear of us.

SOME HELPFUL TECHNIQUES:

1. Use your voice as a tool.
2. Speak to individuals ...squat, sit, or kneel down, face the child and look into his/her eyes.
3. Reach out, hold hand or shoulder gently.
4. Talk about the problem with words easily understood by the student/child. However, don't "talk down" to her/him.
5. Give only 1 or 2 requests at a time.
6. Reinforce your directions when necessary by actually showing the student/child what you mean.
7. Let the student/child know that a certain behavior is important.
8. Give directions in a positive form. Use directives like: "Please sit/walk/talk/listen/use your inside voice"...etc.

EXAMPLES:

Positive statements (good option) :

Walk inside school.
You can run outside.

Stay with the others...

Walk around the poster, please

Please sit flat on your bottom!

Move over here, and work on this assignment

Negative statements (not as good):

Don't run!

Don't leave

Don't step on Jennie's poster

Stop fidgeting!

Stop messing with the other students

9. Give "I" messages:
"It scares me when"...
"I can't allow you to swear at other students." "It hurts them. It's disrespectful"
"I will not let you throw paper at Sara". "You may toss it in the waste basket".

10. Direct your comment to what has happened, not to the student/child.
Example: Water makes the floor slippery and someone could fall. You need to try to wipe the floor with these towels, so no one gets hurt.
11. Give choices when you mean it!
Example: During tutoring time, students cannot choose to play sports. "Would you prefer starting with your math or your history?"
12. Be honest with the youth...tell them how a behavior made you feel.
Example: "When you interrupt and disturb Jenny, I am unhappy. She comes to get her work done and I must ask you to be respectful and allow her space to get her work done, and I will make sure others will give you respect and space."
13. Lend a helping hand.
Example: "Let's try this, I'll read a paragraph and then you read the rest of the page."
14. Redirect an activity.
Example: "It's Chris's turn to use the printers now. You can work on Math Aces software until it is your turn." When a student/child willingly waits or chooses something else...again, be honest and tell them how terrific that makes you feel!
"GOOD FOR YOU! That shows me you are waiting your turn. I like your patience."
15. Take a Break! (Time Out!) This should be a last resort. After a short break, talk to the student/child.
16. Help the students/children to express their feelings and value the feelings of others.
Example: You need to tell Gary that you don't want him to push you (put you down). Use your words (express yourself).
17. Teach your students/children to resolve conflict in a non-violent way. Present a variety of solutions.
18. Ask students/children to define the problem. Also make sure they understand each person's feelings and the result of their actions. Allow students/children to try out a solution that they came up with together, rather than just eliminating all contact.
19. Talk with your students. They may respond as if they don't like you, or they don't care. In the long run, however, you will earn their respect.

TUTOR CHECK LIST

Here is a checklist that tutors should reference each tutoring session to ensure all necessary tasks are completed. The purpose of this check list is to aid tutors so they do not have to ask the question, "What do I do next?"

- Welcome – Overview of tutoring schedule for the session, ask them about their day and what homework assignments they have, share additional/supplemental materials you brought along with you.
- Check student's agenda/planner – What assignments/projects are listed and when are they due.
- Log on to Skyward/Infinite Campus (need access to computer or iPad with internet access) – Ask student to log on and review their grades, identify missing/incomplete homework and subjects of concern. Work with the student to locate missing/incomplete assignments and finish them after completing homework they brought with them.
- Homework assignments and projects – Assist student with any assignments and projects they brought with them today. Ensure assignments are completed accurately and thoroughly. Also, work on long-term projects and papers, as well. Just because it's not due tomorrow, doesn't mean you can't work on it during tutoring. Additionally, study for upcoming tests and exams!
- Reading – When student is finished with current homework assignments and missing/incomplete homework, have them read for 20 minutes. They can read to you, with you (paired reading), etc. Reminder – some students require tutors to sign a reading log after completing 20 minutes.
- Supplemental Materials – Go over the additional materials/activities you brought along with you. These materials should review concepts or subjects your student is struggling with (Reading comprehension, division, etc.). Allow your students to improve by practicing each session. Various materials can also be found in the resource box, but tutors should be bringing materials along with them, as well.
- Wrap Up – Review what student completed today, and what they still need to work on at home if necessary. Have student put away all homework assignments/projects/books. Ensure work area is clean and in proper order.

If you finish all of these tasks above and there is still time remaining, here are additional tasks to do with your student:

- Organization – Have your student organize backpacks, binders, and lockers. Discuss the importance of great organizational skills.
- College Preparation – For students in 6th grade and up. Each student has a Know How 2 Go Manual (in tutor's folders). Tutors should go over the manual with student so that

they can start thinking about the possibility of pursuing higher education, or discuss other alternatives after completing high school. Follow instructions on manual.

- Discussion – Part of your role is that of a mentor. Take some time to get to know your student – ask them about their aspirations, what inspires them, where they see themselves in 10-20 years and how they will get there (the perfect opportunity to set goals with them), etc. Listen to what they have to share and offer advice and your personal experience. Take this time to bond with them!