



Basic and Transitional Studies Division Tutoring Program **NEW VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION**

Megan Court, Tutoring Program Coordinator
Megan.Court@seattlecolleges.edu
Office: 206.934.4378

Welcome to your new volunteer position at Seattle Central College! This packet is designed to give you an overview of what to expect from your experience here, and also what is expected of you as a volunteer.

Our program is a part of the Basic and Transitional Studies Division (BTSD), working with Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), English as a Second Language (ESL), and IBEST students.

The BTSD Tutoring Program exists to support and empower students by promoting English-language learning, preparing students for the GED and COMPASS tests, developing students' self-advocacy skills, and fostering community.

In our program, you will either be volunteering as a tutor or a classroom assistant, depending on your skills and interests.

Tutors provide one-on-one assistance to a student who is learning English or preparing for the GED or COMPASS test. Tutors help students understand basic reading, writing, grammatical, or math concepts and provide opportunities to practice the skills they are learning in class. Tutors work with students to develop activities that are relevant to the students' needs and goals. Tutors generally meet with a student twice a week.

Classroom Assistants work with classroom teachers in ESL and ABE classes. Classes may focus on reading/writing, speaking/listening, computer skills, math, or communications (basic reading and writing). Classroom assistants provide extra help to students during class time. We place volunteers in classes based on the needs of the division as well as the interests and needs of the volunteer. We prefer candidates with previous teaching or tutoring experience, but can be flexible depending on your skills and interests. Ultimately, classroom assistants work out their schedule and role with the teacher that they are partnered with.

Tutoring Logistics

Sign-In: It is very important that you sign in and out when you tutor. This helps us have a record of your volunteer hours, as well as the attendance record of your student.

Attendance: Prompt and consistent attendance is an important part of your role as tutor. If you must miss a tutoring session, please let your student know. If your student was a no-show (no phone call), please write us an email to let us know.

Drop-in Tutor: We have a drop in tutor Monday - Friday, 10 am - 12 pm. This service is available to all students in the Basic and Transitional Studies Division. Students may sign up with the drop in tutoring at the beginning of the drop-in period and work with the drop-in tutor for 30 minutes. Please always feel free to refer people to this service! It is first-come-first-serve and so is not guaranteed, but we are frequently able to serve most students who sign up.

Resource Cabinet: There are resources available to you in the blue cabinet next to the drop-in tutoring area. There are dictionaries and thesauruses, bilingual dictionaries, grammar resources, and other books designated for Level 1-5 (including a "most useful" section!). Feel free to check it out!

Volunteer Guidelines

NO HOMEWORK POLICY

Though your student may expect you to work on their homework with them, it is important for students to understand that tutors are intended to help students understand the concepts covered in their classes, not to help them turn in a perfect homework assignment. It does not help your student to have a perfect homework assignment if they don't understand the content. If a tutor provides answers or excessive editing for homework, the student's teacher won't know their capabilities, and won't be able to track their improvement.

If your student asks you for help with a homework assignment, here's what you can do instead:

1. **EXPLAIN THE CONTENT** (or what is being asked of the student)
 - if you're not sure, ask if they have class materials on the subject
 - Look in the resources cabinet
 - check the internet for resources
2. **PROVIDE EXAMPLES**
 - Take out a sheet of paper and write your own examples in the style of the homework assignment
 - If the student's teacher has said it is okay to provide some homework help, do a couple problems or start the assignment with the student, but then allow *the student to complete the majority of the homework independently.*

CONVERSATION GUIDELINES

Many students who study English in our program ask to practice speaking and listening with their tutors. While this can be a wonderful opportunity to get to know the student that you work with, it is also important to respect students' privacy. Our program works with a diverse population of students, including immigrants and refugees, for whom seemingly simple questions like "why did you move to Seattle" may feel invasive and emotionally charged. If a student initiates a conversation about an emotionally charged topic and you feel comfortable engaging in the conversation, then follow their lead and listen. If you don't feel comfortable having these conversations it is important to set boundaries and suggest a different topic.

If a student asks to practice speaking and listening, you can spark a discussion using a magazine or newspaper article, a Youtube video, a book of photographs, or just a few questions about a particular topic.

Here are some common topics:

- Favorite/least favorite foods, movies, TV shows, books, celebrities, music, sports, hobbies, places to visit, people, technology, etc.
- A time when you...(changed your mind, broke the rules, had a big scare or major surprise, won a prize, lost a bet, made a big mistake, got lost, etc.)
- A time when you were... (proud, angry, happy, discouraged, embarrassed, etc.)

- Places you've traveled to, or would like to visit
- Things you're good at/not good at
- Things you like best/least about your home town/country/school/job
- Differences between the US and your native country (e.g. weather, government, health care, work, customs, dress, foods, money, laws, transportation, etc.)
- Holidays and special events
- Current events, natural disasters, new scientific discoveries, sports
- Particular movies or TV shows you've both seen recently, or books you've read

It is generally easier to practice conversation if you've planned a bit beforehand and have a topic in mind or some material to spark conversation. It can be useful to talk to the student that you work with at the end of each session, so that you can get an idea of how to prepare for the next session.

Beginning a Tutoring Session

- Extend a warm greeting by smiling, making eye contact, speaking in a positive tone, and introducing yourself.
- Do what is comfortable for you and the student, but many find that it helps to sit side-by-side with the assignment in front of the student or between you and the student.
- Tutor helps identify strengths and critical weaknesses in the assignment and how to correct them.
- Student needs to take up the role of making the corrections in their workbook.
- Tutors are not expected to “fix” everything. Only provide guidance on one matter at a time.
- Start where the student is. Let student direct your attention to their needs on their terms and at their pace.

During a Tutoring Session

- Make sure the student retains control of their work. Let the student hold their workbook, turn the page, write notes, and make changes to their work.
- Have the student read aloud the directions and what they have written. This will help the students practice reading skills and pronunciation, and build confidence in their ability to find and correct errors independently.
- Encourage student to ask questions.
- Let the student finish the sentence before you signal a halt to point out a problem.
- Listen actively. Pauses are okay and often lead to a student providing more information.
- Direct any evaluation at the student’s work, not at the student.
- Never evaluate an instructor, a student’s placement in class, or tell a student what grade they should get.

Ending a Tutoring Session

- When you have five minutes left, ask the student if they have any questions and recap the session.
- Leave the student with a strategy they can use.
- Remember: You don’t need to “fix” all of the problems you might identify.
- Encourage pride in student’s work by pointing out what the student has accomplished already.

Basic and Transitional Studies Division Tutoring Program

Volunteer Contract

As a volunteer in the Basic and Transitional Studies Division (BTSD) Tutoring Program, your contributions to the students' learning and success are highly valued. To make everyone's experiences as positive as possible, you will be agreeing to abide by the following rules while volunteering with our program. Volunteers who violate these rules will be asked to speak with the BTSD Tutoring Program Coordinator and if the issue cannot be resolved, you may be asked to leave the program. If you have any questions, please ask us!

- **I am** committing to volunteer for the quarter and understand the importance of consistent attendance. If a conflict arises, I will communicate my absence to the student(s) and/or teacher I am working with. If I can't reach them directly, I will tell the Program Coordinator.
- **I will** tell the Program Coordinator immediately if I need to stop volunteering for the quarter.
- **I will** inform the Program Coordinator if the student I am working with stops coming to tutoring.
- **I will** maintain professional relationships with BTSD students at all times.
- **I will** respect other people's beliefs and not impose my religious or political beliefs on others.
- **I will not** use my cell phone during tutoring sessions unless I am looking up something related to tutoring.
- **I will** talk to the Program Coordinator or BTSD Manager if a BTSD student tells me anything that concerns me, causes discomfort, or raises question I cannot answer.
- **I will** inform the Program Coordinator, BTSD Manager, or other Division staff immediately if I notice other volunteers or students violating these rules or engaging in other dangerous behaviors. As a volunteer, it is not my job to intervene.