Evidence Brief

Tutoring the Tutor: Goals, Supports, and Practices

The Summary of Evidence is structured in four parts:
  A. Five Effective Forms of Support
  B. Three Main Barriers & Three Key Supports
  C. Emotional Intelligence Training
  D. Three Effective Tutoring Practices

How Did We Compile This Evidence?

We searched YouthREX's online Knowledge Hub, Google Scholar, and Google using the following key terms: "tutor models", "teaching techniques", "emotional intelligence training", and "best practices for tutors".

Key Term: Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to monitor one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). In this way, one is able to identify and distinguish between different emotions and use this information to inform their thinking and actions (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). In the educational context, tutors who possess this attribute are better equipped to build stronger bonds with their students, manage emotionally-rich sessions, and cater their support to the individual needs of the learner (Mayer & Salovey, 1993).

A. Summary of Evidence: Five Effective Forms of Support

The role of a tutor entails much more than simply helping with schoolwork. Tutors not only support the academic success of their students, but also their personal and emotional wellbeing (MacDonald, 2008). One of the main reasons many youth struggle in school is due to personal issues – such as a lack of support from parents/caregivers or challenging financial and living situations – that interfere with their ability to succeed (MacDonald, 2008). Tutoring sessions can become a space for youth to seek support and manifest their emotions.

The ideal tutor must adapt to the individual needs and learning strategies of the young person to ensure their success on both an academic and personal level; in order to effectively support youth, tutors should strive to utilize the following strategies (MacDonald, 2008):

i) Affective Support
Build strong relationships with students in order to increase confidence and maintain

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motivation.

ii) Dialogic Support

Constant dialogue between the tutor and student is essential; understand the individual needs and goals of the young person in order to deliver the best program possible.

iii) Focus Support

Many youth may be juggling their schoolwork with family responsibilities, jobs, and extracurricular activities; create a study system that allows youth to prioritize school.

iv) Reflective Support

Part of a tutor's role is to ensure that the student is still able to lead their own learning; provide youth with the opportunity to reflect on their own work and discover their own strengths and weaknesses.

v) Accessible Support

Be available and accessible through multiple outlets/media; extend support through online platforms, for example, to maximize convenience and receptiveness.

B. Summary of Evidence: Three Main Barriers & Three Key Supports

a) Three Main Barriers

i) Role Clarity

Due to their complex and changing needs, students may not only see their tutor as a teacher, but also as a mentor, counsellor, and coach (McFarlane, 2016). However, tutors themselves may be unaware of the diversity in their role and can be hindered in their ability to provide effective support (McFarlane, 2016).

ii) Workload

Many tutors, especially those who are new, have reported feeling overwhelmed balancing their own lives with the needs of their students (McFarlane, 2016). This stress may place an unfair burden on tutors, and limit their ability to provide students with the support they need to excel (McFarlane, 2016).

iii) Emotional Health

In dealing with students' complex and sometimes challenging circumstances, tutors may experience diminished confidence and emotional exhaustion (McFarlane, 2016). In fact, those who lack resilience may develop their own mental and emotional challenges, further

hindering their ability to provide support for their students' concerns (McFarlane, 2016).

b) Three Key Supports

i) Boundary Setting

Setting boundaries can help alleviate the stress and burnout that tutors might experience (McFarlane, 2016). Tutors may consider beginning their sessions by telling their students what they *are* and *are not* comfortable talking about (McFarlane, 2016). As well, tutors may remind themselves that – although they play an important role in the student's personal and academic growth – they are not responsible for every aspect of their students' lives (McFarlane, 2016). Tutors can create a space where they feel in control of the session, make decisions that best support their wellbeing, and use this autonomy to enhance the learning of their students.

ii) Counselling

Although counselling services may not be necessary, they are a great way to safeguard the emotional wellbeing of tutors who may be experiencing extreme levels of stress (McFarlane, 2016). These services may not only improve the wellbeing of the tutor, but may provide tutors with strategies to support their students (McFarlane, 2016).

iii) Emotional Intelligence (EI) Training

EI training is another effective way to prepare tutors for the stress they may face through the development of emotional resiliency (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). Refer to the following section for an in-depth overview of how EI training can be beneficial for tutors.

C. Summary of Evidence: Emotional Intelligence Training

i) Benefits of Emotional Intelligence (EI) Training

Strong EI allows tutors to better regulate their own emotions and enhance their existing social competencies (Luca & Tarricone, 2001). In particular, EI training tends to strengthen the following qualities in a tutor:

Self-Awareness

This is the ability to understand and interpret one's own thoughts and feelings through internal reflection (Luca & Tarricone, 2001). By fostering a deeper appreciation for themselves, tutors will be able to better identify with the thoughts and feelings experienced by their students.

Self-Regulation

Strong self-regulation ensures that an individual is equipped to regulate their emotions during periods of conflict, stress, and pressure (Luca & Tarricone, 2001). There are various sources of contention and conflict that may hinder a tutor's ability to deliver the support that their students need (Luca & Tarricone, 2001). Strong self-regulation skills allow tutors to overcome these barriers through the development of emotional resiliency.

Motivation

One of a tutor's most important qualities is their ability to motivate others (Luca & Tarricone, 2001). For most youth, feeling supported, nurtured, and inspired goes further than general academic support (Luca & Tarricone, 2001). A tutor who is able to motivate their students will see greater progress in both the young person's personal and educational development.

Empathy

Central to the role of a tutor, empathy is a skill that enhances one's ability to see the world from another's perspective (Luca & Tarricone, 2001). Considering each student brings with them a unique history, it is important for tutors to adapt to, and be accepting of, the diversity of perspectives they may encounter.

Social Skills

Possessing strong social skills allows one to better stimulate cooperation and collaboration with others (Luca & Tarricone, 2001). Teamwork and communication with students are essential to the effectiveness of a tutoring session and the overall impact on a student's academic success (Luca & Tarricone, 2001). This attribute is highly valued in the tutoring context because it helps provide the most effective support for students.

ii) Best Practices for Promoting Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Develop an Action Plan and Log

Organizations may want to encourage tutors to develop a checklist of their main social competencies related to emotional intelligence (Driscoll & Wells, 2020). After each session, tutors can reflect on their performance and identify areas for improvement (Driscoll & Wells, 2020).

Prioritize Emotional Understanding

Training tutors to recognize, accept, and discuss the feelings of learners creates a comforting space for growth and long-term personal development (Driscoll & Wells, 2020). Rather than overlooking the emotions that may be interfering with their academic

achievement, tutors should promote the use of emotional management strategies and respond to their students in a way that makes them feel valued (Driscoll & Wells, 2020).

Engage in Cultural Consideration

Identifying the sociocultural and developmental status of students at the onset of a program will allow tutors to swiftly and effectively build rapport (Driscoll & Wells, 2020). Considerations like age, race, gender, and socioeconomic status should be taken into account in order to design the most effective program and enhance academic success (Driscoll & Wells, 2020).

Promote Self-Modification Techniques

In order to promote the development of strong EI, tutors should identify specific areas for improvement in their own lives, such as self-regard (differentiating between positive and negative emotions), assertiveness (initiating conversation), and self-control (prioritization) (Chang, 2006). The following techniques can be used to attain improvement in these (and other) areas (Chang, 2006):

- Outlining and adhering to self-directed goals.
- Reflection.
- Recordkeeping and the development of a self-change plan.
- Self-rewards and self-punishments.
- Group discussions.

D. Summary of Evidence: Three Effective Tutoring Practices

In order to provide the most effective tutoring for students of all abilities, organizations should emphasize the following practices in the training of tutors:

a) Take a Student-Centred Approach

Student feedback and expectations should be the driving force behind the development and implementation of the tutoring program (Stevenson et al., 2006). When tutors acknowledge the thoughts and feelings of their students, they are able to adjust their teaching styles and integrate practices that lead to the greatest success rates (Stevenson et al., 2006).

Evidence suggests that **students typically value** (Stevenson et al., 2006):

- well-delivered lectures
- support with planning and preparing for assignments
- well-focused discussions on topics related to school
- having the tutor explain the learning outcomes of the course
- feeling supported by the tutor
- receiving feedback on how their work could be improved

- recognition of areas of strength
- explanations of what they had gotten 'wrong'

The following practices are often **seen as unhelpful** (Stevenson et al., 2006):
- tedious spelling and grammar corrections
- general (rather than specific) comments
- being marked too leniently

Tutors should take these considerations into account, but also ensure that they tailor the program to their students' needs (Stevenson et al., 2006). This ensures that tutoring sessions reflect the learning styles and techniques that students value.

b) Provide Effective Feedback

Many tutoring programs ensure short-term achievement but do not prepare youth for long-term success (Hock et al., 1995). Providing effective feedback can bridge this gap by helping students complete their immediate tasks while preparing them to work independently on similar tasks in the future (Hock et al., 1995). Tutors should emphasize four types of effective feedback (University of Arizona College of Education, 2009):

i) Positive Feedback
- Tell the student what they did well, and provide additional examples they can refer to in the future.

ii) Corrective Feedback
- Identify errors.
- Provide strategies that the student can use to avoid the error in the future.
- Have students practice these strategies in different contexts.
- Communicate positive expectations for the student.

iii) Individualized Feedback
- Deliver feedback in a private setting where the student feels comfortable.

iv) Immediate Feedback
- Provide feedback (and strategies) directly after an assignment in order to ensure students are able to improve for the next assignment.

c) Use the Pause Prompt Praise (PPP) Method

This method is specifically catered to students who struggle with reading-related tasks (Wearmouth, 2004). Using the following three learning principles allows students to gain

confidence in their reading and comprehension abilities (Wearmouth, 2004):

i) PAUSE

When a student comes across an unfamiliar term and reads it incorrectly, it is important to pause and allow the student to understand their mistake. Independently recognizing and correcting an error is one of the best ways for youth to learn from their mistakes.

ii) PROMPT

If a student is struggling to correct an error, a prompt may be necessary. By offering appropriate cues and strategies to sound out unfamiliar words, students will eventually learn to apply the prompt on their own and engage in self-correction. Prompting youth with meaningful texts of appropriate difficulty is another way to ensure their development and growth as a reader.

iii) PRAISE

The final and most important step in the PPP method is to praise students following successful reading attempts. Encouragement allows youth to develop confidence in their literacy skills through the reinforcement of successful reading strategies.

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