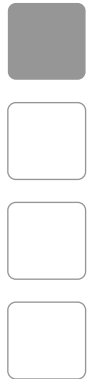


AN ORGANIZER'S WORKBOOK



So you want to start a homework club...

How to set up and run homework clubs



Literacy. Learning for Life.

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Written by Sandra Huehn

Edited by Maureen Anglin, Erica Martin, Dave Page

Designed by Lynette Niles

Published by

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35 Jackes Avenue
Toronto, ON
M4T 1E2

Tel: (416) 923-3591 OR [toll free] 1-800-555-6523

Fax: (416) 323-3522

Email: information@frontiercollege.ca

Web: www.frontiercollege.ca

For more resources go to the Frontier College website

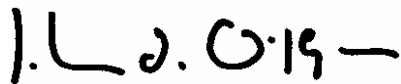
Introduction

Thank you for caring about the growth and development of the students in your community.

Frontier College has been organizing after school academic programs for children and youth in every part of Canada since 1984. This workbook is based upon all of those years of experience and upon the ideas, imagination and determination of thousands of the children, teens, parents, teachers and community volunteers who have participated in them.

No two programs are alike and yours will have its own character, and appearances. This is not a strict guide and it is meant to allow you to bring all of your experience, imagination and inspiration to the program.

Best wishes as you get your program started! I promise it will be effective, rewarding, a lot of fun and that it will help the participating students to fully realize their potential – and their individual brilliance.



John D. O'Leary

President,
Frontier College



Frontier College

Literacy. Learning for Life.

Frontier College is Canada's original literacy organization. Founded in 1899 by a small group of university students, Frontier College began by sending student volunteers to the frontiers of Canada: logging camps, mining towns and rail gangs. They laboured alongside workers during the day and taught in the evenings and on weekends.

Today, we work with Canadians who have little or no access to other educational opportunities or who need extra learning support to reach their goals. Our volunteers serve on Canada's "new frontiers" — inner-city schools and streets, public housing sites, farms, prisons and reserves.

Low literacy skills are directly linked to poverty, poor health and high unemployment. Literacy is more than just the ability to read and write. It's the ability to understand the printed word and to put it to use. It's about strengthening culture, achieving goals, gaining knowledge and recognizing potential. It's about succeeding in today's world.

Forty-two percent (42%) of adult Canadians have trouble with everyday tasks that involve reading. That's millions of Canadians who are not reaching their potential. Literacy is an essential skill in today's world. At Frontier College, we believe it's a fundamental right. Frontier College provides access to this right by reaching out to people across Canada, responding to their learning needs and encouraging lifelong learning. We achieve our mission for literacy through the following: volunteer mobilization, youth leadership development and community capacity building.

Our philosophy of learning

- All individuals have a right to learn and a right to literacy so they can better participate in their community.
- We go where people are rather than expecting them to come to us.
- We use a learner-centred approach whereby learners decide what they want to learn.
- We believe that every place is a learning place.
- We value a tutorial partnership where learner and tutor respect and learn from each other.
- We value the contributions learners, volunteers and partners make in the learning experience.

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The appendices contain samples of forms, letters, agendas, contracts, etc. that you will need to set up a successful homework club. Feel free to adapt these forms to suit the needs of your program. The checklist of best practices (Appendix 1) is particularly useful for planning and evaluating your homework club.

How to use this workbook

This workbook is designed to help the organizing team of your homework club steer through the many decisions that need to be made before you set up your club. Take the time as a group to discuss each topic. At the end of each section there is a space for the team to make notes about your decisions.

Homework clubs do not become successful by accident. They need to be thoroughly planned out before they start running. Homework clubs often fail because not enough thought went into designing the club. So, congratulations! By using this workbook, you are well on your way to success.

Key factors for success

- **Select students who want to participate.**
- **Start small and build on your successes. Start with realistic goals.**
- **Match students and tutors well. Development of relationships is the key!**
- **Provide regular support to students and tutors.**

Decisions, decisions, decisions



What is a homework club?

The term “homework club” typically refers to an after-school program where tutors offer homework and reading support for a group of students on a regular basis.

Tutors may work one-on-one with students or with a small group of students, or the homework club may have a “drop in” structure. Homework clubs can take place during the school day, after school, in the evening or on the weekend.

The structure of a “homework club” depends upon the availability of the location and tutors as well as the needs of the students. The term “homework club” can also refer to many different kinds of volunteer-based homework support for students. Here are some examples of successful homework club programs:

- Every Tuesday after school, 20 high school volunteers tutor 20 grade 4 students in the school library.
- Tutors from the university work one-to-one with students from grades 1 through 8. They meet in the elementary school library at various times during the school day.
- Tutors from grades 11 to 12 meet one-to-one with students in grade 9 twice a week during lunch hour.
- Twice a week, grade 7 and 8 students travel to the public library to meet with their tutors right after school. The tutors are high school and university students as well as community volunteers.
- A community centre operates a “study hour” twice a week for high school students. The students help one another with their work during the “study hour.” The same students also volunteer as tutors for a homework club for children in grades 3 to 6.
- In an after-school program at a Boys and Girls Club, students in grades 1 to 8 spend 45 minutes on homework or reading.

If you wish to start a program, run a pilot project. Start with the 10/10/10 model: a 10-week program involving 10 students and 10 tutors.

Tell everyone that you want to learn from your experiences and build on your successes!

Who will be on your organizing team?

Before you make any decisions about your club, it is important to involve other people who will work with you and support your homework club.

Your organizing team is very important. Without a good one, no club will last for very long. An organizing team of three or four people will ensure that responsibilities can be shared yet the size of the team will not be cumbersome. The main role of the organizing team is to make decisions for your club and organize the activities to make things happen.

Steps to take

1. Think about who you would like to join your team.

Is there a teacher or librarian who can help? Which parents are already involved with the school? Are there community members you can recruit? Think about your goals — for more information about the goals of a homework club, see page 6. The goals will help you to decide who should be on your organizing team. Look for enthusiastic, community-minded people who like to get things done!

2. Identify what role each person on the organizing team will play.

3. Identify other roles that you need for the program.

In addition, to your organizing team, there are a number of roles that other people can have to support your program. Some people may only have an advisory role, while others will help with training or supporting your program. These support roles may include onsite supervisor, outreach coordinator, fundraiser and resource person. To ensure everyone works well together, be sure that everyone has a clear idea of their role(s).

4. Set up partnerships with community organizations.

Partnerships with community organizations can ensure the permanence of your club. Think about which organizations may give you assistance or provide resources for your club. Ensure that representatives from each partner organization are involved in the decision making for your program.

5. Decide how often you will meet and who will be involved in decision making.

Consider how often the organizing team should meet. As well, you may wish to hold two or three “community” meetings a year where you seek the advice and continued support of organizations within your community.

What will be the goal of your homework club?

Before you decide upon the goal of your homework club, assess your *community's assets and challenges*.

What are the resources and needs of your community?

Are there other homework clubs or after-school programs in the community? Take stock of the resources that can support your club. Which local businesses are supportive of community activities? Where are recreation centres, libraries and schools located? Is there a high school, college or university nearby? You may wish to involve some of these organizations as “community partners” for your club. They may be able to help you with volunteer recruitment, outreach to parents and children, training or fund raising. Find out about the needs, interests and resources that the students will bring to your program. This will help you to figure out how to work with the students from your community. Talk with students, parents and teachers to gather ideas about what type of program they would like to participate in. You may be surprised by what you hear!

Use the information gathered through your community assessment to do the following:

- **Decide what your purpose is.** Do you want to build community, develop students' self-esteem or help students improve academically?
- **Decide who your program will help.** Concentrate on a certain age group — grades 1 to 3, 4 to 8 or 9 to 12.

Choose a name for your club.

Possible names include: Reading Buddies, Homework Club, After School Tutoring Program, The All-Star Club, Study Group, Power Hour or ask your students to name your club!

Do not try to be all things to all people. Later, if you have the resources, you can expand your program.

- **Establish a specific focus.** Homework completion, reading support, math help or preparation for standardized testing are some examples.
- **Determine the learning philosophy of your club.** Frontier College follows a “student-centred” approach to learning. Refer to the Frontier College website for information on Student Centred Individualized Learning. Other organizations may follow a curriculum-based approach.

Where will your homework club be located?

Select a location for your club. Consider the following options:

- local elementary school or high school
- community or recreation centre
- local social service agency
- common room of a housing complex
- public library
- local business

Ensure that your location

- is accessible to both students and tutors
- is welcoming and comfortable
- has ample room
- can easily be set up with tables and chairs
- has a secure storage area for the materials that you have gathered for your club
- is easy to supervise (onsite supervision helps to develop a quality program and ensures the safety of tutors and students)
- has few distractions
- has easy access to other resources (books, computers, chalk boards, etc.)
- has washrooms available
- is safe for students and tutors to travel to and from the club
- is safe when students and tutors meet

Make sure to pick a location that works for both your students and tutors!

What time will you hold your homework club?

Find out when your students and tutors are available.

- If your tutors are high school students or university students, the best time to hold the homework club is during the school day or right after school.
- If your tutors are adults, the best time to hold the homework club is in the early evening or on weekends to accommodate their work schedule.
- If your students are in elementary school, programs that run after school, on evenings or Saturday mornings work well.
- The hardest-to-reach students (high school students who are struggling readers) will often participate only in a program that runs during the school day.
- If your students are teenagers who are newcomers to Canada, they may be willing to meet with tutors after school.

Decide how often your tutors and students will meet — once a week, twice a week or even daily. The schedule depends on the commitment and availability of the students and tutors and on how much support you can give to your program.

The older the students, the longer they can concentrate. So, determine the length of the tutoring sessions based on the age of your students. Elementary students usually meet with their tutors for 30 to 40 minutes at a time, while high school students often meet with their tutors for 80 to 90 minutes.

Make sure to pick a time that works for **both** your students and tutors!

What will be the routine of your homework club?

The focus of your program will determine the activities that tutors and students do together in the homework club. Activities may include:

- studying for tests
- engaging in creative writing activities
- working on math facts and concepts
- completing homework assignments
- reading books and novels

It is important to develop a routine for your homework club so that your students and tutors know what is expected of them. For example, if your tutors and students meet for 85 minutes, each session could include:

1. A healthy snack/meet and greet (10 minutes)

2. Homework help (55 minutes)

This may include:

- ▶ agreeing on a goal, based on student need and/or teacher feedback
- ▶ discussing ways to approach the assignment or concept
- ▶ completing the task
- ▶ asking students to summarize their learning
- ▶ summarizing the process and the progress students have made
- ▶ planning for the next session

3. A group activity (20 minutes)

This may include:

- ▶ a literacy-related game
- ▶ a short discussion about an education-related topic such as goal-setting, career choice or preparing for high school/university/college

Outreach and training



How will you reach out to and register your students?

Start small. Select 10 students who really *want* to be part of your homework club and who can make a commitment to the entire time of the program.

Develop a set of criteria to help you select your students. It is important that your organizing team agrees on the criteria before you begin outreach to students.

Criteria for selecting students

First come, first registered

It is tempting to choose students on a first come, first registered basis however, this criteria may not ensure that you are reaching students with the highest need. Before you select your students, think about their learning needs and the commitment they are able to give your program.

Learning needs

When you are setting up a new homework club, the desire to reach students with the greatest needs must be balanced by the importance of selecting students who will commit to the program. Especially in the beginning, it is important to select students who will attend the program regularly.

As your club becomes more established, higher-needs students will be attracted to join because they want to belong to an organization with a good reputation. Remember to invite **both** struggling students and successful students to join the homework club, so that it does not become a “ghetto” for struggling students.

Commitment

Ask students why they want to join the homework club. The older the student, the more important this is! Parents can encourage elementary students to participate in a homework club, but high school students need to decide for themselves whether — and why — they participate. Homework clubs that students join voluntarily are always more successful than clubs where students are forced to join.

Recruit students by

- asking parents or teachers for recommendations and then inviting these students to join the homework club. Remember, be sure to select only willing participants!
- posting flyers in the school and around the neighbourhood
- giving presentations in classes to explain the benefits of participating in the club (tutors are often the best spokespeople for these presentations)

If you have more than 10 students keen to participate, start a waiting list. Let the students who are registered know that you have a list of students who wish to join the club.

Make sure that students are aware of the responsibilities of participating in a homework club. These may include:

- being punctual and attending consistently
- bringing homework
- working hard
- learning (and having fun!!)

Include the responsibilities on the student registration form. (See Appendix 2 for a sample form.)

Make sure to get parental permission for students to participate in your program. (This applies whether the club takes place after school or during school hours.) When you send the form to parents, include a letter that describes the structure of your program (time, place, start date, end date, etc.) and provides an on-site contact number in case of emergency. Asking parents to fill in part of the registration form also helps to get their commitment to help their child attend the program regularly.

How will you recruit your tutors?

Start by recruiting 10 tutors who are keen and who can commit to the program for the duration.

Once you decide on the goal, time and location of the homework club, this will help you to determine the type of volunteers you will want to recruit. Each type of volunteer (high school students, university/college students, community volunteers, parents/older siblings and employees of local businesses) has advantages and challenges. Here are some advantages, challenges and suggested recruitment methods for each group.

High school students	
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They have a lot of energy.• They can be great role models.• They can be keen to tutor younger students to gain experience, to fulfill their community service requirements and to add to their resumes.• An added benefit of matching high school students with younger students is that the skills of both sets of students improve.• Homework clubs that take place in an elementary school at the end of the school day work well for high school tutors. The teenagers can travel together, volunteer together and leave together. (See Appendix 3 for sample flyer to recruit high school volunteers.)
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They need to work in a structured homework club where onsite adult support is available.• You must get parental permission for volunteers under the age of 18. (See Appendix 4 for a sample parental permission letter and form.)• Evening programs may not work well for high school volunteers.
How to recruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask experienced tutors (or those who have volunteered in a similar program) to help find new volunteers.• Speak with vice-principals, guidance counsellors or co-op teachers.• Give classroom presentations to high school classes.• Post flyers throughout the school promoting your program.

University/college students

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are more mature than high school students and therefore need less onsite supervision.• They have a lot of energy.• They can be great role models.• They are keen to tutor in order to build their resumes, gain experience and obtain references.• They are often flexible about the times during the day that they are able to tutor.
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Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are only available from September to early April.
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How to recruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The most effective method is to ask university/college student tutors to invite their friends to participate!• Post flyers on campus, use the campus website or participate in the “clubs day” and the career and volunteer fairs held on campus.• Give classroom presentations.• Approach professors. Seek out those who are in leadership positions. Talk to professors in education, social work and journalism faculties where students are often required to volunteer.
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Community volunteers

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They fit well with homework clubs in the early evening or on weekends.• They are available throughout the school year.• They often volunteer for several years.
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Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unlike students, who can be recruited as a group, community volunteers are recruited one at a time.
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How to recruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use posters; advertisements in local media; notices at volunteer centres, service clubs (Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.) or seniors’ centres; announcements at local religious places or personal networks.
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Parents/older siblings

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They can have a strong commitment to a homework club. Often, they continue to tutor even after their child/sibling is no longer involved.• Parents can reinforce literacy skills throughout the week with their children.
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Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The parent/child dynamic can get in the way of successful tutoring.
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How to recruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you are recruiting students for a homework club, ask parents or older siblings if they would be willing to volunteer or support the program.
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Employees of local businesses

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They can be ideal role models for students.• They are an untapped resource. These professionals would otherwise not volunteer because of time constraints. However, because the club is held in the workplace, they can be excellent and committed tutors.• They can meet with their students throughout the school year.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finding a business that is within walking distance (or within a short transit distance) from a school.• Negotiations to set up a club in a workplace can take a long time.
How to recruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Through the human resources person or a contact in the workplace.

Remember to think about other roles — besides tutoring — that volunteers can fill in your club. These can include the following:

- providing snacks
- doing outreach
- holding fundraisers
- being storytellers
- taking photographs
- supervising field trips
- running enrichment activities
- assisting with group activities

Manulife Homework Club

Since 1999, a homework club has run in the downtown Toronto office of Manulife Financial, a Canadian-based financial services company. Manulife employees tutor grade 7 and 8 students one afternoon a week from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m.

Manulife encourages its employees to volunteer their time (they often return to work after the club has finished) and provides a space for tutoring. Manulife supplies snacks and allows access to its resources (computers, internet, photocopier and library). More importantly, Manulife provides an enriching environment for students and tutors alike.

How will you orient, interview and screen your tutors?

Orientation

Develop a volunteer orientation guide for tutors that describes your program and summarizes the responsibilities of tutors, students and parents. This guide should supplement — not replace — an orientation (group or individual) for your tutors. (See Appendix 6 for an overview of topics that you may wish to include in your Volunteer Orientation Guide.)

It is also important to have a group orientation or speak with prospective tutors prior to the tutor training. This orientation should include information about the following:

- the goal of your program
- the location and schedule of your program
- roles and responsibilities of the tutors
- a general description of the students (age, grades, neighbourhood, etc.)

As well, list the tutor's responsibilities on your volunteer form to ensure that tutors understand and can commit to their role. (See Appendix 5 for a sample Tutor Registration form.)

Interviews

Interview each prospective tutor. (See Appendix 7 for a sample list of tutor interview questions.) The interview is an important part of the volunteer screening process. It will help you learn about the strengths and interests of tutors, which will assist you in matching them with students. It will help to ensure that tutors

- are able to make a commitment to your program
- have the values necessary for your program
- understand the goals
- are aware of your program's logistics (location, requirements, etc.)
- understand their responsibilities

Screening

All tutors working with children and youth must be screened. (See Appendices 5 and 8 for forms and questions to screen volunteers.) The screening process should include:

- an application
- an orientation
- a one-to-one interview
- two character reference checks
- a police records check

The process for police records checks varies depending on where you live. Your local police force and school administration should be able to help you with this process. For more information go to www.volunteer.ca

How will you train your tutors?

The quality of your program will depend a lot upon the orientation and training that you provide your tutors. Hold a training session which focuses on the specific learning needs of the students in your homework club. (See Appendix 9 for a sample training agenda.)

Key topics to cover

- Introductions
- Program structure and logistics (times, location, etc.)
- Volunteer commitment, roles and responsibilities
- Tutoring strategies
- Scenarios (“what would you do if ...?”)
- Other learning activities
- Evaluation and next steps

When to offer the training

Most programs train their tutors after the orientation and before they are matched with the students. However, in some programs, the tutors are trained after they have met with the students for a few weeks. The major benefit of this approach is that tutors have specific questions about their students and have a context for the discussion. However more time should then be spent in the orientation to prepare tutors for the first time they meet with their students.

Amount of training required

- If you are able to meet regularly with tutors after they have been matched with students i.e., at least once a month, then the initial training only needs to be 1½ to 2 hours long.
- If tutors are high school students, the initial training session needs to be short and should focus on a few key tutoring techniques. You will also need to provide a lot of on-going support and on-site supervision.
- If you see tutors only occasionally i.e., less than once a month, then the initial training needs to cover more material and can be as long as 4 hours.
- If tutors are university students or professionals from the community, it may make sense to have a longer initial training session to allow for in-depth discussion i.e., 4 to 5 hours. You may not need to provide as much on-site supervision and follow-up support.

Customize your training to fit the needs of your students and the skills and knowledge of your tutors.

For more information go to www.frontiercollege.ca

Managing your homework club



How will you structure your homework club?

You will need to determine the structure of the homework club i.e., **one-to-one, small group tutoring or a drop-in homework club**. This will be determined by the number of students, the number of tutors and the type of students you have.

One-to-one A tutor is matched with one particular student for the duration of the homework club	
Advantages	A strong relationship is built between tutor and student which ensures commitment of both tutor and student. The tutor focuses on the strengths, interests and needs of the student and the student may feel more confident to take “learning risks” with the tutor.
Challenges	It may be difficult to recruit ample tutors and if a tutor or student drops out, there will be an “unmatched” student or tutor.
Keep in mind	There is no magic formula for finding the best match between tutors and students. The guidelines that you use need to be consistent and should be agreed upon by the members of your organizing team. You can match tutors and students based on interests (sports or music), needs (place high-needs students with experienced tutors) or role modeling (match male tutors with male students).

Small group tutoring The students are organized into small groups, usually by grade level. The tutors work with a specific group of students.	
Advantages	More students can be reached. Tutors can also focus on those students who require more help.
Challenges	It may be difficult to recruit ample tutors and the tutors may not be able to focus on the individual needs of the students.
Keep in mind	It is important that the students have similar learning needs and that they can work well together rather than competing for the attention of the tutor.

Drop in The homework club takes place at a designated time and place. Students attend the homework club when they need extra help.

Advantages This model is less complicated to set up and works well for groups of students who already have a relationship with one another, i.e., students who are new to Canada.

Challenges The attendance can be irregular especially if the students who attend the club are not motivated.

Keep in mind It important to ensure that relationships are developed between the tutors and the students through group activities or by encouraging volunteers to work with the same group of students.

It's about relationships! Whether you have a one-to-one, small group or drop-in homework club, it is important to ensure that the all-important learning relationship is built between the students and the tutors.

It is also important to put together a contact list of the names of your students and tutors. For emergency purposes, you may want to include the phone numbers of your tutors and students as well as information about allergies and other medical conditions on this list. For student and tutor safety, this list should only be shared among the program coordinators.

What types of resources do you need for your homework club?

Supplies

- Pens, pencils, markers and pencil crayons
- Lined paper, blank paper and graph paper
- Calculators, rulers, staplers, erasers and scissors
- Dictionaries (French, English) and atlases
- Portfolios to hold samples of work

Learning resources

Because students sometimes arrive without homework, it is important to have other learning materials available. These materials can include:

- books and magazines — include novels, non-fiction books, storybooks and magazines. These can be found at garage sales, in used bookstores or you may be able to get donations from friends or other organizations.
- textbooks — you may be able to obtain extra copies of textbooks or classroom novels from your local school.
- workbooks — these are available from most bookstores
- worksheets — there are many websites with downloadable worksheets and activities you can do online.

Location

Make sure you have comfortable tables and chairs as well as a secure storage area for the materials that you have gathered for your club.

Snacks

If possible, provide snacks for students (and tutors). Healthy snacks ensure that everyone has the energy to have fun and learn. They also provide an important time for students and tutors to socialize.

Sources of donations

Contact local groups or businesses for donations in kind for your club; they may be willing to provide supplies, snacks, books, etc. Talk with other community organizations about how they obtain resources for their programs.

How will you support and engage your students?

It's about relationships! Make sure you get to know your students so that you can provide encouragement and advice. Give membership cards that acknowledge participation. Speak with the students who are not attending to find out why they have stopped coming.

As well, involve your students in making decisions about how to make the club more effective. For example:

- ask for their feedback on group activities
- invite them to design and implement group activities
- think about how they can share their talents and strengths with other students and tutors

Emphasize confidentiality. No learning can take place unless the relationship between tutor and student is based on mutual respect, which includes the right to privacy. If the volunteers are high school students who tutor their peers, it is extremely important that you discuss issues of confidentiality and respect. Because tutors and students share the same hallways, it is important everything that happens in the program remains private. (See Appendix 10 for a sample student-tutor contract. This contract can help facilitate discussions between tutors and students about their roles and responsibilities.)

Homework club rules

Develop a set of club rules with your students by asking them what they believe the rules for behaviour in the club should be. Post these in a prominent place. Here are some example rules:

- Come to learn
- Have fun
- Be on time
- Bring homework
- Do not disrupt others
- Respect other students, tutors and our space

Dealing with disruption

Homework clubs can break down if students are disruptive or behave inappropriately. When you start your homework club, establish a fair system for managing situations when student are disruptive. You can ask a student to leave your club until he or she agrees follow the rules of the club. It is important that students know that everyone is welcome but certain behaviour is not acceptable. Some clubs give a verbal, then a written warning before asking a student to leave.

Group activities

Plan group activities for your club as they enrich everyone's experience and help with motivation and commitment. Some ideas for activities are

- a launch party — this will help everyone feel they are part of something important and provide momentum for your program. (See Appendix 11 for a sample launch agenda and group activity.)
- parties/celebrations
- board game days — although games can be a great group-building activity, it is important to limit the time that tutors and students play games. After a few weeks of no homework, it can be difficult to get back on track! Some clubs limit games to the last 20 minutes of each session; other clubs only play games every few weeks
- watching movies based on books
- field trips

Rewards

Use rewards to motivate students to work hard and attend the homework club consistently.

Make sure that the rewards system is seen to be fair. Rewards may include food, fun activities, books or games.

Final celebration

Hold a final celebration to acknowledge everyone's hard work. Give certificates to acknowledge student participation. (See Appendix 14 for a sample certificate.)

For an after-school homework club, it is important to send a note home to the parents to inform them about the final celebration. This letter serves two purposes. First, it ensures that the parents know that this is the last time the students and tutors will be meeting. Second, it invites parents to come to the celebration to acknowledge all the hard work of the students and tutors.

How will you support your tutors?

Have organizers onsite

They can help to supervise the club, solve problems as they occur and encourage and assist tutors (and students) during the program.

Provide ongoing support for tutors

Make sure you get to know your tutors.

Talk with your volunteers regularly about their tutoring experience. This contact can be done by telephone, by email and/or in person. Ask your tutors

- “What are you doing with your students?”
- “Do you have any questions?”
- “Do you need any resources?”
- “Are you encountering any difficulties in meeting with your students?”
- (For tutors who are not attending the program) “Why have you stopped coming?”

Support is the key to keeping a homework club running smoothly

Half of the work involved in ensuring a successful homework club takes place after the club is launched.

Hold regular group meetings with your tutors. These meetings can either be quick “check-ins” after the homework club meets every week or more formal meetings held once a month at a convenient time (lunch hours work well for high school/university students and workplace volunteers). At these meetings, help your tutors to

- discuss what is working and what is not working
- brainstorm solutions to any problems
- share resources
- generate new ideas for the club
- become involved in the decision making for the club

Hold additional training sessions for tutors if appropriate. For more resources go to www.frontiercollege.ca

Hold a volunteer appreciation party to give tutors positive feedback. Hand out certificates and provide letters of reference for tutors. (See Appendix 14 for a sample certificate and Appendix 15 for a sample letter.

Be proactive in managing your volunteers. Occasionally, some people may not be appropriate volunteers for your program (for example, if they are disruptive or behave inappropriately). These volunteers should be asked respectfully to leave your program. If you would like more information (or training) about volunteer management, contact your nearest volunteer centre.

How will you evaluate your program?

There are many reasons why evaluating a homework club is important:

- to determine if you have met your goals
- to celebrate success (which will ensure continuity)
- to find out how your club can be improved
- to engage your students and tutors in the club
- to show funders the benefits of the club
- to share your knowledge with other groups who would like to start similar clubs

How to evaluate your homework club

1. Keep an attendance record. This is the first indication of success. (See Appendices 12 and 13 for weekly attendance forms and sample sign-in sheets.)
2. Do an assessment of the students' homework and study skills at the beginning and the end of the club.
3. During the homework club, talk with tutors, students, other teachers and parents to obtain their feedback. Listen to what they have to say. Try not to be defensive.
4. Keep a record of stories. Anecdotal evidence is useful for funders and other supporters. Take photographs. (Remember to get parental permission first — see Appendix 2 for students and Appendix 4 for tutors.)
5. Ask tutors and students to keep samples of the work they do together.
6. Contact tutors or students who have left the program to ask why they stopped coming.
7. At the end of the program, distribute questionnaires or hold discussion groups with students, tutors, parents and other teachers. You will receive more feedback from discussion groups but the information from anonymous questionnaires will be more honest. (See Appendices 16, 17 and 18 for sample evaluation questionnaires.) Ask questions about how to improve the program and what the participants — students, tutors, parents and teachers — learned during the club.

For more resources go to www.frontiercollege.ca

How will you ensure the success and sustainability of your homework club?

- Establish an organizing team so that roles can be shared.
- Choose a focus for your club — do not be all things to all people.
- Choose a location and time that works for both your tutors and your students.
- Gather support from the community and be sure to involve others in decision making so they “invest” in the homework club.
- Select students who need help but are also able to commit to your program.
- Carefully screen and supervise your volunteers to protect your students, your volunteers and your organization.
- It’s about relationships — connect with both your students and your tutors.
- Celebrate your successes.
- Gather data to show the benefits of the homework club.
- Ask your volunteers and students how to improve the homework club.

Key factors for success

- Select students who want to participate.
- Start small and build on your successes. Start with realistic goals.
- Match students and tutors well. Development of relationships is the key!
- Provide regular support to students and tutors.

Appendices



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Managing your club

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When you adapt these forms, letters and agendas, etc. to meet the needs of your program, include the following footnote: Adapted from "So You Want to Start a Homework Club: An Organizer's Workbook" available from Frontier College Press.

Appendix 1: Checklist of best practices

Use this checklist to plan and evaluate your club. It includes best practices from research and from the collective knowledge and experience of literacy workers, community centre staff, teachers and Frontier College staff. Best practices from research are indicated with an asterisk [*].

Program space

- Use a safe, accessible space that is conducive to learning.*
- Create a warm, welcoming community environment.*
- Make sure that you can move the students around in different groups.*
- Have a quiet space that the tutors and students can use.
- Be aware of safety issues. Set up the program so that children don't have to travel far.*

Program structure

- Use a flexible, appropriate homework club model that suits students and tutors.*
- Have a well-organized homework club structure so that students and tutors are clear about the expectations and rules of the club.*
- Establish a time for the homework club that works well for the students and the tutors.
- Have designated staff, including a positive lead organizer, to oversee the program.*
- Have a volunteer site coordinator who can attend each homework club session.*
- Ensure a low tutor to student ratio (1:2 or 1:1 if possible).*

Partnerships

- Establish connections with local schools and other relevant organizations.*
- Ensure that the staff and administration of the different partner organizations are informed and involved in the homework club.*
- Involve parents in the homework club.*

Structure for each session

- Provide a healthy snack.
- Spend a few minutes to meet and greet your student.*
- Agree on a goal based on student need and/or teacher feedback.*
- Discuss ways to approach an assignment or concept before completing the task.*
- Ask students to summarize their learning.
- Summarize the progress students have made.*

- Plan for the next session.*
- Hold a short group session involving a literacy-related game or a discussion about an education-related topic such as goal setting, career choice or preparing for high school or university/college.

Students

- Set up the homework club so that it will be successful for all students.*
- Connect with youth in the community.*
- Focus on students who are motivated, who will benefit from attending the homework club and who will be committed to it.*
- Ensure that students can easily travel to and from the homework club.
- Make sure that the homework club is well advertised.
- Have additional educational resources for students to use. These may include computers, magazines, literacy/word games, books, dictionaries and atlases.*
- Build in a lot of positive reinforcement for the students.*
- Place responsibility on students for bringing their homework to the club.

Tutors

- Have as many volunteers as possible.
- Recruit tutors who are caring and respectful.*
- Recruit tutors who are fairly close in age to the students.
- Provide a strong orientation and training for the tutors.
- Screen tutors carefully.
- Build strong relationships between tutors and the students.*
- Ensure that the tutors have a strong commitment to the homework club.*

Research sources for best practices

Anglin, M. (2006). Action Research Report: The Keys to Success for Setting Up an Effective Homework Club. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2005) Guidelines for Reading Tutoring Sessions: Middle School; Ages 10-13 (or what do I do now?). Portland, Oregon: LEARNS at the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory.

Peter, N. (2002) Outcomes and Research in Out-of-School Time Program Design. Philadelphia, PA: Best Practices Institute. p. 6

U.S. Department of Education. (1998). Safe and Smart: Making After-School House Work for Kids — June 1998. <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/SafeandSmart/chapter2.html>. pp. 1- 2

Yohalem, N., Pittman, K. and Wilson-Ahlstrom, A. (2004) Getting Inside the “Black Box” to Measure Program Quality. The Evaluation Exchange X 1. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project. p. 6

Appendix 2: Student registration form

This two-page form is designed for an after-school homework club for students in grade 7 and 8 which is based in a business. The letter describes the program and invites parents to the launch.

September 1, 2007

Dear Parent,

Your child has been selected to participate in the Working World Homework Club. Please sign the form on the next page to allow your son/daughter to participate in this club.

There will be approximately 25 grade 7 and 8 students from Sunrise School who will participate in the program. Students will meet one-to-one with volunteer tutors. Together, students and tutors will work on homework, review class work, study for tests, read books, write stories and do other activities to prepare students for high school.

The club will be launched on October 2, 2007, and will continue until May 13, 2008. Students and tutors will meet every Tuesday from 4:15–5:30 p.m. (except during exams and holidays). They will meet at Working World, which is located at 1 King Street East.

Each week, your child will walk from his/her school bus stop to Working World. Teachers will not accompany students as they walk to Working World. Your child will be responsible for walking unsupervised to Working World and for arriving by 4:15 p.m. When the students arrive at Working World each week, they will receive a snack.

The tutors and teachers will not accompany students as they leave the homework club at 5:30 p.m. It is your responsibility to ensure your child travels home safely from Working World. Either your child can walk home unsupervised or you can pick your child up at Working World.

I hope that you can come to the launch of this homework club to meet your child's tutor. The launch will take place on Tuesday, October 2, 2007 from 4:15–5:15 p.m. If you have any questions, please call me at 999-0000.

Sincerely,

Don Fantastic
Principal, Sunrise School

This form, which registers students and obtains parental permission, should be filled in by parents. You do not need to collect as much information for a homework club that is based in a school.

Sunrise School

Working World Homework Club

Parental permission form

I give permission for my son/daughter _____
to participate in the Working World Homework Club.

I understand that my child will walk to Working World unsupervised from his/her school bus stop every Tuesday from October 2, 2007, until May 13, 2008. My child is responsible for arriving at Working World by 4:15 p.m. each Tuesday.

The Working World Homework Club will finish each Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. At the end of each homework club session:

- I allow my child to walk to home from Working World unsupervised
or
 I will arrange for someone to pick up my child from Working World.

From time to time, members of the homework club may be filmed, taped or photographed.

- I allow my child to be filmed, taped or photographed
or
 I do not allow my child to be filmed, taped or photographed.

In case of emergency, I can be reached at this phone number _____
on Tuesdays from 4:00–5:30 p.m.

- I plan on attending the launch of the homework club.

My child has allergies or medical conditions:

- No Yes – Describe: _____

Signature

Date

Name (please print)

Appendix 3: Flyer to recruit tutors

This flyer is designed to recruit high school volunteers.

Volunteer in your neighbourhood!



Be a tutor!

Earn your community service hours by helping a younger student with homework.

For more information and to sign-up for the training, contact the guidance office.

Homework Club Training

September 25, 2007

Room #555

Appendix 4: Parental permission for tutors

This letter is designed to obtain parental permission for tutors younger than 18 years of age.

September 1, 2007

Dear Parent,

Please sign the form on the bottom of this page to give your son/daughter permission to volunteer at Sunrise School this fall.

A homework club for grade 8 students at Sunrise School will start on Tuesday, October 2, 2007 and will operate every Tuesday from 3:50–5:00 p.m. until May 13, 2008. This homework club is supported by your school. Your son/daughter will receive a letter of recommendation as well as a certificate for his/her participation as a volunteer in this club.

In case of emergency, you can reach your son/daughter until 4:30 p.m. at Sunrise School by calling (416) 444-0000. When you call, please ask to be transferred to the library. For your information, Sunrise School is located at 4 Sunrise Road.

If you have any questions about this program, contact me at abc@email.ca or at (416) 999-0000.

Sincerely,

COORDINATOR
Sunrise Homework Club

I give permission for my son/daughter _____ to volunteer as a tutor at Sunrise School each Tuesday from 3:50–5:00 p.m. from October 2, 2007 to May 13, 2008.

I allow my child to be filmed, taped or photographed.

or

I do not allow my child to be filmed, taped or photographed.

My child has allergies or medical conditions:

No Yes — Describe: _____

Signature

Date

Name (please print)

Appendix 5: Tutor application form

This two-page form gathers contact information and matching information from tutors. It also summarizes the expectations of tutors.

Sunset Collegiate Institute

Volunteer information

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ Postal Code _____

Phone (day) _____ (evening) _____

Email address _____

Languages (spoken and written) _____

Availability (please specify times):

	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Why do you want to be a volunteer with NAME OF HOMEWORK CLUB?

What skills/knowledge do you have to share as a volunteer in this position?

Employment and/or volunteer experience

Year	Organization	Job placement (describe briefly)

Three character and professional references (we will check a minimum of 2): At least one must be a professional/volunteer reference. At least one must be a character reference.

Name	Relationship to you	Phone #

I will

- ▶ Sign in the record book before each session
- ▶ Meet with my student every Tuesday from October 2, 2007 to May 13, 2008 from 4:00–5:30 p.m.
- ▶ Inform NAME OF VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR if I am not able to attend
- ▶ Keep in touch regularly with NAME OF VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Authorization for collection of personal information

I authorize NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION/SCHOOL to collect information from the above references.

I further authorize NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION/SCHOOL to conduct a Police Records Check (PRC) with my local police department.

I understand that the information obtained will be confidential but may be shared with partner organizations in order to obtain an appropriate volunteer placement.

Signature

Date

Appendix 6: Volunteer orientation guide

Your volunteer orientation guide may include these topics. It should only be 3–4 pages long. **This guide should supplement — not replace — an orientation (group or individual) for your tutors.**

Goal of your homework club

- Describe the purpose of your club. (For example, to provide a safe learning place for students in grades 7–8 living in the Sunrise community.)
- Articulate the philosophy of your club. What is important to you? (For example, building the community, developing students' self-esteem or helping students improve academically.)

Overall description of your homework club

- Summarize the structure and schedule of the club.
- Describe how students are selected and registered, how tutors are recruited and how students and tutors are matched.

Benefits of your homework club

- Describe why your homework club benefits this particular group of students. (For example, your homework club may focus on helping students to achieve better test results on their grade 3, 6 or 10 literacy test, or to provide academic support to students whose parents work long hours.)

Homework club schedule

- Outline the time and day(s) of the week of the homework club.
- List important dates for the homework club including
 - ▶ launch date
 - ▶ dates for group activities
 - ▶ holidays
 - ▶ final celebrations

Roles and responsibilities of students

- Describe the responsibilities of the students (to be punctual, to attend regularly, to bring homework, to not disturb others, etc.).
- Describe how you ensure student safety. Set rules such as:
 - ▶ tutors meet with students only during club hours
 - ▶ tutors and students should not exchange personal contact information without parental permission
 - ▶ the students and tutors should only be in locations where they can be seen by others
 - ▶ tutors should not take pictures of the students

Roles and responsibilities of tutors

- Describe the qualifications and time commitment required.
- Describe the role of the tutors.
- Describe the limitations on meetings/communication between tutors and students for safety reasons.
- Describe the certificate or reference letter distributed at end of program. (See Appendices 14 and 15 for samples of a reference letter and certificate.)

Roles and responsibilities of your organizing team

- Describe your role in setting up and supporting the homework club, and give relevant contact information.

Roles and responsibilities of other partners

- Describe the roles of other community partners (parents, library, other schools, etc.) who are supporting your homework club.

Successes and challenges of your homework club

- Describe the successes of the club. (For example, anecdotal information about how students have benefited.)
- You may also wish to describe some of the challenges of the club. (For example, attendance, behaviour problems or lack of motivation.)

A wish list for your club

- Describe the resources you wish to have for your club; supplies, snacks, additional tutors, computers, etc. Your tutors may surprise you!

Appendix 7: Tutor interview questions

Program information

Explain your program, describe the community and the needs of the students and outline volunteer responsibilities. Ask them if they have any questions or concerns. Let them know they can ask questions throughout the interview.

1. Are you able to attend the training session?
2. Do have any questions about the program, your responsibilities as a tutor, or our screening process?
3. Do you have any questions about the location, schedule, routine etc. of this program?
4. Choosing to volunteer as a literacy tutor is an important commitment. Do you expect that you will have any problems with building a weekly time commitment to the program into your schedule?

Getting to know your volunteers

1. Why do you want to be a tutor with our program? What would you like to gain from this experience?
2. What work, volunteer or personal experiences have you had that would help you to be an effective tutor?
3. What challenges do you think you might encounter as a tutor?
4. How will you focus on the needs, skills and interests of the student or students you will be working with?
5. How would your friends describe you? What would they say you need to work on?

Appendix 8: Questions for character references

These are questions to ask character references. Before asking these questions, give references some information about the homework club.

Sunrise Homework Club

Character reference

Name of volunteer: _____

Name of Reference: _____

1. How long have you known this person?

2. What is your relationship to him/her?

3. Does he/she have the time and patience to work with children or teenagers? Yes No

4. What strengths does he/she have that would help in this position?

5. Is he/she reliable and punctual? Yes No

6. Please describe how he/she works with others, either adults or children.

7. Is there anything you feel we should be aware of before placing this person with a student? Do you have any concerns about him/her working with a student?

No Yes — describe: _____

8. If the applicant were to apply to your organization, would you hire/rehire him/her?

9. Do you have any other comments?

Reference taken by: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 9: Training agenda

Adapt this agenda to reflect the strengths and needs of students and tutors. For more resources go to www.frontiercollege.ca

Sunrise Homework Club

Homework club training agenda

September 25, 2007

- Introductions
- Program description and volunteer responsibilities
- Tutoring techniques

Choose the techniques that best meet your students' needs!

Learning to read <i>(For beginning readers)</i>	Reading to learn <i>(For struggling readers)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Language experience▶ Word attack skills▶ Tips for reading aloud▶ Homework strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Homework strategies▶ 4 R's of reading▶ The writing process

- Scenarios
- Other learning activities
- Evaluation and next steps

Appendix 10: Student-tutor contract

Sunrise Homework Club

Student-tutor contract — October 2, 2007 to May 13, 2008

Student declaration

I, _____
have joined this homework club
because:

As a member of this homework
club, my goals are to:

Tutor declaration

I, _____
have joined this homework club
because:

As a member of this homework
club, my goals are to:

To help us to reach our goals, we will:

- **Be punctual.** We will meet 4:00 p.m. every Tuesday.
- **Be prepared.** We will bring homework and other materials to work on together every week.
- **Be quiet and courteous to others.** We understand that we meet in an office building where people work.
- **Be committed and work hard.** We are here to learn together about school and the world.
- **Have fun together while we learn.** Learning is an important part of life — everyone learns every day.

Agreed to in the spirit of cooperative learning

Student: _____ Tutor: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 11: Agenda for launch

Adapt this agenda to meet the needs of your homework club. A quiz (see next page) or other fun, non-competitive activity helps tutors and students to get to know each other. When tutors and students are finished, take the activity up as a group.

Sunrise Homework Club

Launch agenda

October 2, 2007

- Welcome
- Introductions between tutors and students
- Pizza
- A few words from:
 - ▶ The organizing committee
 - ▶ Partner organizations
- Group activity (fun quiz)
- Tour of building
- Group photo
- Next week....

Adapt the questions in this quiz to students' needs and interests.

Sunrise Homework Club Quiz

Welcome to the launch of the Sunrise Homework Club. We hope you and your tutor have fun completing this quiz. We will take the answers up later as a group.

1. What is the world's most often sung song?
2. How many degrees is half a turn?
3. What city is home to the Eiffel Tower?
4. What city would you visit to see Buckingham Palace?
5. Who wrote *The Paper Bag Princess*?
6. Where will you float better, in salt water or fresh water?
7. Does water expand, contract or remain the same when it freezes?
8. Which of these letters have a line of symmetry? G, A, O, F, L
9. Is the cello a string instrument or a wind instrument?
10. What would you like to be when you grow up?

Answers (to be taken up with the group)

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. Happy Birthday | 6. Saltwater |
| 2. 180 degrees | 7. Expand |
| 3. Paris | 8. A, O |
| 4. London | 9. Stringed |
| 5. Robert Munsch | 10. ... |

Appendix 13: Tutor-student sign-in sheet

This is a sign-in sheet for tutors who meet one-to-one with their students at various times throughout the week.

Sunrise Homework Club

Sign-in sheet — October 2007 to May 2008

Tutor's name: _____

Student's name: _____

What is today's date? How long did you meet?	What did you work on today?	Do you have any questions or concerns?

Appendix 14: Certificate of participation

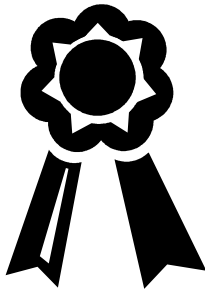
This certificate acknowledges the hard work of both your tutors and your students.

SUNRISE SCHOOL

Certificate of Achievement

This certificate is hereby presented to

For dedication and commitment to learning in the
Sunrise Homework Club



Date

Sunrise School, Principal

Appendix 15: Reference letter for tutors

Here is a general reference letter for tutors. You may wish to add more specific information on your tutors who assume additional responsibilities.

May 13, 2008

Concerning: (First and Last name)

To whom it may concern,

(First Name) volunteered as a tutor at Sunrise Homework Club this year. The tutors in this homework club helped students in grade six complete their homework, understand their class work and study for tests.

(First Name) met with her student for one hour every week for 15 weeks. She attended a training session where she learned about various strategies on helping a younger student understand and complete homework. We follow a student centred philosophy where the tutors take into consideration the learning needs, interests and strengths of their students.

Tutor commitment is stressed during tutor training. Tutors must meet regularly with their student and notify the program organizer if they are unable to meet. (First Name) fulfilled these responsibilities and showed dedication and enthusiasm to her tutoring relationship with her student.

Sincerely,

NAME

Sunrise School

Appendix 16: Evaluation questionnaire for students

Sunrise Homework Club

Feedback from students — May 2008

1. What did you learn through this homework club?

2. What did you like best about working with a tutor?

3. What did you not like about the homework club?

4. How did this homework club help you with your schoolwork?

5. How would you improve this program for next year?

6. What skills have you worked on at the homework club
i.e., reading, writing, math, or science?

7. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the club?

Appendix 17: Evaluation questionnaire for tutors

This two-page questionnaire is designed for tutors in homework club at an elementary school.

Sunrise Homework Club

Feedback from tutors — May 2008

Please fill out both sides of this questionnaire to help us evaluate this program and make improvements for next year. Thank you!!

Section A — How the program was set up and run

1. What are two things that you learned from the tutor training?

2. What would you change about the tutor training?

3. What do you like about the homework club?

4. How can we improve the program?

5. Did you receive enough support from the homework club coordinators?

6. If no, how could the homework club coordinators have given you more support?

7. Do you have any other comments?

...please see over

Section B – Your relationship with your student(s)

1. How many times (approximately) did you meet with your student(s)?

2. How did your student(s) benefit from your tutoring? Please provide examples.

3. Did you meet with your student(s) regularly? Why or why not?

4. What did you work on most often with your student(s)?

5. What was the biggest success you had with your student(s)?

6. What was the biggest challenge you had with your student(s)?

7. Did you benefit from this experience? If so, how?

Appendix 18: Evaluation questionnaire for teachers

Sunrise Homework Club

Feedback from teachers — May 2008

1. How did your students benefit from participating in this homework club?

2. What changes (if any) did you observe in the students who attended the homework club? Please give examples.

3. What were the strengths of this homework club?

4. What were the weaknesses of this homework club?

5. What three changes would you suggest for next year?

6. Do you have any other comments?

Testimonials

March 1st, 2006

The Organizer's Workbook is a gem for all those who are interested in a foolproof and easy-to-implement way of setting up and running a homework club. The workbook guides you through the step-by-step process from getting the right people on board to recruiting, training, and encouraging volunteer tutors. What I like the most about it is the organization of the resources; each step in the guide creates the backbone for the next. Before you know it, you have a fully operational homework club!

The workbook is truly designed with the tutor and student in mind and provides the organizer with tools and suggestions on volunteer/student management. For example, at the back of the workbook, the organizer can find a myriad of useful and easily reproduced forms and resources that save time and lead the organizer to the next stage of the program — longevity.

Neda Skific-Lee

Program Manager, Children, Youth, Adults
Harbourfront Community Centre
Toronto

February 27th, 2006

The Working Women Community Centre is incredibly grateful to Frontier College and their fabulous Homework Club Guide! Working Women's On Your Mark Tutoring Program serves over 100 students a year. [We have] over 80 tutors [in] an incredibly busy program with which the guide has helped immensely. The guide is easy to follow and provides many useful forms and letters which I was able to revise to fit my program. Most important in running a homework club, and expertly covered in the guide, is volunteer management, from ensuring that the volunteers get the best experience to ensuring that the program has proper screening of tutors. In our fifth year of running the program I still refer to the guide as to how I can improve all aspects of running a homework club!

Sonia Neves

Project Coordinator - On Your Mark Tutoring Program
Working Women Community Centre
Toronto

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www.frontiercollege.ca