STC Presents: What Students Want Volunteers to Know?

BFI-Bureau of fearless Ideas or 826

YTP-Youth Tutoring Program

April 12, 2018

A panel of youth met and answered questions for volunteer tutors. Here are some of the themes that emerged:

* Relationships should come first.
* Students listen to every and all words tutors say, please be kind and patient!
* Don’t give kids advice about their lives, you may not understand the world from their perspective, just listen.
* Students come to tutoring for the volunteers and the help is really great too!
* Keep students on task, be kind and firm.
* Volunteer tutors have made a HUGE impact on the students at the panel!

For all of their words of wisdom, see the transcript below:

**Q: We always encourage our tutors to get to know our tutors, what are you passionate about outside of tutoring?**

Business, suicide prevention, business, volunteering, student of color club, track an basket ball, social justice, facilitate community conversations around social justice, black student union, tennis team, Issues of the black community, softball, drug and alcohol squad, frisbee and soccer, global issues.

**Q: Why did you originally start going to tutoring and why do you continue?**

I started at 5 and we did not speak English at our house, 826.I was afraid to talk with people but people made me feel safe and I learned to speak English and learne dhow to write, instead of being behind, I was ahead.

I started Homework Help really young, but I keep going because it’s a great support for me. The tutors are really supportive YTP has helped me with writing

I used to go to Broadview and then I went o 826, but then I realized that BFI was more time and more hours and so I could go more often. I got a lot of

826 in first grade with my brother and when I started getting homework, I realized that I didn’t really understand because my teachers didn’t explain.

My mom introduced me to tutoring when I was in 7th grade, the environment was really great and the over all support that I go was great and I saw a big impact on my school

My family just immigrated to America when I was in first grade and I struggled a lot with language and writing and I have had the same turn for 9 years and having someone there to support you and they want to help you. It encouraged me to stay there longer.

**Q: Thinking back, what was one tutoring session that made you feel special and energized?**

5th grade I was proficient in school, but writing was hard and it took me a long time. But I could talk really well and teachers didn’t understand that I could talk really well. The tutor took a break from writing and we just talked for 30 minutes about all kinds of things an then we just wrote down bullets and writing down exactly what I said.

My tutoring session, I was talking about how I wanted to improve and so she gave me a random topic and asked me to talk as much as I could. It has helped me elaborate on topics I really didn’t know.

I had a math tutor that was really good at math. After working with him for a long time, I got my first A. I still work with him every week.

I was frantic and my tutor told me to pause and take a breath and then we talked out about what I wanted to write, but she offered to keep working with me so that I could finish the paper.

My first tutoring session, I really needed help with science and the next day I had to take a test and I got the help I needed.

When me and my tutor was having a rough day when someone we weren’t fond of was elected. She taught me how important mental health was and we talked an got emotional and I am not usually one to talk about emotions.

**Q: Have you ever had a frustrating experience with a tutor?**

I brought a text book over to the tutor and she asked me to speak up and I hate that because I was super scared. Condescending, he asked me if I had read the question and then he looked down on me and was scaring me. His face was turning red and he went to the bathroom and told me that I needed to know the answer by the time he got back from the restroom. Instead, he should have made me feel safe. Just walking =through the question with me. Reading it together would have helped.

Safety is important!

3rd or 4th grade, there were some concepts that I wasn’t understanding and she would have laughing fits. During our tutoring time she would be laughing and I didn’t understand what she was laughing at? She was having a good time, but I was really interested in getting help. She could have found a way to have a good time and balance having fun but helping men.

A few months ago, there was a kids who was new to the United States, I saw him working with the tutor and another student and was getting irritated that she wasn’t getting all of the attention and was saying mean things about the student. The tutor just laughed it off and didn’t address the wrong thing that was said. I wanted to communicate to the kids that he is going to overcome his challenges.

When I need math help, but the tutor can’t really help me. They want to work together, but sometimes that confuses me. I wish they would be honest instead of taking up my time.

If I am doing a math worksheet, the tutor will end up doing all of the work and I can’t follow what she is doing. Tutors should help students learn concepts and not just get their homework done.

I was getting help from a tutor who didn’t really know the topic, I could have handled the situation better, I was impatient. I should have said thank you.

I am easily distracted, I had a tutor who was easily distracted and so we would get off track. The whole session would be wasted, I need someone to keep me on track. It would have been helpful for the tutor to connect for 5 minutes and then encourage student to get back on track.

Annie P. (Adult from YTP): Balancing student needs and tutor needs and communicating needs

**Q: If a new tutor comes in and asks for advice, what would you tell them?**

Work that I am super behind on, work that I am behind on and then there is maintenance, stuff I have to study for all the time and then enrichment, topics that I want to learn more about. At BFI there were always writing prompts and there was always stuff to do. Different ways to tutor kids and how to meet their needs and that all students learn differently. Getting to know students and how they learn.

**Q: Making kids feel safe was mentioned, how can tutors do that? When you first meet kids, be patient. Initiate the conversation and initiate the help.**

You are going to be in that student’s life and so it’s important that you build that relationship and set some good ground work.

Sometimes tutors work on their own thing, it’s hard to get their attention. Tell student it’s okay to interrupt and stay in tune to when student need help.

Being aware that when a student doesn’t get it, switch to another method and be really flexible and change the way you are tutoring to help the person.

I also wanted to add, when kids ask for help, they are in a super vulnerable spot. Think about how you feel when you ask another adult for help. Please be patient when kids ask for help. When kids I are at tutoring they are there for help and they need help.

Nat (Adult from BFI): Tutors don’t know where kids are coming from.

**Q: That’s the end of questions that we had planned, now it’s time to get volunteer questions.**

**Q: When you feel tired or not well, what can I do to engage you or should I back off?**

If student is not feeling well, you should show them that you are there, but don’t push them or ask them a bunch of questions. Don’t hurry them. All teens wanted a little bit of encouragement. I have to make an effort and teens make an effort to get there and they can remind teens/kids that they can go home early—but teens know they need to get something done.Build relationship that are also not academic. Younger kids tell you everything and exactly how they are feeling, there is no filter.

What if you are a tutor and you are working with someone who is off task. I tutor at Boys and Girls Club and it helps to take a break playing a game or drawing and then after the 10 minutes, we get back on task.

Use reinforcement because I will tell you more about myself after this math problem or we can play a game.

Adult Participant: When we started the tutoring session, I would ask her about her day. When she got off task, I would incorporate what she did during the day to problems.

**Q: What personal qualities do you want to have in a tutor? Or thinking about the tutor you get a long the best, what makes them good to work with.**

Values are important, she is a good listener. She encourages me to be a problem solver and listens to me.

My Wednesday tutor, I have had her for 6 years. I can talk to her about anything and she is open and not Judgie, but helped me understand what I am going through. We can laugh together.

Sometimes after school, it’s a majority white school and then I go to school with kids of color. I need to debrief and talk about my day and what happened to me at an all white school.

My tutor opens up about her life because I don’t just like venting about my life and we have genuine conversation and not student and teacher, but equals.

Having a tutor that’s not just work-work-work.

I want someone who can tell me to get back on task.

Tutors didn’t let me give up.

**Q: What is the most annoying thing that tutors do or say?**

I know they have good intentions, but I had a tutor say, it’s easy if you think about it. It’s not easy!

You don’t get this?

Tutors shouldn’t give answers to kids problems about their lives. Be a good listener, but don’t give advice. You don’t really know their life. You talk to your white tutors about stuff they don’t really understand. We come from very different places.

When I had a tutor tell me that it probably didn’t happen because I am black. You don’t believe me that it happened because I was black.

I really like hearing about their high school life.

One of my tutors is a sophomore in college and so she relates to me.

Take a minute of one tutor that you worked with that you really value, if you could show them appreciation, what would you say?

Volunteer brought me books with black authors because that’s what Ike to read. She brings be ;books by lack authors.

Helping build a community at BFI, because it’s a second home to me. I stopped going, but then I saw my old tutor and he stopped and we talked and he came to my recital and he left a note for me and I came back to BFI after that.

Worked with me individually and provided a lot of experiences and we went to STEM and arranged me to talk, arranged for everyone to see Black panther and he provides a lot of awesome experiences. I don’t know how to thank him.