

GOAL: Help a family member with homework and studying

Contributed by Casandra Issaka, Sacramento Public Library

Introduction

Adult Literacy learners often lack confidence, in particular, when it comes to school-related topics and interactions due to low literacy skills and their own past negative experiences in school. However, there are many ways that Adult Literacy learners can support and help a family member regardless of their current literacy level.



We want to encourage adult learners to recognize their current skills and strengths, build on those, and apply any new knowledge and skills that they want to learn.

Note: Learners of children 0-5 can help them be school-ready through talking, singing, playing, reading, and pre-writing activities. Ask your coordinator if you'd like more information.

GUIDEPOST I: Where to start

Tutor (to learner): “What do you already know or feel confident about related to this goal? “

“What do you still want to learn, know more about, or improve? Let’s decide where to start to help you build the skills you want.”



Tutor Tips

1) Brainstorm ideas first through discussion. Have your learner brainstorm their own ideas of ways to help a student, regardless of current literacy skills. Help your learner make notes or a mind map as needed.

Tutor: “What ideas do you have about what you could say or do to help support your child/student with homework or studying?” (What do you do to help yourself organize chores, your own studying, etc.? On page 2 are some more ideas if needed.)”

2) Review the list on page 2 once your learner is done brainstorming their own ideas, with any guiding questions from you. Have the learner compare their ideas to these and see what is similar or different. Write an ‘S’ by similar ideas and a ‘D’ by different ideas.

3) Using a KWL chart* (see page 2) or similar concept, have the learner categorize all unique ideas into ‘Know’ or ‘Want to Know’. Use the learner’s preferred categories or word choice to explain each idea in the Know or Want to Know columns. Save the ‘Learned’ column for later, after tutoring on these ideas has taken place. Use a date and note specific skills or knowledge learned. This will help the learner to have clear learning objectives and to see progress.

Note: As usual, make sure you explicitly explain why you’re asking the learner to do the suggested steps and activities as you go through the lesson; explain how they will benefit or help the learner.

Mind Map Example

Ways to help a student

These ideas are smaller, shorter term goals to work on in order to reach the larger, longer term goal.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of general tips: organization, motivation, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources: Library, school/district, other (family/friends, local org’s), other Roles & Goals lessons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization & planning specifics Create a homework/study schedule Following instructions, deadlines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading-writing tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-ins: daily, weekly Asking open-ended, specific questions or follow-up to yes/no 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test anxiety & learning disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding Common Core <u>Basic</u>, Intermediate, Advanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the school system as a whole; parent involvement opportunities

Other ideas/questions related to goal:

***Resource: KWL chart**

<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/KWL%20Chart.pdf>

.....

Select a topic you want to research. In the first column, write what you already know about the topic. In the second column, write what you want to know about the topic. After you have completed your research, write what you learned in the third column.

What I K now	What I W ant to Know	What I L earned

GUIDEPOST II: – What you will learn

What You’ll Learn

In conversation with your learner, choose a short-term goal from the mind map to work on in your tutoring sessions.

Tutor: “As we discussed, there are several things you can say and do to help a family member in school, even if you do not read and write well yourself or don’t feel confident about certain subjects. We’ll use your answers to the KWL chart to choose a specific starting point to focus on to work toward your goal.”

Now that you and your learner know which goal-related activity you will focus on, you will locate resources that you can use for instruction. Remember to explain to your learner how you will use each resource and how the instructional activity will help them achieve their long-term goal.

Related resources:

Many of these resources are for you, the tutor, to use for guidance in tutoring your learner. Any that you use directly with your learner should be modified according to your learner’s literacy level, needs, and interests. Use the general Guideposts 1-4 during any additional lessons.

More detailed ideas and suggestions for asterisked goals below can be found at the end of the Guidepost section under Additional Tips.

Goals/Topics	Resources
<p>*Planning and organization specifics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a homework/study schedule • Following instructions, deadlines 	<p>Homework schedule https://www.verywellfamily.com/making-a-homework-routine-2601532</p> <p>Verbal instructions https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/understanding-childs-challenges/talking-with-your-child/10-tips-to-help-your-child-follow-directions</p> <p>Written instructions (2nd part of article) https://jenniferfindley.com/get-students-follow-directions/</p>
<p>*Check-ins: daily, weekly</p> <p>*Asking open-ended, specific questions or follow-up to yes/no</p>	<p>See suggestions after Guidepost IV, under Additional Tips.</p>
<p>Help Resources</p> <p>Library, school or district, other (family/friends, other community organizations, private tutors)</p>	<p>Public library web site – educational databases, homework help – online chat platform or in-person/virtual drop-in sessions</p> <p>Teacher, school, and district sites – look for “Parents” tabs; or school library if available.</p> <p>Other “Family Member” Roles & Goals lessons: Using the Library, Interacting with School or Teachers https://libraryliteracy.org/for-coordinators/roles-and-goals/</p>
<p>*Reading-writing-vocabulary tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: “interact” with the text • Writing: organize ideas first, proofread later 	<p>CLLS tutor training videos – can be adapted for children https://libraryliteracy.org/resources/tutoring-and-tutor-training/</p>
<p>Memory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mnemonic devices • Multisensory learning • Relate new concepts/information to personal experience or existing knowledge 	<p>4 types: spelling, order, acronym, rhyme/poem. VAKT: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile (i.e. seeing, hearing, doing, and touching). Be creative, make learning fun!</p>

<p>Test anxiety & learning disabilities</p> <p>Talk to the child’s teacher and/or doctor if there is a concern, and the school principal or school district as needed.</p>	<p>Test anxiety https://childmind.org/article/tips-for-beating-test-anxiety/</p> <p>Learning disabilities/Dyslexia https://www.dys-add.com/dyslexia.html</p> <p>Bright Solutions for Dyslexia – general info/resources page https://www.dys-add.com/dyslexia.html</p> <p>CA Department of Education – Dyslexia Guidelines</p>
<p>Understanding Common Core Basic, Intermediate, Advanced</p> <p>Be careful not to overwhelm a learner with too much information at once.</p>	<p>Basic: understand term, watch the video https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/whatareccss.asp</p> <p>Int-Adv: standards by grade English Language Arts-Literacy, Math https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/commoncorechannel.asp</p> <p>*See academic language resources below under Additional Tips...Reading-Writing-Vocabulary.</p>

GUIDEPOST III: How you will learn—multisensory strategies

Tutor: “Now that we’ve chosen a short-term learning objective from the brainstorming activity (Guidepost 1), along with one or more resources, we’ll decide on some learning strategies and activities for meeting this objective.”

For the Tutor: Below is a chart of suggested activities and resources to help you and your learner. The benefits of the activity are also noted so that you can be explicit with your learner about why they’re doing a certain activity. Some notes may also help guide you in how much to do or not do based on your learner’s reading level and comfort level with processing new information (do not feel like you have to use or do all of the suggestions). Decide together with your learner what to focus on and how much to do.

Note: Activities 2 and 3 (asterisked) have additional detailed suggestions following the chart.

Activity & Benefits	Resources
<p>Activity 1: Use a KWL chart (graphic organizer).</p> <p><u>Benefits:</u> Helps organize thoughts about what Learner knows and wants to learn and then evaluate what they've learned.</p>	<p>KWL chart: Know–Want to Know–Learned http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/KWL%20Chart.pdf</p> <p>A KWL chart is also in back of <i>Journey to Success</i> Teacher's Guides starting at level 3, along with other graphic organizers that may be useful. https://www.newreaderspress.com/journey-to-success#productDetail_resources</p>
<p>Can be used at various stages in this and other lessons. If you used this already for Guidepost 1, you may not need to use it much at this point, except possibly as a reminder of what the learner wants to focus on learning/improving. You may want to skip to the Vocabulary and Article activities.</p> <p>The adult learning to use graphic organizers can, in turn, also be a tool they can use to help support their student family member(s).</p>	
<p>Activity 2*: Vocabulary development, previewing key words</p> <p><u>Benefits:</u> Improve fluency & comprehension</p> <p>Consider levels of knowing a word:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading/decoding a word <u>easily</u> • Understanding the meaning(s) in context, and out of context • Being able to use the word correctly in speech or writing • Being able to spell the word correctly 	<p>Video Training: Teaching Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-teaching vocabulary (ideas below) https://youtu.be/yBmWKEoo5IE • Working with Words in Many Ways: Building a Word Bank https://youtu.be/Tat3HwBavt0 <p>*See ideas for words to pre-teach and vocab practice after end of chart. Look for Activity 2.</p>
<p>Preview the article to consider which words may be difficult for your particular learner. Then, together with your learner decide which words they need or want to learn and to what extent. Focus first on reading and understanding in context in order to get the most out of the article. Additional practice can be done later.</p>	

<p>Activity 3*: Discuss/read informational article</p> <p><u>Benefits:</u> Goal-specific content/information; (optional) Reading skills-building</p> <p><u>Reading skills:</u> (optional, some or all) vocabulary, comprehension, fluency</p>	<p>Article: “How Parents Can Help Their Kids Be Successful in School”</p> <p>Overview providing 10 tips—plus daily checklist https://www.udel.edu/canr/cooperative-extension/fact-sheets/parents-help-children-school-success/</p> <p>*Additional suggestions can be found after end of this chart. Look for Activity 3 notes.</p>
--	--

This article provides an overview of general tips, many of which can be immediately applied, can build on existing strengths, and do not require the learner to read/write.

It also gives the learner a chance to apply any new vocabulary previewed; reinforce their reading/understanding of the word(s) in a larger, meaningful context; and potentially encounter new words or phrases and practice other reading skills as appropriate for their current level.

The focus here, however, should be on covering and learning the information or ideas in the article. More practice with reading skills could be done later, if the learner is interested in practicing with this article.

<p>Activity 4: Apply information from the article</p> <p><u>Benefits:</u> Gives Learner practice thinking deeply about and evaluating what they read, and then applying information in a practical way to their own life.</p>	<p>Activity steps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate the information. 2. Apply the information to own life by creating personalized list. <p>Detailed suggestions below, which include multi-sensory components.</p>
--	---

Tutor prep: Cut article into sections according to the 10 tips.

1. **Evaluate and personalize:** Learner arranges cut strips of each key tip from the article in order of importance or relevance to them and verbally summarizes the points. Learner may want to take a picture to refer to later and/or write them up in their preferred order.
2. **Apply to self/family:** Learner creates their own daily checklist (a summary essentially, similar to the list at the end of the article). Note: Final list should be created after Learner decides if any tips should be combined, eliminated, or added. Only the most important, key points should be in the checklist. It should not be too long or detailed. Learner may want to add images and highlight/underline key words or phrases.

Learner decides where in their home they will try out keeping the list so that it’s easily remembered and used (refrigerator, desk, bulletin board, etc.).

Activity 2 – Vocabulary: Ideas for Words to Pre-teach and Vocabulary Practice

Review [article](#) (*How Parents can help their Kids be Successful in School*). Look for challenging words to pre-teach your learner if you choose to have your learner read the article, or if your learner is an English language learner. Some ideas are below.

Flash cards or matching word-definition cards, with verbal element encouraged (say the word aloud, say the definition). Learner should try to give a definition in their own words, as well as create a personal sentence using the word. Adding an image to the card on the same side as the word is encouraged. The cards could be used before reading, as well as after for review.

For lower level learners or those with handwriting difficulties, the tutor may write the definition and/or sentence for the learner; or the learner could copy the information onto the cards.

success(ful)	children	unworthy	excuse(s)
specific	create	encourage	convenient
achieve(er)	optional	praise	contagious
curious	require(d)	avoid	
materials	assignment	disability	

Activity 3 – Overview Article: Additional Suggestions for Parent/Caregiver Tips

Other general ways to help even if you have limited literacy or English skills:

- Ask the student to explain and show assignments, talk through questions (even if you can't read or understand everything).
- While distractions should be eliminated, consider whether some kind of background noise or music may actually be helpful, instead of complete silence. That will depend on the individual.
- Sit with or be nearby the child during homework time (while you are doing something else) in order to monitor that they are on task and to help guide/problem-solve if they get stuck.
- Identify a support person/network – another family member, friend, neighbor, or other parent/caregiver of child in same grade, etc.
- Have a list of other resources to refer student to if you can't help the student yourself. See "Help Resources" in the "What's Next?" section at the end of this document for ideas.

- Have regular communication with the teacher or school as needed; be proactive in reaching out to the teacher and asking for extra communication or other support as needed.
 - Ask for make-up work or test re-takes as needed if child is struggling.
 - Ask if your child could get extra time for a difficult assignment or test if you think it would help; or ask for test anxiety tips.
-

GUIDEPOST IV: What worked, what didn't, what can you use?

Reflection (Tutor to Learner): Let's think about what we learned today and how you can use it on your own as you work toward your goal.

- Are there any tips you want to modify, add, or delete for your personal list? You may want to try them out and think about them during the next week and modify them (again) later.
- Which tutoring activities worked well today for you, and why? Were there any that did not work well for you, why? This will help us to plan the kinds of activities and strategies we want to use in our next session.
- Are there any tutoring strategies we used today that you think would be helpful for your child/student? If so, which ones and why? Are there others you can think of right now that would be helpful? (Consider making a list the learner can use to early refer to later.)

Evaluate Progress: Revisit the KWL chart and update according to new knowledge/skills gained. Together, identify specific examples of progress toward the goal and recognize the learner's achievement.

Look for the *Milestones* that reflect important steps along the way to goal achievement. Make note of this progress for future discussion and reporting.

Initial Effort – The ultimate goal has been broken down into smaller components and your learner understands the skills needed to achieve the final goal. You and your learner have discussed where to start.

Making Progress – You and your learner have recognized indicators of progress and put aside specific physical and anecdotal evidence that shows improved abilities.

- Specific physical and anecdotal evidence might be of an improved grade in class, or a visible improvement in the student's attitude regarding schoolwork.

Goal Accomplished – Your learner can independently support their family member's homework responsibilities.

Notes:

Plan: Are there still areas for improvement for this specific short-term goal that are important to the learner to address now? Some may be revisited later instead. It may be better to move on to other short-term goals identified from the mind map and/or from your initial brainstorming.

END of Guidepost Section

Additional Tips for the learner helping a family member with homework:

Planning and Organization

- **Best time of day** – decide together, in general, what will be best/most helpful for this particular student (this may change for a particular subject or project – see 'prioritize' tip also).
- **Chunk time** into manageable bits, schedule in breaks/rewards
 - Incorporate music into breaks and/or meditation type sounds as background for studying
- **Prioritize assignments** – make a list/calendar; consider easiest and most difficult, how much time needed; balance getting easier done first and out of the way with leaving time and energy for more difficult.
 - Start more difficult/bigger assignments early to brainstorm and come back to later to work on more in-depth; the brain will start thinking/processing in between and there will be less pressure to finish everything at the last minute.

Following Assignment Directions, Due Dates

Make sure the child is understanding and following assignment directions and turning assignments in on time. Unnecessary points can be missed simply from not following directions.

- Have the child read the directions aloud. The child should underline/highlight any key words or numbers in the instructions or make separate notes of the essential components or steps.
- Ensure the assignment is clear. If it isn't, ask the teacher for clarification.
- Use a calendar to keep track of important due dates.
 - Check bigger projects for multiple deadlines.
- Check off the key components of the assignment directions as they are completed.
- When the assignment seems complete, have the child go back and double check the instructions and check that each part is complete.

Check-ins

In general, for a child or other member needing more assistance with time management and getting assignments done, have more frequent check-ins and have the person show you their assignment descriptions, due dates, completed homework, etc.

- **Daily check-in(s)**
 - Ask child for any notes, letters, etc. for you from the teacher or school. For younger children, check their backpack and books/folders.
- **Weekly check-in(s)**
 - Consider a weekly check-in at the end or beginning of the week to review any upcoming assignments, projects, tests to monitor or plan for; check any returned homework assignments and tests for grades to monitor child's progress and understanding.

Asking Open-Ended, Specific Questions

Ask the child open-ended but specific questions about what they're learning and their day, maybe while having a snack together. This will allow you to learn strengths, weaknesses, and show an interest in school and that it's important. Use your own words, but here are some examples:

- What's something new you learned today?
- What's the most interesting thing you learned or did today at school?
- What was the most challenging or difficult thing about school today? What did you do to overcome that or make it easier? Was someone able to help you?
- What was something fun you did?
- What was something nice someone did for someone else?

- What was the best part of your day? Was there a bad part to your day? (What? Then guide in problem-solving if applicable.)
- Is there anything else you want to tell me about, or anything you need help with?
- End discussion with a positive, specific statement: It sounds like you did a great job [-ing].... I enjoyed/loved hearing about.... I look forward to hearing more about...

Reading-Writing-Vocabulary

Reading and writing are interconnected: the more you read, generally the better writer you will be; spelling and grammar will also generally be easier (unless perhaps there's a learning disability). In general, encourage reading and writing for fun in the child's free time. This will help over time.

- **Reading:** Have the child "interact" with any reading assignments. Make notes/questions, highlight, comment, underline difficult words, etc. Use a notepad or post-its if unable to write in book. Reading aloud may help auditory learners; others may do better reading silently.
- **Writing:** Focus first on developing and organizing ideas (content). Then, check style and clarity. Have the child read their work aloud to hear how it sounds, and to see if they catch any of their own errors. Save spelling or grammar corrections until the content is complete, unless it's interfering with the meaning/comprehensibility.
- **Vocabulary:** Keep a personal vocabulary log and/or create flash cards for new or difficult words and concepts. Add pictures, be creative! Review 5-10 new or difficult words daily or weekly, as needed.

Specific attention to learning academic language is needed vs. "everyday" language.

- **For children**, there are "Content Areas" picture dictionaries (targeted to ELLs) that can make learning this language more interesting and structured.
Oxford Picture Dictionary [Content Areas for Kids](#) (+ supplemental materials)
Oxford Picture Dictionary for the [Content Areas](#) (+ supplemental materials)

- **For high schoolers/college students**, there is Avril Coxhead's "Academic Wordlist". It's important to be able to recognize words as part of word families as well, and their patterns. This list is very extensive, so you would want to break it down and prioritize.
Academic Wordlist
<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist>
-