

TEACH ONE REACH ONE

Faith-Based Tutoring Best Practices

Faith-based tutoring can be an excellent way for a ministry to serve the children in their community, while also teaching them about God. Unfortunately, many faith-based tutoring ministries fail to reach their potential or become secular over time. Often this is because leaders and volunteers are not using best practices in their faith-based tutoring ministry.

Below are some of the most important best practices for faith-based tutoring ministries in most locations.

Before Offering Faith-Based Tutoring Services

- Conduct a community survey of the parents of potential students. Try to gather enough data to have a fairly accurate idea of the number of students who would be interested in participating, the subjects in which they need tutoring and the best days and times for meetings.
- Analyze the needs indicated from the survey and the resources you have including potential volunteers, facilities, supplies, etc. Do you have enough resources to make an extended commitment to the children whom you will offer to serve with your ministry? Obviously circumstances can change, but you want to make a commitment that will offer some stability to the children to whom you will minister.
- Determine the best place for meetings and the days and times your ministry will provide services to children participating in the ministry.
- Check for any local ordinances or insurance requirements that could impact your ministry. Make sure your ministry is compliant and has any necessary insurance before beginning to minister to students.
- Determine the maximum size of the first group of students to whom you will minister. It is often better to limit the number of students enrolled in your first session to find and resolve any potential issues. If there are problems, fewer students will be negatively impacted. You may want to offer a small summer session for example, and then roll out the full program with a larger enrollment when school begins in the fall.
- Identify volunteers willing to commit to the ministry for a minimum of an entire session. (A session could consist of several days or weeks during school breaks or an entire school year.)
- Screen all volunteers including criminal records and reference checks.
- Provide volunteer training in the following areas:
 - **Empathy** - What challenges do the children face? How can your ministry best serve them while also teaching them about God? What can you learn from the children and their families? What are areas where volunteers and children have things in common? What are appropriate and inappropriate or insensitive topics of conversation to have with the children and their families?

- **Classroom management** - What are appropriate ways to manage classroom behavior in order to maximize learning? What special techniques may be needed because of the location or timing of your sessions or the special needs of students?
- **Child safety and mandatory reporting** - Volunteers need to know the safety policies and procedures for your ministry. If you are using a public facility like a school building for your sessions, there may be additional safety requirements mandated by the facility. In many areas, volunteers are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse. They should have training in recognizing the signs of abuse and procedures for reporting suspected abuse. You may also want some or all of your volunteers to have CPR and first aid training.
- **Planning lessons and activities** - What does an appropriate faith based tutoring lesson include? How should volunteers connect Bible stories to the academic topics in which they are tutoring children? What types of activities are most appropriate for their particular subject? What special teaching strategies might they need to help some struggling learners?
- Plan your curriculum for the entire length of your session. Depending upon your resources, you may want to provide a prepared curriculum to your volunteers or ask them to assist you in creating the curriculum for your ministry.
- Host an information session for children and their parents and enroll students. On the enrollment form, make sure to get emergency contact information and medical information like allergies, medications and physicians.

During Faith-Based Tutoring Sessions

- Connect the Bible to every academic subject and activity in meaningful ways. You can find free activity ideas with strong connections to Bible stories in ESL, basic and advanced elementary language arts, basic and advanced elementary math, science, and health and hygiene on our website (www.teachonereachone.org) under Children's Activity Ideas.
- If possible, use the NIV version of the Bible with students. Written on a third grade reading level, it is the most appropriate version for struggling learners. Other versions are on much higher reading levels and will be frustration texts for most of your students.
- Avoid using lectures to teach or requiring students to sit quietly for long periods of time. Students should be actively engaged in hands-on, experiential, meaningful, memorable activities that are also educationally appropriate for their needs (and fun!).
- Whenever possible, provide opportunities for training in character, godly attitudes and Christian life skills in addition to Bible lessons and academic tutoring. These areas can be worked into the tutoring lessons or offered as an additional activity during your sessions.
- Self-control is key to success in both school and Christianity. While it is a fruit of the Spirit, children can still be given help in developing more self-control. Teach students strategies for improving their self-control, including impulse control and delayed gratification.
- Allow time for students to express their emotions about school, friends or their life in general. Children often don't have an available adult who is willing to help them process their experiences and emotions in godly ways. Depending upon the needs of your students, you may want to provide individual mentors for more personal attention.

- Students may have issues with self esteem because of academic, personal or family struggles. Volunteers should be loving and encouraging while also providing clear, healthy boundaries for student behavior. Students should be encouraged to develop godly self esteem that is neither too high or too low, but a realistic understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.
- Whenever possible, provide opportunities for children to discover and develop the talents God may have given them. You may even consider providing opportunities for them to serve others using these talents. Serving others can also prevent children who are being served from becoming entitled.
- Develop a list of referrals for students or families who have needs your ministry and church are not equipped to meet. Local school administrators may be able to provide appropriate referral suggestions.
- Consider having periodic parenting sessions to help parents with their parenting issues and introduce them to your church and God's word.
- Consider providing Bible studies for interested parents at your facility in addition to inviting them to worship services and Bible classes at your church.

After Faith-Based Tutoring Sessions

- Provide parents with information about the Bible story that was taught (with scripture references), academic skills taught and practiced and the activities you did to reinforce the lesson.
- Provide parents with suggested activities they can do with their children at home to give them additional practice for the skills in which they are struggling.

Additional Volunteer Considerations

- Provide volunteers with various resources they can use to encourage families to attend your church for worship services, Bible classes and special events.
- Volunteers may need additional training in mentoring, faith sharing, teaching and ministering to at risk children. You can find helpful free volunteer training resources on our website: www.teachonereachone.org
- Someone should periodically evaluate volunteers and their classes. The purpose of the evaluation is to learn where one or more volunteers may need additional training or resources to be more effective in your faith-based tutoring ministry. You can find a [free classroom evaluation tool](#) on our website (www.teachonereachone.org). Although designed for a traditional children's Bible class, it is also appropriate to use when evaluating faith-based tutoring sessions.
- Volunteer retention is crucial for continuity in your ministry. Provide volunteers with regular encouragement. Schedule volunteers as far in advance as possible and have trained substitute volunteers available to cover absences.