

Prime your tutees for Learning Together

For a smoother start at the first tutorial, make sure your tutees understand how their new mentors will help them become better readers or mathematicians. An explanation of Learning Together can be handled by the classroom teachers, but if time allows, consider scheduling a separate meeting to introduce tutees to one another, preview materials and get them excited about participating. This meeting can be held during what will be the regular tutoring time, or if staff is available, during parent orientation.

Tutee orientation lesson plan

- Introduce yourself and welcome tutees. Explain that each of them has been picked to have a special tutor to help practice the reading or math skills they are learning in the classroom. They will meet (*times per week, when and where*) to learn together and have fun.
- Lead an ice-breaker game. For example, cut string into pieces of different lengths; each piece should have a mate of the same length and there should be enough pieces to give one to each tutee. Challenge tutees to find the student who has a string of the same length. After students find their matches, they can take turns introducing themselves to one another. Provide a list of questions to help students break the ice, or let them come up with their own. Extend the activity by having each student introduce his or her partner to the group.
- Introduce the Student Kit. Show tutees the T-shirts they will wear during lessons. Show them the “say” bubbles in the Tutor Guidebooks and explain how tutors know what to say and do (many tutees are curious about what the tutors are reading during the

lessons). Show the Tutee Activity Book with the passages they will read aloud. For Reading Together, hold up some of the trade books. If tutees will use the optional Progress Posters, pass them out and let them look at the books or history lessons they will cover (download at www.learningtogether.com). If tutees are familiar with some of the books or historical events, encourage them to share their opinions.



- Point out the activities, take-home letters and games at the end of the lessons. Remind tutees they will be having fun with their tutors in addition to working.
 - Help tutees think aloud about what qualities would be important for tutors to have, and record their suggestions on chart paper. Prompt them to add important qualities they might have forgotten (patience, kindness, reliability, etc.). Be sure to save this list so you can refer to it later.
 - Ask tutees to brainstorm the qualities of a good tutee. Write their ideas on chart paper and discuss them, suggesting important qualities they might have forgotten (politeness, attention, friendliness, etc.). Be sure to save this list.
- ✂ **ACTIVITY:** Provide file folders or manila envelopes, and markers or crayons. Have each tutee decorate a storage place for post-reading activities or SOLVE activity sheets. Have each tutee write his/her name on the outside and leave a blank for the tutor’s name.

Student selection is the first step to success

by Amy Werner
Director of Training

You are the chosen coordinator. Your schedule is mapped out. A location has been secured, as well as materials, snacks and transportation. You are just waiting for the students to complete the picture. Choosing the tutors and tutees for Reading Together and/or Math Together is the final, and perhaps most important, step on your planning journey. During training, you were introduced to the basic formula for choosing your participants.

We used ninth graders as tutors, and I’ve never seen a program that actually works to get these older kids reading. We had tutors who went from F’s to A’s because of their experience.

Reading Together™ Principal

Choosing tutors who fit the program model chosen for your school is an important key to success. Tutors must be able to read at a fourth-grade level and exhibit appropriate communication and reading or math skills. They need to be available for all training sessions and committed to completing 30 tutorials.

The best scenario for the **cross-age** model is to use tutors at least two grades above tutees. When possible, middle school or high school students also make great tutors. Try to select students who may not be traditionally chosen for leadership roles; students who may have been struggling readers themselves (or have been Learning Together tutees) would have empathy for tutees. Also, ESOL/ELA/ESL students who are at the intermediate or transitional stage have great success as tutors.

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Word of Mouth

I like having my own tutor. He helps me read and he always says hello to me when I see him in the hall.

Third-grade tutee

Begin planning now for a smooth ending

It's hard to think about next fall when you're just getting started with this school year, but a little planning now can make it easier to get your Reading Together program up and running in the future. Keep in mind that the trade books included in the Student Kits are considered *durable* items—that is, while the tutor guidebooks are discarded at the end of the program, the trade books and Grade Two game board should be counted and safely stored to use in subsequent years.

This year we've added a checklist to every Student Kit, so tutors can inventory the contents as they preview the materials during training. Remind your students to return their books to the kit at the end of each lesson. In early spring, we'll be emailing another checklist so tutors can check the contents at the end of Phase II (if you finish early, you can find this inventory form in the Coordinator Community of the website).

For Math Together programs, the Math Tool Kit is considered a durable item. An inventory checklist also will be sent at the end of the year to help tutors verify the contents of their math baggies.

We'll also be emailing an end-of-program planning kit, which will include award certificates, surveys, progress reports and other resources. Make sure to keep your email address up to date!

Trade Book Updates

One of the strengths of our program is the library of award-winning trade books. Occasionally one of these books goes out of print and must be replaced—thank you for your patience as we make the necessary adjustments! We try to make sure all kits shipped to a school have the same book, whether the original or replacement, but it's a difficult juggling act. Please take a minute to check your materials for the following updates:

R2 Grade Two

Choose Me is out of print and has been replaced with a wonderful non-fiction book, *The Bravest Cat* (Grade Two, Phase II, Lesson Two). Most schools receiving *The Bravest Cat* also received new Tutor Guidebooks with an updated lesson, or have already been mailed copies of the old lesson so tutors can use existing copies of *Choose Me*. Let us know if you have questions.

R2 Grade Three

Last year *Spectacular Spiders* went out of print and was replaced in some kits with *Spinning Spiders* (Grade

Three, Phase II, Lesson Nine). *Spectacular Spiders* is finally back in stock and is included in the newest Student Kits and Tutor Guidebooks. Please check p. 131 of your Coordinator Manual (under *Preparation for Before-Reading Activity*) to see if your copy references *Spinning Spiders*. If it does, update your manual by changing the title and page number to read:

Spectacular Spiders
p. 3, "Outside I have a little friend..."

If you prefer, you may email us at alexis@learningtogether.com for a PDF of the replacement page.

✓ Tutor Tip

My tutee and I write the book titles on his T-shirt. William liked doing that and always wanted to be sure we added the new titles at the end of each session.

Maura Dyer, adult volunteer
Rock Creek Forest Elementary
Chevy Chase, MD

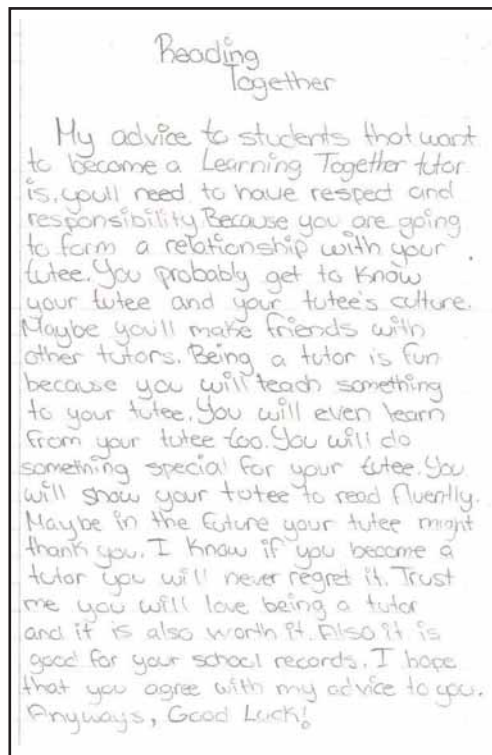
Cleveland tutor wins Spring writing contest

Congratulations to **Melissa Castro**, a sixth-grade Reading Together tutor at George Washington Carver Elementary in Cleveland. Melissa won a gift certificate to purchase books with her entry in the 2007 writing contest, which invited math and reading tutors to respond to the prompt: "What is your advice to a student who wants to become a Learning Together tutor?"

Tutors "need to have respect and responsibility," Castro wrote. "Being a tutor is fun because you will teach something to your tutee. You will even learn from your tutee too. You will do something special..."

Thank you to the many tutors who took the time to reflect on their

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New history lessons enrich math and reading programs

Learning Together is excited to introduce History Together™ 10 lessons that take a fresh look at key events in U.S. history from an African American perspective. The authors of this curriculum have extensive experience in writing for African American children, and have created a thought-provoking series of passages and questions that raise awareness for all students.

For Math Together programs, the lessons are keyed to existing math passages: for example, the history lesson that accompanies Lesson 19 (The M Team at Pearl Harbor) is a biography of Dorie Miller, the African American seaman whose bravery during the attack made him the first American hero of World War II. The history lessons are formatted like Reading Together lessons and include no math problems, but they encourage students to compare and contrast with their other reading in Math Together.

For Reading Together programs, a separate stand-alone version of History Together is available to extend your implementation, and is ideal for use during Black History Month in February. The curriculum is appropriate for all students, not just those in Reading Together.

Topics include:

- African Americans in the Continental Army (complements The M Team Meets George Washington)
- Slavery and the U.S. Constitution (complements The M Team at the Constitutional Convention)
- Toussaint L'Ouverture (complements The M Team Visits the Louisiana Purchase)
- Slavery and the Texas Revolution (complements The M Team at the Alamo)
- Harriet Tubman (complements The M Team Meets Harriet Tubman)
- Lewis Latimer (complements The M Team Meets Thomas Edison)
- Navy Cross medalist Dorie Miller (complements The M Team at Pearl Harbor)
- Claudette Colvin (complements The M Team Rides with Rosa Parks)
- Civil rights and the draft (complements The M Team Over Vietnam)

Half of the tutor prep sessions for History Together is spent discussing the concepts and issues raised by the reading, and reviewing special vocabulary words. The teachers' guide helps coordinators lead the discussion, and provides additional resources for extending the lessons.

Please contact us toll-free at 1.866.921.0000 if you would like to see a free sample lesson.

Meet the authors



Author/Storyteller/Historian Irene Smalls grew up in Harlem and has a B.A. in Black History from Cornell University and an

M.B.A. from New York University in Behavioral Science. She has written a series of children's books from slave narratives, including *Ebony Sea*, *A Strawbeater's Thanksgiving* and *Irene Jennie and The Christmas Masquerade*.

Author Tavares Stephens

wrote *Soulfood Café*, a book of poetry, and *Reading Revolution: Connecting the Roots*, a series of African American biographies for children. He teaches high school English in Atlanta, is a motivational speaker on the topic of mentoring for African American boys, and is a part-time trainer for Learning Together.



Illustrator Jim Hoston

teaches at The Art Institute and Lesley University in Boston, and at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. He has exhibited at Pennsylvania Academy of Art, the Hirsch and Adler Modern Gallery in Manhattan, The Studio Museum in Harlem, the Copley Society in Boston and the Grenning Gallery in Sag Harbor, New York.

Illustrator Cathy Johnson

Johnson's books include *Robo's Favorite Places* by Wade Hudson; *Glo Goes Shopping* by Cheryl Willis Hudson; and *My Nana and Me* and *Pop Pop and Me* by Irene Smalls. She lives in Kansas City, Missouri.



History Together™ provides thought-provoking discussion and positive role models for Black History Month in February. It can enrich Reading Together or Math Together programs.

The image shows a sample lesson titled "DORIE Miller" by Irene Smalls. It includes a passage about Dorie Miller's bravery during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The passage is followed by a "TUTOR INSTRUCTION SHEET" with sections for "BEFORE READING" and "DURING AND AFTER FIRST READING". The "BEFORE READING" section includes a warm-up chat and a prediction task. The "DURING AND AFTER FIRST READING" section includes a progress form and a reflection task. The materials are part of the "Lesson 19 Extension" series.

Student selection is first step to success

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Parent and community volunteers make effective tutors and reinforce school/community partnerships. Adult tutors do not require as much training as the cross-age students, but still must commit to the training the coordinator deems necessary. They should make sure their schedule accommodates the tutorial schedule of the program set by the coordinator.

Choosing tutees is equally important. Keep in mind that Reading and Math Together programs are intended to supplement best practice classroom instruction and existing curriculum. The goal is to improve mastery of basic skills such as comprehension, fluency, critical thinking, problem solving and fact mastery.

The programs do not have built-in assessment tools, but Learning Together can advise on the correct levels for the assessments your district already has in place. Running records, DRA, quarterly benchmark testing or state standardized testing already being used in the district are all appropriate measures for a student's eligibility, as well as measures of growth pre- and post-program.

Looking at the target achievement level for the grade of the tutee, then scaling back a half to one full year, will help reveal the students who are in need of additional services. Because both programs are being

taught by tutors, not certified teachers, tutees must have adequate decoding skills to be comfortable participating.

For example, if you are using Reading Together Grade Two, look for second-grade students with DRA scores of 10 – 12 (this is a half year below academic expectations, which would have them decoding enough to successfully read the chosen passages). Similarly, the Grade Three program would be appropriate for third-grade students with DRA scores of 17 – 20 (almost one full year below academic expectations).

Math Together is appropriate for third graders through middle school students who are struggling to meet or exceed proficiency goals for their given grade. Using quarterly benchmark assessments or annual standardized testing, coordinators should target students who are showing deficiency specifically in the areas of problem solving, fact mastery, or non-calculator supported computation.

Working closely with the classroom teachers, coordinators can make sure the students chosen for the program meet all qualifications. Collecting data from the benchmark testing the classroom teachers use throughout the school-year is the key in tracking growth for both tutors and tutees. The Learning Together consultant who provided your training can answer specific questions, or you may contact us toll-free at 1.866.921.0000.

Cleveland tutor wins Spring writing contest

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experiences and offer suggestions to students who might be interested in tutoring next year. Each participant was awarded a prize, and many of the entries were read at school assemblies and/or prominently displayed in the hallways. What a powerful recruitment tool in attracting the next crop of dedicated tutors!

We will be repeating the writing contest this Spring, and adding a tutee writing component by popular demand. Please consider building some time into your final sessions to allow these fabulous young people the opportunity to express themselves and bring some closure to the program. If you have a prompt suggestion, please email it to alexis@learningtogether.com.

In our next issue

Principal Patricia Katzman shares her secret for high achievement at a high-needs school. *Everyone is a learner, everyone is a tutor* at Squires Elementary in Clark County, NV. "There's no shame, no embarrassment, no one is singled out," she says. "Peer learning is so motivational. Even the teachers are learning things that filter down into the classroom."

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