

Mentor Tips

The following tips come from current and former Read2Succeed mentors. We hope these suggestions will help enrich your mentoring experience. Please remember that each child is different and what works for one may not work for another. Thank you to all the mentors who submitted ideas!

- Listen!!!
- Maybe this is obvious, but I tried immediately to make a connection with "my" little girl, without becoming too personal. I wanted her to know what we had in common as persons, Central FL residents, family members, etc. as we started our sessions. We talked about all kinds of things in our sessions, besides reading.
- Smile. Be encouraging and inquire into their interests.
- When I met with the student(s) initially, I would have them read "The Little Engine that Could" and incorporated that theme into their struggles with learning.
- Be patient. Be good-natured. Compliment each student about something he/she is wearing each time you meet. They love knowing you are paying attention.
- Try not to spend more than 20 minutes on any one exercise to prevent the students from becoming bored or distracted. Try to "mix up" the sessions with some shared reading exercises, some arts & crafts, word searches, word scrambles or other fun activities.
- I had each student keep a journal and I would have them write about a story that I/we/they read. Sometimes they would summarize, other times they would write their own story based on the characters. Other times I had the students take the journal home and write on a prompt. Whatever they wrote about, they would draw a corresponding picture and then read what they wrote aloud. They both really enjoyed this.
- I took the student to library and let her choose books that interested her. If they were more challenging, we would take turns reading pages. I supported school fundraisers with her (i.e., Holiday grams, Birthday book club, etc) and reminded her how great it was that she was so knowledgeable about certain subjects (saying how much I learned from reading with her). I also stayed in touch w/ the teacher via email about overall academic and social issues with student.
- You need to plan several activities for each session. An 8 year old cannot focus on one thing for very long. You have to make the session interesting.
- With the student that I had this year, I found poetry very motivating in improving the reading skills.
- Dictation of student's own story or thoughts by the mentor and then read-back by the student. Mentor can print a list of words the student has trouble with during a read; use carbon paper for student's copy to take home, study and review next session. Give the student short homework assignments.
- Make the time fun by bringing along storybooks aside from their curriculum.
- Patience, patience, patience.
- In addition to reading, we also do word search and crossword puzzles.
- One of my readers was less than enthusiastic at first because he claimed he hated to read. So we decided to "write a book together". After we picked a subject matter that interested him, we wrote the pages, and then illustrated the captions (by coloring the pages of the book). I made several color copies of this book for his friends and family to enjoy, and my student was thrilled to be "an author". I believe this experience changed his perception of reading.

- Get to know what motivates your student and gear your sessions around this. It will improve their confidence and make them want to succeed. My student and I wrote a short book together; just a few sentences each week. I'm giving her a copy on our last day together.
- I would suggest that you "lead" kids to the answers. Help them sound out new words. Check that they understand the vocabulary.
- My student and I read together for the first part of our session. We keep a log of all books we have read. Each time we reach 10, he receives a gift. (The first was a gift certification to Barnes & Nobel; the next two have been magic books/kit since he has shown interest in that.) We also do Word Searches together!
- Be yourself, be honest, kids know if you really enjoy being with them. Love what you do or don't do it!
- It's all about the time - not the work. Although the student needs to improve in their reading skills, they really just appreciate you being there. Try not to miss your time being there.
- Encourage, listen and enjoy the time together. Don't try to be a pseudo parent/guardian. Just be yourself, a caring adult.
- Found that most students respond better to the instruction if it's presented as a "game" -- rhyming games (pointing out such things as changes in the vowels, etc.) and "finding" answers. Almost all liked the word search puzzles!
- I've put together a sheet that he can fill out with stickers (all related to reading) each week to show what we covered and how he did. He likes to put a sticker on his shirt at the end of the session (it's usually one that says "awesome reader" or something similar).
- Show a lot of patience and never criticize a student for not knowing how to read. Start the session by asking how the student feels.
- Our first session, I brought two pieces of paper. I put her name on one and mine on the other. We drew pictures of everything we liked and our family all around our names and gave it to each other to keep. I always looked back on it to ask her a question or to pick out a book.
- My students love to be encouraged. They especially like it when I tell their teachers what a great job they did!
- If a child has trouble with a word, write it down on a flashcard. Then go back to the flashcards after each session. You can also have them draw a picture on the flashcard to go with the word.
- always start with a hello and ask them what they have read or an experience they have had since your last meeting
- Have work sheets available for when the computers are down. It was great meeting the teacher and having her available through email.
- Bring a white board with a dry erase marker. Students do love to write down words or sentences dictated. It can be a fun way to mix reading with writing.
- I used a variety of practices based on the interest my readers expressed. For example, I devoted some time to AR reading, some time to reading flash card games, some time to books I got from the Orange County Library, and some time to poetry from the classroom teacher's library.
- Always make eye contact. Standby what you say and expect from them.
- Try to communicate with the student's teacher. I enjoyed working with my teacher at Winegard Elementary. She has been very supportive in providing me insight of the student. This surely made it easier for me.