

Mentoring Refugee, Immigrant & Newcomer Children and Youth

Homework Club

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Homework Clubs provide extra support for youth in need, whether they're facing language barriers, adjustments to new cities or countries, or have other challenges affecting their education. Homework clubs can also have the added benefit of developing a caring relationship between a child and an adult or older individual. By creating a relationship based on trust and open communication, mentors help kids foster a sense of belonging, build self-confidence and learn new skills and passions. In order to gain the full benefits of the relationship between the mentor and mentee, ensure the match remains consistent week after week so as to develop a deeper level of trust and connection.

Why a Homework Club?

Homework clubs provide one-to-one or small group mentoring opportunities for youth. They foster greater academic and personal growth amongst participating youth, and offer rewarding volunteer opportunities for mentors.

Benefits for Newcomer and Refugee Youth

Homework clubs may be particularly valuable for New Canadians, such as refugees and newcomers. Refugees in particular very likely have had their schooling interrupted, and will have to catch up in addition to adjusting to a new curriculum and language of instruction.

If your program targets or attracts a large number of newcomer students, some may wish to have a mentor who

shares their first language, or has similar life experiences. Others may view this as an opportunity to strengthen their knowledge of English and Canadian culture. A successful program will be able to match each participant with a mentor who suits their needs.

One-to-one or small group mentoring offers intercultural learning opportunities for both the participant and mentor.



Getting Started

Before you launch your program, determine the following:

Staff Resources

Do you have the staff in place to run this program? Volunteer recruitment and management will take time, as will liaising with the families of participants, and partners in the program, such as schools.

Volunteer Resources Needed

To determine the volunteer resources you need, first identify:

- How many mentees you can have as part of the program? Is space a constraint?
- Will mentoring take place one-on-one or in small groups?
- Are there any other tasks that require volunteer assistance?

Target Audience – Youth and Mentors

Will your club serve one age group or level of school?

Where will you find your mentors? Will it be older students mentoring younger ones? Community volunteers?

Finding Space

The space should be easy to get to for everyone involved, particularly the participants. Using school spaces is the best starting point, as it removes any travel time for participants.

If that's not an option, nearby space may be available through agencies like the Boys & Girls Club or Big Brothers Big Sisters, a community centre, or faith organization.

Accessibility is also important for mentors. If your mentors are high school or university students, is it walkable or easily accessible by transit? Is there parking available - and is it free or low cost – if you have volunteers who require that?

What Does A Homework Club Look Like?

Homeward clubs can be structured to meet the needs of your participants. Some examples of how it works:

- Twice a week, high school students mentor elementary students one-on-one or in small groups after school.
- Grade 9 students work with Grade 1 and 2 students during lunch hour every Wednesday.
- Elementary school participants meet one-on-one with a community mentor every Tuesday and Thursday after school. Volunteers ensure they get to the Boys & Girls Club, either by walking or by bus.
- University students mentor elementary and junior high students one-on-one throughout the day in their school. These are scheduled around the mentors' schedules and breaks in the students' day.
- At the Boys & Girls Club every Tuesday from 3:30-4:30, students read or do homework under the supervision of a program coordinator.

Homework Club in Action

Here is what the schedule might look like:

3:30 – Start

Introductions, snacks provided.

3:40 – Homework

One-on-one or small group help, individual study, or some combination. Participants and mentors or the program coordinator should have a clear understanding of what is being worked on, and what the goal of the session is.

4:30 – Wrap-Up

This can include planning for the next sessions, a sharing of learnings (encourage both participants and mentors to share), or a fun activity.

4:50 – Close

Participants are picked up by their parents or other relatives, or bussed home.

school (in a K-9, for example) or a nearby high school.

- For university students or high school students, seek out service-minded clubs, such as Rotaract or Circle K. Education students at universities and colleges are good starting point; you can contact their faculty or student association.
- In the community, service organizations (Rotary, Lions Club) are good starting points. Many businesses look for opportunities where their staff can volunteer together as a group.
- Seniors groups offer connections to volunteers with time and expertise.

Tips for a Successful Homework Club

- Be clear on the time commitment and length.
- Offer or be aware of a next step for participants – what program can they be a part of after this one?
- Have clear ground rules. Examples might include:
 - Be on time.
 - Be respectful of everyone.
 - No use of cell phones or any other electronic devices.
 - Let the participant drive the agenda – as long as it's educational, let them choose the activity they need that day.

Recruiting Participants

After deciding on your age group, you can seek out participants in the following ways:

- Talk to teachers and school administrators to see if your program is a fit, and if they can recommend students or promote the program to parents (use AMP tools to promote mentoring in schools)
- Put up posters in your community, or where allowed at buildings like recreation centres, community halls, or non-profits.
- Work with faith organizations to build bridges and encourage participation.

Recruiting Mentors

- There are many places and ways to find mentors. Here are a few ways:
- For school-age mentors, work with the school or school district to identify good matches – whether it's the same

Summary: A Homework Club in 10 Steps.

1. Pick an age group for participants and mentors.
2. Find a space and time.
3. Decide on a structure – one-on-one, group, a combination of both?
4. Recruit participants and mentors.
5. Set up a schedule with a list of possible activities for each session.
6. Train your mentors.
7. Start your program. Understand that it may take time for rapport to develop between mentors and participants.
8. Seek feedback from participants, their families, and mentors, informally during the program then through a formal evaluation (at least from parents and mentors) at the end.
9. Refine your program for its next round.
10. Repeat!





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