



Homework Centre – Responses to Volunteer Survey 2006

- From 2006 Volunteer Tutor Surveys:

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“The fact that the kids come here voluntarily – that they want to learn and are grateful for the help is really important to me.”

“..we get to know and see kids over an extended period of time – get a chance to know their strengths and weaknesses and build up a good study relationship.”

“Tutoring program was a good way to ‘give a little back’.”

“I wanted to do some tutoring work.....being able to help students from a refugee background.”

“I absolutely love to talk to many kids from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I was also happy to see students appreciate my help. I feel that work is spiritually rewarding.”

Number of Respondents: 14

(Q1) How did you originally find out about the Homework Centre?

Fitzroy Library (14)

Friend (2) (8)

BSL Website

GoVolunteer Website (13)

Your Work (3) (4) (7) (11) (12)

(9) Other tutors at work

(10) GHD

Other _____

1) Monash Medical School – Community Partnership Placement with BSL (stayed on voluntarily after this)

5) Local volunteer centre in Camberwell

6) The internet – found the Richmond Learning centre and they gave me the number for the Homework Centre (John M).

(Q2) What motivated you to first volunteer at the Homework Centre?

1) As part of my placement, I experienced a little bit of many of the services of the BSL. When I got to the homework centre I was keen to keep doing it long-term because I had tutored before and really enjoyed it. I was motivated by the fact that the kids were coming in there own time for help with their homework and that volunteer tutors could potentially make a really big difference

2) I moved into the area of Fitzroy and felt that I wanted to get involved somehow with the immigrant community here.

3) To be able to help kids not so fortunate as myself.

4) I had previously [*been*] thinking about volunteering for something and then this opportunity came up.

5) [*I*] Received an excellent private school education – felt the need to give others who were eager to learn but did not have the same advantages/opportunities a hand. The fact that the kids come here voluntarily – that they want to learn and are grateful for the help is really important to me.

- 6) I was teaching English at AMES while at Monash Uni Clayton. when I started working in the city it was just too far to travel to make it to Dandenong for teaching so I wanted to find somewhere local.
- 7) I guess initially it was because someone at my work dropped out and it was advertised for someone to fill the place. I thought it would be good experience for me to try something new and I felt that I had something to offer the students. I have tutored previously but it was paid and one-on-one tutoring.
- 8) I was looking for volunteering opportunities in Melbourne after a short stint volunteer teaching in Ghana. I had enjoyed teaching in Ghana and wanted to continue some sort of teaching activity in Melbourne. Tia (from GHD) recommended it highly.
- 9) (a) Travelling to a lot of developing countries. (b) Tutoring program was a good way to 'give a little back'. (c) Believed that could relate to some of the students due to this travelling experience.
- 10) Just wanted to do some volunteer work and this opportunity arose at that point of time.
- 11) I wanted to do some tutoring work, particularly in Maths/Science, and this seemed like a great opportunity to do so, as having the additional challenge of the language barrier with some of the students, being able to help students from a refugee background.
- 12) It's a fairly easy way to do something for the community.
- 13) My uni course (Dip. Ed.) required me to do a volunteer work that involves children. I found the work at the Homework Centre suit my schedule.
- 14) I wanted to give something back to the local community. I also wanted to try teaching to see if I enjoyed working with young people.

(Q3) What have you enjoyed about the Homework Centre so far?

- 1) I have enjoyed tutoring, and having to help kids from very different educational and cultural backgrounds. Whilst this was quite a challenge it also felt much more rewarding. I've enjoyed simply spending time with all the students cos they're a riot and have missed their antics over the past 6 months or so. It's also been great working with a team of tutors who are excited about what they do.
- 2) Its atmosphere; meeting new people; different backgrounds.
- 3) The relationships that I have formed – the kids are really wonderful. Gaining a sense of satisfaction helping these students learn something new.
- 4) The kids are great and it is nice to see them making such an effort with their schoolwork.
- 5) The way we get to know and see kids over an extended period of time – get a chance to know their strengths and weaknesses and build up a good study relationship.
- 6) Tough question – everything, where do I start? (a) The young people. Great group of kids, it's inspiring to be around people who recognise a need for help with studies and actively seek it. They are a diverse group too with various interests. (b) John and the other volunteer teachers – without John this program couldn't be as successful; not only from an admin perspective but also because he is fantastic with teaching the students.
- 7) The ability to help people, especially with students who are struggling in their studies. I guess you could say I've had a privileged education and haven't really been exposed to students who struggle with their learning. Also I've enjoyed contact with people from different cultures and backgrounds.
- 8) Contact with the students – the students are a delight; motivated, generally hard-working. Contact with other volunteers.
- 9) (a) Developing relationships with the students over time. (b) Satisfaction when successfully helped with a problem.
- 10) Learning the different cultures and also being able to make a difference.
- 11) Trying to get students to understand Maths concepts, especially when I succeed!
- 12) The laid back atmosphere where the kids can come and go as they please.
- 13) I absolutely love to talk to many kids from various ethnic [*ethnic – ed.*] and cultural backgrounds. I was also happy to see students appreciate my help. I feel that work spiritually rewarding.

- 14) The sense of community; I feel like part of something quite unique. I like to watch young people from diverse background sharing ideas and finding common interests. I also enjoy the challenge of working with teenagers.

(Q4) What have been the challenges for you in tutoring students?

- 1) Trying to help students of very different educational backgrounds has been quite a challenge as the techniques required are so different from what I had previously known. It was also a challenge trying to learn the balance between approaching and motivated students and letting them do their own thing, particularly with some of the more reserved students.
- 2) It's sometimes difficult, particularly with some of the Sudanese guys to know what their level of English is and to help and teach them accordingly. Sometimes I'm not sure if I'm going too fast or too slow; if they can understand me or not or whether I'm being condescending or too complicated.
- 3) Language barriers – some of the students communication skills were limited. Trying to teach them a concept in a short space of time was difficult.
- 4) Sometimes the language barrier makes it hard.
- 5) The gaps in some students education; kids leaving work till the day before it's due then coming in with an impossible amount to finish in one session/night.
- 6) Not being a teacher, it takes some time to think about the best way to take a problem – from a learning perspective. Also, having finished High School ten years ago, it took me sometime to get familiar with the syllabus. Another challenge for me has been getting to the Homework Centre on time and every week because I work fairly long hours.
- 7) Not being able to prepare for the sessions. I could be asked any question on any maths topic from any year level. I'm not used to being so under prepared. But it's exciting too and sometimes it has me running for the textbook!!
- 8) It has been a challenge to know I develop the best approach tailored to individual needs of each student. In general it's easy for me to cross the line and do too much for the student rather than guide them in doing the work.
- 9) (a) Some of the quieter students, it is difficult to develop relationships to understand their problems. (b) Not having regular contact with students. Some might only be there the one time on a particular night.
- 10) Bringing across a concept on what may seem simple to me but complex to a year 11/12 kid. Especially explaining in really simple English for them to understand.
- 11) The language barrier can be difficult at times, especially when they are dealing with complex topics and have a limited English knowledge – it's tough to know where to start sometimes.
- 12) Not remembering the stuff they need help with.
- 13) Difficult to explain some questions in as plain English as possible. I thought the register in textbook sometimes too hard – unnecessarily for kid to understand.
- 14) Having all the answers! Often the students expect more than I can give and that's difficult. But I feel that I have learned now to cope better with that.

(Q5) Have students discussed topics other than their homework with you?

Yes (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (8) (9) (10) (12) (13) (14)

No (7) (11)

If you answered “YES”, can you give some examples?

- 1) Topics other than homework have mostly been centred around career and future plans. These ranged from questions about getting a part-time job to questions about my career path and other aspects of their future, such as VCE, VTAC etc. Of course there were also always the random topics of discussion on the latest goss 😊 Students haven't disclosed to me topics of a sensitive nature
- 2) Their backgrounds, families, schools, weekends, religions etc. Nothing problematic or profound. I enjoy talking to them about more than just their homework.

- 3) Social activities; general information regarding family life; school life.
- 4) Uni choices.
- 5) General school topics – what they think of teachers/friends etc. Also subject selection or help with finding employment e.g. CV's, cover letters etc.
- 6) Their future careers and ambitions. Their family life. Their friends. Some talk about issues they are having in their personal life and ask for advice.
- (8) Experiences back in home country and coming to Australia whilst leaving behind family members in home country.
- (9) About my job/career. How I performed at school.
- (10) Career options e.g. being a doctor, or engineer etc.
- 12) Leanne's formal dramas in group discussion.
- 13) I asked how they know 'good' and 'bad' teachers; that helped my understanding in teaching.
- 14) I have tried to find common interests with the students. I think it's important that they can relate to me as a person not just a teacher. Also, I think many of them need to relax more and realise that there is more to life than school can offer. So I talk to them about music, sport etc – whatever they are into.

(Q6) If you answered "YES" to (Q5), have you felt sufficiently supported to deal with problems or topics a student has disclosed to you that may be of a sensitive nature?

Yes (4) However I didn't get into too sensitive subjects with the kids.

(5) (6) (8) (9) (13) (14)

No

N/A (1) (2) (7) (10) (11) (12)

(Q7) Is the current structure sufficient to meet debriefing needs and keep up to date on student needs?

Yes (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (10) (11) (12) (13) (14)

No (9)

If you answered "NO", do you have suggestions for improvement?

- 1) To be honest I'm not up to date on what the current structure is, but it seems pretty good to me. I found the most useful part was simply being able to discuss things with the tutors in an informal setting
- 9) Basic course notes for each topic would be useful.

(Q8) Can you suggest ways to improve the structure to maximise the assistance we provide to students?

- 1) I think that changing the structure too much may risk changing what the homework centre is about. As long as the students that are more shy get approached from time to time, I think the system works well.
- 3) No, John has been a great support if further assistance is required.
- 4) Maybe if there was a computer in the [main] room. Kids who were looking for certain things on websites for assignments etc weren't getting as much help as they sometimes needed. Particularly those learning English trying to access info on the net. When they left the room they weren't always asking tutors to come with them and help them.
- 5) Not really – I think one of the key benefits of the current program is its informality. Kids don't want it to be like school. They like the relaxed atmosphere.
- 6) Most of the questions we get are related to Maths, Science and English. I think if we had tutors everyday assigned to these groups that would be helpful for students. Also if possible we should have a bias towards Maths and Science tutors because they make up the majority of the questions.
- 7) I haven't really experienced the Homework Centre busy [as I only started tutoring for the last few weeks on the year as students finished school – ed] so I've also been tutoring one-on-one but I could imagine if it does get busy that multiple student tutoring would be effective.

- 8) Obviously more tutors would be helpful on some occasions – sometimes one tutor is dealing with multiple students at once (usually maths/sciences).
- 9) (a) Ideally spend time with each student during a session. (b) Not spending the bulk of your time with the first person who asks you a question. (c) By limiting amount of time/or number of problems.
- (10) Allocate a maximum time to be spent with one student. I had a few students waiting up to 45 min for someone to help them. By the time they got their turn, the library was closing and it was a missed opportunity for them.
- 11) Maybe more instructional handouts, on how to teach really basic concepts like understanding languages and simple maths like fractions, the things which I take for granted and thus find it really hard to explain to others.
- 12) Nope, sorry. It's pretty good how it is I think.
- 14) The training evening at Fitzroy Learning Network was great.

(Q9) Did you take part in the refugee experience training in October at the Fitzroy Learning Network?

- Yes (2) (5) (8) (9) (11) (12) (14)
No (1) (3) (4) (6) (7) (10) (13)

If “Yes” can you please comment on how interesting and relevant to tutoring at the Homework Centre the training was:

- 1) I was disappointed to not be able to come to that training session and would really love to sit and discuss the topic when I get back to Melbourne.
- 2) I thought that the training was in a general sense, a very interesting experience. In terms of the work at the Homework Centre the most resonating point for me was the idea of just making personal connections with people *[how important that is for newly arrived people - ed]*
- 5) Really valuable. Helped give real insight into the wider issues that many of our students and their families are facing. Had no idea the extent of the challenges/difficulties faced once in Australia. I think the training will help me be more sympathetic and understanding in the future when dealing with both students within the program and the broader community.
- 8) The training was very interesting and very relevant to Homework Centre tutors – simply by providing an important insight into the context of many of our students. This insight has helped me enormously in my empathy for and understanding of the students' backgrounds, and possible associated learning issues/challenges.
- 9) The first half of the session was interesting material. Helps with background (understanding personally). Did not attend the second half.
- 11) It was really interesting to understand more about the background and experiences that students may have been through and what they still might be going through. However it was quite a long session and much of what was said could have just as easily been given as a handout or talked about in a much shorter timeframe.
- 12) It was extremely interesting and very relevant I think in teaching us to be wary of issues.
- 14) Very relevant. Although I found that the speaker talked a lot about working with adults but I wondered if everything he had to say applied in the same way to adolescents/young people. Perhaps greater focus on their specific problems might have been useful.

(Q10) Do the Volunteer Meetings at the end of each term provide you with a sufficient feedback mechanism?

- Yes (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (8) (10) (12) (13) (14)
No (11)
N/A (7) I haven't attended an end of term meeting yet
(9)

If you answered “NO”, can you suggest how we could improve the meetings or any other feedback mechanisms we could implement?

11) More emails/handouts about how to deal with the language barrier.

(Q11) Do you have any suggestions for improving the program in areas such as promotion to increase student numbers, acquiring funding, future training for tutors or anything else you can think of?

- 1) Future training might involve some training in tutoring those lacking literacy or some previous education. If I can come up with any ideas that you haven't already thought of for increasing numbers or funding I will let you know, but I've got nothing so far.
- 2) I think that we could design a more attractive poster.
- 3) If possible provide a shuttle bus service?? It seems that transport is one of the major limiting factors discouraging students visiting the centre.
- 5) It would be great if we could get more kids to come. Surely the huge housing estates could send heaps of students –more advertising/word of mouth programs there?
- 6) I think it would be great to have computers in the room - keeps the kids together and the centre lively. I think also providing a copy of the syllabus or example syllabi to new tutors early on would be helpful. Perhaps some training in teaching young people *[would be good]*.
- 7) I guess just advertising the program at the local schools – but you're probably doing this already!
- 8) Are parents/families/guardians involved in promoting? i.e. are they promoted to?
- 11) Maybe more advertisements through schools as it seems like the same students come every day and once they finish, there won't be too many students once they finish. Maybe at the start of each term have an introduction session to encourage new students so they know what the program is and what subjects they can be helped with (possibly with food as a bribe!).
- 12) Posters at local schools to promote.
- 13) Maybe you can contact schools in neighbourhood to promote Homework Centre.

(Q12) Please feel free to make any other comments?

- 1) The homework centre is awesome 😊
- 3) The volunteer program for students (Fitzroy) *[i.e. the Homework Centre – ed]* is very well organised centre for students who require extra tutoring. I have enjoyed being a part of it.
- 4) Thanks for providing the opportunity to meet a nice bunch of kids.
- 7) I've only been a tutor for 4 sessions so I'm unable to provide too much feedback sorry!
- 12) Good work!
- 13) I believe the Centre provide students with great help. Kids obviously enjoyed the centre. Though I started the work as a part of my compulsory task for my course, now I love and miss the centre. The programme gave me a lot of lessons too.

THANKYOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO ANSWER OUR SURVEY!