America Reads

Policies
&
Procedures
PROGRAM GOALS

The America Reads Challenge program at East Tennessee State University seeks to ensure that all the children in our community are able to read well and independently by the end of third grade. In order to complete this goal, we have established a partnership with several area schools and community centers within Johnson City, Washington, Carter, Unicoi and Sullivan Counties. Our commitment to these partners is to provide high quality reading instruction to children who read below the third grade level and improve young children’s academic performance.

Through participating in the America Reads Challenge program, Reading Tutors will:

- Gain more understanding of literacy and reading instructions
- Develop an awareness and respect for cultural differences
- Feel a sense of self-worth for contributing to the education of a child
- Gain awareness of and interest in careers in education and public service
- Develop a strong peer network of collaboration and support

The overarching goal of the America Reads Challenge is for Tutors to help Tutees develop into independent, successful, strategic, and lifelong readers.

Through participating in the America Reads Challenge program, Tutees will:

- Develop a positive attitude about reading and increase motivation to read
- Receive one-on-one attention
- Improve reading fluency
- Increase use of strategies while reading
- Improve reading comprehension
- Improve decoding skills
- Increase sight word vocabulary
- Improve spelling of high frequency words and use of spelling patterns in unknown words
SECTION I: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

HIRING AND PROMOTION POLICY

The America Reads Challenge program at East Tennessee State University is an equal opportunity employer. It is the policy of the America Reads Challenge program to base appointments, retention, pay raises and promotions solely on qualifications and performance, as outlined in the Federal Work-Study Student Employment Program Job Classification and Pay Wage Guideline. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex and disability is not tolerated.

CRIMINAL HISTORY DISCLOSURE

Before placing America Reads Challenge employees in the school environment to work with children one-on-one and in small groups, East Tennessee State University requires that each employee make program staff aware of their involvement in any criminal activity.

APPOINTMENT DURATION

Members of the America Reads Challenge Tutoring Corps are hired for a minimum period of one semester and may be invited to return to the program for future semesters. Reading Tutors are expected to honor the work-term commitment. Only under very unusual circumstances should this commitment be terminated. There is no implied commitment to renew or continue an appointment beyond the current semester. Continuation of an appointment beyond the appointed term is at the discretion of the America Reads Challenge staff.

The greatest gift is a passion for reading.
It is cheap, it consoles, it distracts, it excites.
It gives you knowledge of the world and experience of a wide kind.
It is a moral illumination.

--Elizabeth Hardwick
POSITION LEVELS

The America Reads Challenge at East Tennessee State University currently offers two Federal Work-Study positions that vary in degree of expertise, commitment, and responsibility involved. Promotion to a higher level involves increased responsibility, specialized expertise, and/or more extensive experience.

**Reading Tutor:** Students in this position are trained to follow the tutoring session plan and are expected to demonstrate their ability to adhere to the lesson and work well with their tutees and with school personnel.

**Reading Tutor Responsibilities:**

- Assist tutees with reading for a 30-minute session.
- Record activities of each tutoring session on a daily log.
- Participate in all designated Training and Development sessions.
- Tutor a minimum of 6 hours per week, 2 to 3 hours per day, 2 to 5 days per week, according to a weekly work schedule.
- Abide by the attendance policy standards regarding absences and late arrivals.
- Keep up-to-date on pertinent America Reads Challenge information by checking office mailbox and email (if applicable) on a weekly basis.
- For additional duties and requirements please refer to the Tutor Agreement.

**Tutor Team Leader:** Students in this position have proved themselves competent Reading Tutors and have demonstrated leadership potential and a desire to assume responsibility for the development of fellow Tutors.

**Tutor Team Leader Job Description:**

- Tutor assigned children in reading a minimum of four hours per week.
- Provide an additional three - four hours of administrative/leadership duties.
- Act as liaison between school personnel, Reading Tutors, and program staff.
- Maintain a bulletin board and/or notebook on-site as a means of communication important and timely information to Reading Tutors.
- Provide strategies, activities or other ideals to Reading Tutors when possible, and refer all other questions, comments/concerns to appropriate program staff.
- Monitor all tardiness, absences, and call-ins to the school.
- Attend and actively participate in all designated Training and Development session.
- Facilitate and participate in reflection activities via e-mail, direct communication and at tutor training sessions.
- Organize and implement special projects (e.g., book drives, read-a-thons).
- Other duties as assigned.
TUTOR AGREEMENT

All Reading Tutors are required to read, sign, and adhere to the Tutor Agreement for each semester they are employed through the program. The Agreement outlines program policies and procedures and details the responsibilities of student employees. A copy of the Tutor Agreement may be found in the Appendix of this handbook.

WORK SCHEDULES

Reading Tutors must submit class schedules prior to each academic term. Tutors work with the Graduate Assistant and school liaison to plan work schedules; however, all schedules are subject to approval by the Program Coordinator. Complete and final schedules must be submitted to program staff before Tutors begin working. The elementary schools participating in the America Reads Challenge program generally begin instruction at 8:30 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m. Therefore, the hours worked by each Reading Tutor must fall between these hours, Monday through Friday. After school programs generally operate Monday through Thursday, 3:15 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Tutors must schedule their work hours on at least two separate days each week and in blocks of two hours or more. Tutors may set their work schedules at any time within these constraints and around their scheduled classes and other obligations. Tutor Leaders are required to work a minimum of seven hours each week and, in general, their schedules should satisfy the same conditions described above.

WORK HOURS

A minimum of six tutoring hours per week is required of all Reading Tutors. Tutor leaders must work a minimum of seven hours per week. All America Reads Tutors are required to attend all tutor training and development sessions, as scheduled, in addition to their weekly work commitment. Students must keep in mind their Federal Work-Study allocation. Compensation will not be given for time worked above that amount.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance on the part of the Reading Tutors is crucial to the success of this program. Research shows that the effectiveness of tutoring/tutoring sessions depends to a large extent on their consistency. Therefore, America Reads Challenge employees are required to abide by a rather stringent attendance policy. Our expectation is that each Reading Tutor will conscientiously keep to his or her schedule. That is, we expect that Tutors will work all hours for which they are scheduled and will have no absences. Of course, we realize that absences cannot always be avoided. A total of no more than (3) absences are permitted each semester whether excused or unexcused. Tutors with absences in excess of three per semester will undergo a review for continued employment. With respect to unexcused absences, special consideration may, in some cases be given to students who know they are going to have to miss their scheduled tutoring or training and inform both the program staff and appropriate school personnel/Site Supervisor well in advance. A copy of the official America Reads Challenge Attendance Policy is included in the appendix of this handbook.
INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

As Tutors work in the public schools, they are expected to follow the cancellation/late arrival/early dismissal instructions pertaining to the school district(s) as well as those of East Tennessee State University. If this should occur, appropriate announcements will be made through the various news media.

SITE ORIENTATION

Before beginning tutoring sessions, all Reading tutors are expected to participate in a site orientation with the partnering school/community center. During the orientation, appropriate school personnel/Site Supervisors will provide emergency reporting procedures as well as general information including a building tour, to help familiarize the employee with the site. Orientations may be conducted on an individual or group basis. An orientation checklist is available in the appendix of this handbook. Tutors are responsible for making sure all items on this list are covered and explained to their satisfaction.

SUPERVISION

Federal Work-Study regulations require that America Reads Challenge employees must have direct access to a partnering school/community center’s permanent staff member at all times and whenever possible conduct tutoring sessions within sight of a permanent staff member. Example of acceptable tutoring locations include: within the classroom, outside the classroom with the door open, and, if school personnel are present, the media center, multipurpose room, reading specialist’s room, or guidance office.

DRESS CODE

Employees with the America Reads Challenge program should remember that while on site, they represent East Tennessee State University. Therefore, employees should wear neat, clean clothing whenever they meet with their tutees and may not wear hats, ripped or torn garments, or clothing that is revealing or otherwise inappropriate. Tutors should consult their appropriate school personnel/ Site Supervisor and adhere to the dress code of the school.

RECORD KEEPING

All Reading Tutors are required to keep complete and accurate records of what transpires during each tutoring session. Tutors will complete a Tutor Report form to note activities for each part of the lesson plan. Information from this report will be used to assist in planning future tutoring sessions, as a reference to gauge the improvement of the tutee, and as a means of evaluating the Tutor. Tutor Reports are due on the 15th or last day of the month by 12:00 pm, along with your Time Report and Time Sheet. If this document is not turned in at the designated time, Tutors will be docked any earned preparation/planning pay. A copy of the Tutor Report form may be found in the Appendix of this handbook.
CONFIDENTIALITY

Occasionally a student may confide information to a Tutor. If a student does entrust you with confidential information it is best not to betray his/her confidence UNLESS it threatens the student’s welfare. As you develop a relationship with a tutee, he/she may share personal information such as a family divorce, death in the family, a relative that is incarcerated, etc. In these cases it is best not to make any judgmental comments or statements that lead the child into a lengthy discussion, but rather restate the child’s feelings (i.e. “It sounds like you are sad that your uncle passed away.”) When possible, re-direct the child as quickly as possible to the lesson. If you really feel the child is upset, talk to the classroom teacher or Site Supervisor. All schools have counseling available. This is not to undermine your ability, but to protect student employees from saying or doing anything that could be construed as harmful. If a situation makes you uncomfortable, go directly to the Site Supervisor or America Reads staff.

Tutors should refrain from any unprofessional discussions about students. Avoid discussing specific students inside or outside the school setting unless it is regarding a professional matter with the classroom teacher, Site Supervisor, or America Reads staff. For example, it is perfectly appropriate to ask for advice on techniques or strategies that address a student’s particular reading problem, but inappropriate to talk about a student in any regard with your peers. You are expected to sign a confidentiality statement at the beginning of every semester. A copy of the confidentiality statement may be found in the Appendix of this handbook.
PREFORMANCE APPRAISAL

A performance appraisal is completed at the end of each semester for all America Reads Challenge employees. When possible, the evaluations will be shared with the employee and will be made for viewing upon employee request. Performance appraisals will be used to identify employee strengths as well as areas where improvement is needed. For reference, a copy of an observation assessment form may be found in the appendix.

GRIEVANCES

The America Reads Challenge staff encourages tutors to discuss job-related problems with their Tutor Team Leader or Site Supervisor. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be obtained at this level, the employee should contact the program staff immediately to discuss the concerns and work together to resolve the problem.

RESIGNATION

Adhering to a semester-long work-term commitment is crucial to the success of the America Reads Challenge program. Research shows that the effectiveness of tutoring/tutoring sessions depends to a large extent on its consistency. Early termination of tutoring affects the tutees in more ways than one. These children often feel disappointed and sometimes blame themselves for the Tutor’s absence or departure.

Unless other arrangements have been made with the Program Coordinator, employees are expected to give two weeks advanced written notice of resignation. Employees may be asked to complete an exit interview sharing their experiences in the program and offering suggestions for its improvement.

DISMISSAL

America Reads Challenge Tutors may be counseled and retrained if their performance or behavior is unsatisfactory. If improvement is insufficient or not-sustained, employment may be terminated at the Program Coordinator’s discretion. The Program Coordinator may terminate the employment of an employee whose job performance, conduct, and/or dependability are unacceptable. A student’s employment will be terminated if he/she ceases to maintain his/her current enrollment status or exhausts his/her Federal Work-Study award.

Normally, an employee will be given written notice that performance is unsatisfactory or that behavior is unacceptable. The student will be presented with a written action plan and given a probationary period during which the improvements must be demonstrated and sustained. If behaviors persist or performance does not improve, the employee will be terminated as of the date given in the written notice.
PAYROLL PROCESS AND PROCEDURE

The America Reads Challenge is one of several Federal Work-Study Community Service programs available to students at East Tennessee State University. Federal Work-Study is a student employment program through which the federal government subsidizes earnings for hours worked in special student employment positions. Federal Work-Study is a need-based program of financial aid and is administered through the Office of Financial Aid. Through the Federal Work-Study program, students who demonstrate financial need may work to earn a Federal Work-Study award intended to assist them in defraying educational and living expenses while attending an institution of higher education.

Time Sheets

Time sheets are available in the America Reads Challenge office. If no time sheets are available in the bin, please ask the appropriate program staff.

Two (2) time sheets should be completed and submitted each pay period: the “Time Report” sheet and the “America Reads Challenge Tutor Time Sheet.” A copy of these forms may be found in the Appendix of this handbook.

Pay periods are defined as the 1 - 15 and the 16 - last day of the month. Time sheets must be submitted on the 15th and last day of each month by 12:00 p.m. Time must be reported accordingly. Time cannot be combined between pay periods. Late time sheets are unacceptable and show a lack of responsibility on the Tutor’s part. If you fail to turn in your time sheets by the pay period deadline you will be docked any preparation pay that may have been accumulated.

Time sheets are to be turned into the box labeled “Time Sheets” in the America Reads office in Warf Pickel Room 423. Do not place time sheets on any desk or chair. We are not responsible for lost forms because of your failure to follow the procedures detailed above.

RECORDING TIME

The “America Reads Challenge Tutor Time Sheets” provide a detail of hours listed on the “Time Report.” The number of hours on both sheets should be the same for a set of time reported for one pay period. Hours will be verified with sign-in/sign out sheets provided by each site as well as a signature by authorized school personnel/Site Supervisor.

Be sure to fill out your name, the month and the year at the top of the “America Reads Challenge Tutor Time Sheet.” Then total the number of hours worked for the particular pay period. Do not put an entire month of days worked on one “America Reads Challenge Tutor Time Sheet.”
**Recording Time Cont’d.**

The “America Reads Challenge Tutor Time Sheet” is set up like a calendar—Monday through Friday. Be sure the day of the month corresponds to the correct day of the week when completing the “Tutor Time Sheet.” Within each space be sure to fill out the date, time(s) in, time(s) out, and total hours. In the space marked “description” provide the tutoring site, training or administrative/office as appropriate.

If you tutor more than one school in one day or you have breaks between tutoring sessions you will have more than one time in and more that one time out. Make sure that all the schools for which you have tutored that day are listed and breaks have not been included in the total.

Do not include time for preparation on time reports. If you are eligible for planning/preparation time, the America’s Read/Service-Learning Executive Aide will add the appropriate time prior to submitting your time for payment.

The “Time Report” is for total hours worked each day. Enter the total number of hours worked in the bottom row of boxes under the number that corresponds to the date that you worked. A total of hours worked for the entire pay period should be entered in the very last box of that row marked “Tot” or out to the side.

On the “Time Report” be sure to complete your name, your position (America Reads Tutor), your student identification number, the pay period, and “signature of employee”. Unsigned “Time Reports” are not official and will not be submitted for payment.

Do not mark in the blank boxes that correspond to dates that you did not work.

All time sheets submitted for the America Reads Challenge program should be neatly and accurately completed in pen. If unnecessary effort is required to read your time sheet, it will not be submitted for payment.

**Sign-in/Sign-out Sheets (Attendance Logs) and Schedules**

The America Reads Challenge Coordinator must approve all schedule changes. A revised and most current schedule should be provided for office files. Tutors will **only** be paid for time that corresponds with schedules on file.

All tutors must sign IN and OUT at tutoring site for each visit. Your name and exact times should be neatly written on the “America Reads Sign-in/Sign-out Sheets” provided to each site. These records are used to verify time reports turned in for payment. If you record time on a time sheet for a date on which you did not sign IN and OUT at the site—you will not be paid for that time. A copy of the Sign-In/Sign Out (Attendance Log) will be provided to your site for your use. If a child that you tutor is absent sign in anyway and make a note that the child was absent. You will be paid for the scheduled time if you have followed these instructions.
Preparation Time

Each tutor is expected to plan and prepare for his/her tutoring sessions each week. Each tutor will be compensated for one (1) hour of planning/prep time per six (6) hours of actual tutoring time. Planning and preparation compensation is at the discretion of the America Reads Challenge program staff.

DO NOT include travel or planning/preparation time on either of the time sheets. The America Reads/Service-Learning Executive Aide will adjust time sheets accordingly prior to submitting them for payment.
Attendance Policy

Regular attendance on the part of the Reading Tutors is crucial to the success of this program. Research shows that the effectiveness of tutoring/tutoring sessions depends to a large extent on their consistency. Your ability to help your tutees improve their reading skills hinges on your being there to work with them as scheduled. Furthermore, the children you will be working with will come to depend on you. Irregular attendance on the Tutor’s part affects the tutees in more ways than one. These children often feel disappointed and sometimes blame themselves for the Tutor’s absence. Please remember that your tutees look forward to your meetings and are relying on your help and support.

Our expectation is that each Reading Tutor will conscientiously keep to his or her schedule. That is, we expect that you will work all hours for which you are scheduled and will have no absences. Of course, we realize that absences cannot always be avoided. Our hope is that, if you have to miss work for any reason, you will make arrangements with the America Reads Challenge staff and your Site Supervisor to make up the hours missed within one week of the missed day. If you do so, the original absence will be disregarded. To avoid confusion regarding absences in general, we have established the following policy.

First, we note that absences are of two types: excused and unexcused. Excused absences are, essentially, unavoidable absences – those for which the Reading Tutor has an acceptable excuse. Acceptable excuses are generally of the following sort: illness on the Tutor’s part, observance of a religious holiday or a death in the family. Unexcused absences are those for which the Tutor has an unacceptable excuse. Unacceptable excuses are of various sorts. They include, but are not limited to, the following: having to study for an exam or write a paper, oversleeping, leaving town early for an extended weekend or vacation, etc.

With respect to unexcused absences, special consideration may, in some cases, be given to students who know they are going to have to miss work and let both America Reads Challenge staff and appropriate school personnel/Site Supervisor know well in advance. Please note that, if you have to miss work for any reason and think there are extenuating circumstances for your absence, it is your responsibility to discuss this with the appropriate program staff right away.
The Attendance Policy

Reading tutors are permitted a total of three absences per semester, either excused or unexcused. If you are sick and miss work more than the permitted number of times, you are required to provide appropriate documentation (e.g., a doctor’s note explaining that you were unable to work). If you exceed the permitted number of absences or exhibit excessive lateness and are unable to provide acceptable documentation showing extenuating circumstances, you may be dismissed from the program and your future involvement in America Reads and the Federal Work-Study program may be jeopardized. Absences of any sort, whether excused or unexcused, are unpaid.

As mentioned above, our expectation is that you will keep to your schedule conscientiously. If you do have to miss work for any reason, however, you are responsible for promptly making two phone calls – one to the school in which you have been placed and one to the America Reads Challenge office at 439-4161. If you get an answering machine, you may leave a message stating your name, the date and the reason you will be absent. If you receive a busy signal, you are expected to keep trying until you get through. If you are absent from work and do not call both the school and the America Reads Challenge office to explain that you’ll be absent and why, this will automatically count as an unexcused absence. Likewise, if you miss more than 15 minutes or the entire Tutor Training or any other mandatory meeting and neglect to make arrangements with the America Reads Challenge staff, this too will automatically count as an unexcused absence. In addition, this absence must be made up within one week of the original meeting. For every unexcused absence you have, you will receive a written warning. If you receive three (3) written warnings, you will be required to meet with the Program Coordinator in person and may be dismissed from the program.

Our intention in adopting this policy is to establish clear guidelines for acceptable conduct. The primary goal of our program is to continue to provide the children we serve with the best support we can in helping them learn to read. We cannot be successful without a group of well-trained Reading Tutors who are dedicated to their work.

Any variances in terms of this policy and resulting consequences are at the discretion of the Program Coordinator and staff.

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America Reads

Appendix