

# Private Tutor Handbook

## *Tutorpedia*

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[www.tutorpedia.com](http://www.tutorpedia.com)

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Written by David Taus

# A Message from the Director

Welcome to Tutorpedia! If you are reading this, you care about our children, our schools, and the future of education. Specifically, you care about doing things differently, about shaking up the way we teach and learn. In short, you want to remix education.

In 2005, after 10 years of teaching and tutoring in public and private schools, I started Tutorpedia with the idea that education needs to be more personal. Think back to your favorite class in high school or college, and I bet you find yourself thinking back not to a specific subject but to a specific teacher or professor – or tutor – with whom you had a personal relationship, someone who knew you and cared about you, someone who advocated for your success.

Almost five years later, our mission remains essentially the same: to deliver high-quality, comprehensive, 1-on-1 tutoring to meet the individual needs of all students (see The Tao of Tutorpedia, next page). My grand vision, however, is to be a place where students, parents, teachers, and educators will come to learn best practices, teach innovative workshops, design alternative curriculum and assessments, find college counselors and learning specialists, and access free, open-source content. I want to complement what teachers are doing in class by providing a “shared experience” – a personal, academic, 1-on-1 relationship – to help students succeed in school and beyond. I believe in online learning and the power of the Internet to deliver unlimited information to students, but more importantly, I believe in the power of relationships to enhance these educational journeys.

As the Tao states, we practice what we preach. That is, how we treat our students is how we treat our tutors. How we engage parents and teachers is how we engage all stakeholders in education. How we behave on a tutoring level is how we behave on a business level.

The future of Tutorpedia looks bright. With a talented and motivated new Director of Operations and Education, a smart and passionate team of Lead Tutors, and a cadre of experienced and educated tutors, Tutorpedia is set to do great things. Free workshops, resource libraries, volunteer opportunities, and philanthropic giving are just the beginning. I am grateful to you for joining the ride, and I look forward to teaching, learning, and creating shared experiences with each of you.

Best wishes for an engaging year,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Seth Lind".

Seth

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	Tutoring Level	Business Level
<b>Collaborative Relationships</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>We value personal attention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-on-1 tutoring model</li> <li>• Student-centered approach</li> <li>• Regular communication with parents and teachers</li> <li>• Small group workshops designed around student interests</li> <li>• Open and honest feedback, dialogue, and evaluation</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>We coordinate efforts among all stakeholders to improve education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free access to original content and best practices</li> <li>• Free resource library of outside content and websites</li> <li>• Free education seminars and speaking engagements</li> <li>• Transparency in goals and business practice</li> <li>• Flat internal hierarchy</li> </ul>
<b>Innovative Expertise</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>We ground pedagogy and philosophy in research-based best practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content aligns with state standards</li> <li>• Instruction aligns with latest cognitive research</li> <li>• Emphasis on alternative forms of assessment</li> <li>• Authentic, embedded learning experiences</li> <li>• The new R's - real, relevant, rigorous, relationships</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>We are highly credentialed and experienced educators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduated from top universities</li> <li>• Many years of tutoring and classroom experience</li> <li>• Background in teaching, not business</li> <li>• Investment in ongoing professional development</li> <li>• Pursuit of progressive models of education reform</li> </ul>
<b>Holistic Vision</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>We prepare students to become productive members of society</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skill building</li> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• Creative problem solving</li> <li>• Intrinsic value of learning</li> <li>• “Shared experience” through 21st century technology</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>We believe that education is a means to achieving equity and social justice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedication to closing the achievement gap</li> <li>• Improving access to college</li> <li>• Supplemental Education Services</li> <li>• Tutorpedia Foundation, 501c3</li> <li>• Modeling our beliefs at all levels of functioning</li> </ul>

# Tutor Job Description: An Overview

Congratulations on your decision to become an educator of youth! You have an incredible opportunity to work with students as a tutor with Tutorpedia.

As a tutor, your day-to-day activities with your students will vary, and may vary widely, but your number one objective will always be to **support your students' academic achievement**. This can be as straightforward as helping students with homework or helping them better understand course content, but it also includes coaching students about organization and study habits, helping them cultivate self-discipline and self-confidence about their academic abilities, helping them prepare for standardized or achievement tests, or helping them forge a positive personal relationship with school and learning.

As a tutor, you are playing an important supporting role in your students' education. The sort of individualized attention you can provide should never be minimized; in many cases private tutoring sessions can make the crucial difference between passing and failing. Because you will only see your students one or two hours per week, though, your work is really meant to complement and enhance the work that teachers are doing in the classroom and parents are doing at home. It is therefore incredibly important that you align your tutoring sessions with the things your students are learning elsewhere. You are not expected to assign homework, create elaborate curricula (although you may find yourself making lesson plans), or generate new means of assessment or evaluation, but you are expected to serve as a well-prepared, competent, academically accomplished adult on whom your students can depend and look to for academic help.

A tutor's duties and responsibilities fall into several categories:

- Tutor your students. This may be so obvious it doesn't need stating, or so ambiguous it carries little meaning, but the underlying idea behind all your work with students is to support their academic achievement. We will go into more detail as to what "tutoring your students" means in the pages that follow.
- Complete all necessary forms and paperwork. This includes logging session notes online, tracking student data, and may involve completing structured assessments. This also may involve documenting your best practices and curriculum.
- Communicate with parents. Remember that you are part of a team, and all members of your team are excited to see your students succeed! Regular communication with your students' parents can only help you in your work. It is important to keep in mind parents will have spent much, much more time with your students than you, and as such, parents will have insights into your students that will prove invaluable in your work. Additionally, if you have the opportunity, it can be very helpful to communicate with your students' classroom teachers.
- Communicate with other Tutorpedia staff. Tutorpedia's Directors serve as an incredible resource for you in terms of pedagogy, lesson planning, and working through certain questions or challenges you have with your students.

In addition to your responsibilities as a tutor, you are expected to:

- Be showered, well-groomed, and appropriately dressed for your tutoring sessions. You do not need to wear power suits, of course, but it is expected that you present yourself professionally.
- Be punctual. Students should be thought of as paying customers (because, really, they are), and in that light it is important to deliver on what time commitments we've promised. Reciprocally, we should also expect that our students are punctual.
- Be kind, respectful, and patient. Education is a process, and sometimes a process that does not happen very easily or quickly. As educators, it is part of our role to place our egos, our opinions, and our needs – to some extent – behind those of our students. And of course, we want to model kindness, respect, and patience for our students!
- Be prepared for your tutoring session. This may mean that you've written lesson plans, or may mean that you have brushed up on the content area you'll be tutoring, or that you bring all the materials you will need for the session. Remember that your students are depending on you for knowledge and guidance, and ultimately it is up to you to structure the tutoring session in a way that promotes their academic learning.
- Place your students' academic needs before your own for the tutoring sessions. If your students want to work on their math homework due the next day, theirs is the choice even if that means scrapping a writing lesson plan you spent hours working on the night before.

A more detailed description of a tutor's responsibilities and duties will follow in the next sections.

# **Specific Tutor Responsibilities / Duties**

## **BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION:**

- Receive contact info for family via email from Tutorpedia's Directors (or Lead Tutor).
- Call parent or guardian to set up first meeting.
- Gather all materials needed for the tutoring session. This may include a pre-assessment, or any other material specified by the student or parent.

## **THE FIRST TUTORING SESSION:**

- Introduce yourself to the student, and if possible, the parents.
- If applicable, administer the Tutorpedia pre-assessment. This is an important baseline measure that will be used to track your students' progress and show that their hard work is paying off! If your students ask why they have to do this assessment, explain that you are there to help them succeed and that this assessment is a way to measure their improvement.
- Establish a good rapport and working relationship with your students. This is more important than working through content on the first session.
- Pay special attention to your students' learning style, particular strengths and weaknesses, and motivation. Determine if your students have special learning needs (i.e. an IEP or 504 plan). Begin to gather other pertinent and relevant information. Conversations with parents can often be the best source of information for you.

## **AFTER EVERY SESSION:**

- Log session hours and session notes on [www.tutorpedia.com](http://www.tutorpedia.com).

## **AFTER THE FIRST WEEK:**

- If applicable, submit pre-assessment to Tutorpedia's Directors.
- Check in with Tutorpedia's Directors and parents via email.

## **ONCE A MONTH, AFTER THE FIRST WEEK:**

- Double-check your hours logged and session notes to be sure that they are correct (do this by the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month)
- Check in with Tutorpedia's Directors via phone or email.

Communicating with parents or guardians is imperative. Parents/legal guardians are not only your students' caretakers; they are also the adults who know your students best. Again, it is in your best interest as a tutor to maintain a good working relationship with parents. Parents can help you gain invaluable insight into your students. If there is a behavior issue, it can usually be solved by maintaining

close contact with parents. Determining effective which incentives will be most effective can also be accomplished by talking with parents.

In many ways, parents are ultimately who you are working for. Parents are in charge of seeking out educational services and programs for their children. Parents must fill out forms, pay money, and give their consent in order to enable their child to receive tutoring. Your students are the biggest investment in their parents' lives, so anything you can do in terms of communication with them about their child is something they will welcome. It is a rare case where you can communicate with a parent too much, so you should never feel like you are bothering a parent with your updates and questions.

Unfortunately, a lot of parent communication comes at a time when their students is in trouble, doing poorly, or in danger of failing. Some parents automatically expect bad news every time they hear from a teacher. Therefore, it is encouraged to come to parents with good news! This goes a long way towards establishing a good working relationship with your students' parents, making it much more likely that parents will be willing to help you out should the need arise, and promoting a positive relationship between you, your students, and their parents.

It's best to meet parents in person, of course, but if you can't do that, parents should be contacted by phone. Only email parents if they tell you it's their preferred method of contact. Many parents do not use email at all, so be sure to ask parents if they will respond to email before writing them.

Communicating with Tutorpedia's Directors regularly can also make your job as a tutor much easier. Tutorpedia's administrative team is there to support tutors in their work. If you have questions about logistics or paperwork, Tutorpedia's Directors are able to answer them! If you are having difficulty with students and have specific questions about behavior management or pedagogy, the Directors probably have some helpful advice. If you are experiencing problems in communication with parents or teachers, the Directors can help.

You may be asked, from time to time, to obtain certain types of information or to complete and send certain forms. This is generally not to make your life more inconvenient or miserable, but because such forms or information needs to be supplied to school districts, the State Department of Education, or other funding sources. Part of the Director's job is to manage data and information so you don't have to, but they are depending on you to submit that data. This includes assessments, session notes, test scores, and the like.

The best way to communicate with Tutorpedia's Directors has traditionally been over email, but phone calls work just as well.

Communicating with teachers is not something that will happen frequently in private tutoring, but when it does it will make your job as a tutor much, much easier. Teachers are invaluable resources when it comes to planning your tutoring sessions, determining areas in which your students needs extra help, providing resources, and more. Remember that your students' teachers spend much more time with your students than you do, and you therefore have a lot to learn from their perspectives, insights, and experiences. In fact, after conversations with teachers you will most likely find it incredibly easy to plan for your tutoring sessions. Don't be afraid to ask teachers for problem sets, reading questions, copies of

homework, or other academic materials. Teachers are also excellent contact points in order to obtain grades, test scores, and the like – you can usually obtain this sort of information through your students' teachers without having to deal with a lot of bureaucracy and red tape.

You should make every effort to align your work with what the teachers are doing with your students in school. Your role as a tutor is really one of support; you are ideally working to supplement and enhance the schoolwork in which your students are engaged. The method of subtraction that you teach, for example, should be the same method that your students' teacher teaches. Likewise, the editing marks you use on your students' essays should ideally be the same as their teacher's editing marks. In order to ensure this sort of alignment, it is of the utmost importance that you communicate with teachers.

Ask your student for their teacher's contact information. You should try to contact teachers in person or by phone the first time; after that you can check in with them via email (but be sure they check their email!).

# Tutoring Nuts and Bolts: How To...

## ***...Plan a Tutoring Session***

In teaching school, aspiring educators are often told that a successful lesson usually requires 3-4 hours of planning for one hour of class time. It certainly is not necessary to spend three or four hours planning for a one hour tutoring session, but it is worth pointing out that quality lessons do not happen magically or by chance. There is *a lot* of forward work that goes into a well-planned lesson, and as a tutor, you should take as a premise that a good tutoring session will take some amount of preparation and forethought.

More often than not, tutoring sessions will involve working on students' homework, or continuing a lesson that the students had in school that day or that week. Therefore, your number one resource for planning your tutoring sessions is your students' teachers. Teachers will generally be more than happy to give you a rundown of what your students have been working on in school, and how you can further support the learning that has been going on during school hours. More often than not, a quick check-in with your students' teachers will give you enough information, ideas, and resources to plan for an hour-long tutoring session.

Crafting an effective and productive lesson is an art as much as it is a science. Every teacher has his or her own preference and technique as to how to craft a lesson, but good teachers generally include several key principles in their planning. Here are some things for you as you keep in mind as you figure out how you're going to fill an hour of time with your students each week.

1. Start with your end goal in mind and plan backwards. Before each lesson begins, ask yourself: "what is one thing that I want my students to achieve or understand by the end of the lesson?" It is a great idea to go so far as to write down your end goal and share it with your students at the beginning of the lesson, or better yet, include your student in the goal-setting process. Ideally, you'll structure all your activities for the day to build towards the end goal, but simply keeping your end goal in mind as you progress throughout the session will help you stay on track. There are lots of resources available that can give you a more complete and thorough explanation of "backwards planning." The best is *Understanding By Design* (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005). Other books and resources are available in the Tutorpedia office, and even more resources are identified in our Resource Library.
2. Think hard about how you are going to 'hook' your students at the beginning of the lesson. Lessons are like TV shows: something happens at the very beginning that hooks the audience in and keeps them wanting to know what happens next. Your students need to be interested in what is going on in your tutoring session, and unfortunately you cannot count on the intrinsic allure of multiplication tables or sentence diagramming to hold their interest. Therefore, part of your job is to 'hook' your students in at the start of the lesson. There are two great techniques that will help you do this:

- Frame your topic for the day as a problem than needs to be solved. People love solving puzzles and problems. If the lesson for the day is conceptualized as a puzzle or problem, and learning is conceptualized as working towards a solution for that problem, students are much more likely to be engaged. The objectives become clear to them, and their work takes on more meaning. Plus, there is a good deal of satisfaction and pride that comes with solving a problem. We, as educators, can use all this for our students' educational advantage.
  - Connect content to your students' life experience as much as possible. Make it real for them! When students see schoolwork as something other than rote memorization and can relate to it on a personal level, they are much more likely to be engaged in the tutoring session.
3. Be sure that the students do something. Nobody likes to be talked at for an hour straight. It is intuitive (and research supports the idea) that people learn best when they are interacting with the material, literally doing something. This can look very different depending on the content and the lesson, but every tutoring session needs to involve some activity or action on the part of your students. You should not be the one solving arithmetic problems (although you can certainly do one or two to model how it's done), your students should. You should not be the one coming up with sentences or examples, you students should be. This may be met with resistance in the form of laziness, because surely it is much easier to have someone else do it for you, but allowing a few seconds of time for your students to think and respond to your requests or questions (what teachers call "wait time") and setting clear expectations will go a long way towards making sure your students is actively participating in the lesson. Be sure to make it clear from the first minute of your first tutoring session: students are expected to be actively involved in their own learning.
4. Remember your R's. We all know about the classic R's: reading, writing, and arithmetic. Including basic content in lessons is, of course, very important, but there are some other R's worth thinking about as you plan your tutoring sessions:
- Real – Be sure your lessons are authentic, concrete, and understandable
  - Relevant – Be sure your lessons relate to your students' life experiences in some way
  - Rigorous – Be sure your lessons are appropriately challenging
  - Relationships – be sure that everything you do is grounded in a good working relationship with your students
- These new R's outline what research has revealed to be best practice in developing effective curricula, and promoting students' engagement in those curricula.
5. Develop a way to check for understanding. It's important to know whether or not your students understand the lesson. The most simple and traditional way to check for understanding has been to give quizzes, but you should not be limited to this (and quizzes might be overkill in the context of tutoring sessions). Informal understanding checks – simply asking your students to explain concepts in their own words or complete problems on their own – are good, and there

are many other ways that students can demonstrate their understanding. One of the best ways to check for understanding is to switch roles, and have your students teach the lesson back to you. Since you don't have to worry as much about formal assessments (grades, standardized tests, and the like), the important thing is to have some evidence that gives you confidence that your students understand what is going on during your tutoring sessions.

There is a lot more that goes into planning effective lessons. There are plenty of resources available to you, including a lesson planning template for you to use. A lesson planning template (in .pdf format) is available online to assist you in planning your tutoring sessions. If you want more information or guidance, please don't hesitate to collaborate with other tutors, or contact a Lead Tutor or other Tutorpedia staff.

### ***...Administer Pre-Assessments and Post-Assessments***

The administration of structured assessments is not required for private students, but there may be cases where it's appropriate to give a student a structured assessment at the beginning and end of their tutoring. If that's the case, then it's important to know how to properly administer Tutorpedia's assessments.

Tutorpedia has adopted performance-based assessments to measure the ability levels and progress of the students with whom we work. These assessments map directly onto the California standards for each grade level. The pre-assessment is to be given on the first day of tutoring, and the post-assessment is to be given on the last day of tutoring. These two assessments are one important piece of data that we can use to report our students' progress back to parents, so it's incredibly important that these assessments are given, and that the scores are recorded. One important thing to realize is that the pre-test and the post-test are the exact same documents! The only difference between a pre-assessment and a post-assessment is that one is given at the start of tutoring, and the other is given at the end of tutoring. Any change in a student's score between pre-assessment and post-assessment should indicate progress.

You should budget about 20-30 minutes during the first and last tutoring sessions for these assessments. The assessments, along with a scoring rubric, are available for download online. Please download and print out the assessment that is appropriate for your students' grade level. Also, note that you should give your students the assessment corresponding to the grade level they are actually in, even if you know they have tested below or above that grade level.

### ***...Write Session Notes***

It is your responsibility to enter session notes for every tutoring session you have. This is Tutorpedia's way of keeping track of how many hours you work in a month, and correspondingly, how you will get paid. In short, if you do not enter session notes, you will not get paid for your time and effort.

Tutorpedia uses an online system for session notes. Follow these simple steps:

1. Go to [www.tutorpedia.com](http://www.tutorpedia.com).
2. Click on "tutor log in" in the upper right hand corner.
3. Enter your username and password. If you don't have your login for the site yet, or forgot your login information, click on "forgot username or password" and enter your email address (the address that this email is sent to). You should get an email right away with your username and password.
4. Select the students for whom you are typing session notes from the drop-down menu. If your students is not in the drop-down menu (or it's your first session note), click "add a student" and select your students from the master list.
5. Click on the day tutoring took place on the calendar below your student's name. Be sure the correct date appears to the right.
6. There is a box that you can click if your students did not show. See the section below for more on this.
7. The default session length is one hour. If your tutoring session was longer or shorter than this, change this value. Please make every effort to use 30 minute increments.
8. You can now enter your session notes in the box. When you have finished, click "submit."

You are STRONGLY encouraged to enter your session notes the same day you have tutoring, if at all possible. This is because your notes will be more substantial and meaningful if the tutoring session is fresh in your mind. At the very least, you are expected to enter tutoring notes by the end of each week. This is for purposes of billing as much as it is because your notes will be better if you enter them as close to your tutoring session as possible.

Please keep in mind that your session notes will be read by Lead Tutors, Tutorpedia's Directors, teachers, and parents. It is therefore advisable that you write as clearly as possible. Use proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Be sure to review the session honestly, but be sure to phrase everything constructively. Include what took place for the session, points of improvement, points of challenge, any notable breakthroughs or struggles, meetings you might have had, as well as any of your own thoughts or perceptions about the students. It's expected that you write, at minimum, 3-4 sentences per session note. Notes should include both positive things from the session, and things you would like to see changed (sometimes referred to as "plus – delta" or "warm-cool" feedback).

Here's an example of a poor session note:

*today we worked on reading.*

Here's one that slightly better, but still not quite there:

*Today we worked on reading comprehension. We used the book that Jane was assigned in class.*

Here's one that better still:

*Today I worked on reading comprehension with Jane. We used the book that Jane was assigned in class. Jane was able to read most of the words she came across, and only got caught up with the bigger words. By the end of the session, Jane had an easier time reading the bigger words.*

Here's an example of a good session note:

*Today I worked on reading comprehension with Jane. We used the book that Jane was assigned in class, which Jane did not particularly like. Jane was able to read most of the words she came across, and only got caught up with the bigger words. Even when she got stuck on a word she did her best to sound it out and rarely got frustrated. I gave her space to try to read on her own, and offered my help with the reading when she was completely stuck. Sometimes Jane pretended like she couldn't read a word and tried to get me to read for her, but I just prompted her to keep reading when this happened. By the end of the session, Jane had an easier time reading the bigger words. I am encouraged by her progress.*

Session notes are meant to document your day's experience, but they also can serve as a useful exercise in prompting you to reflect on your own practice as an education. Please take advantage of this!

### **...Collect Student Data**

A certain amount of data needs to be kept for each of the students we serve. Data might include student grades, report cards, STAR test scores, assessment scores, online tests taken, college acceptances, and any information contained in an IEP or 504 plan. Tutorpedia uses students' data to track their progress.

In most cases, you will be responsible for tracking down and keeping student data. With private students, it's expected that, at minimum, you track our students' initial and final grades. It's better yet to track more regular grades: how did your student do on successive tests, quizzes, or projects? If you need to collect any data on your students outside of this, teachers are, by and large, your best resources for any sort of information about your students.

As a general rule, the more information the better! If you think some form or piece of paper may be important, then it is. It's better to be a safe than sorry; do not throw anything out until you are absolutely sure it's not needed. It is a good idea to dedicate a folder or file to Tutorpedia documents. You can also hand off important documents to the Tutorpedia office for safekeeping.

If you have any questions about student data, it's always better to ask than to assume.

# **Pedagogy and Instruction**

Teaching is a profession that requires its own set of background knowledge and skills if it is to be done at the highest level. Doctors must have a solid working knowledge of human anatomy in order to heal their patients, plumbers must know a good deal about fluid dynamics in order to fix the pipes in your house, filmmakers must understand how their cameras and editing tools work if they want to utilize them to their fullest extent, and likewise, educators must know something about the inner workings of the human mind, human development, and their students' culture if they want to be effective teachers.

Studying how people learn can be an incredibly broad and consuming topic. Some people spend their entire professional lives studying one aspect of learning, and in this light it's important to recognize that we can only scratch the surface here. It is useful, however, to scratch the surface, and highlight some practical information that is essential for educators.

Again, there are many resources available for you if you want more information. Teachers, as part of their credentialing program and as a byproduct of working with young minds every day, are excellent practical resources. There are also many books and readings published on the topics that follow. If you want to know more, we encourage you to seek out other tutors, a Lead Tutor, or Tutorpedia's Directors.

## ***Age Considerations and Cognitive Development***

There are many models and theories of human development, and all seek to uncover the secrets of what happens to us as humans grow and change, especially in our childhood years. Human development can be examined from many levels: the physical development of the body, the development of our mental abilities, our social development, and even our neurological development. While all types of development are important in understanding young people, the development of our minds, or cognitive development, holds a special place of importance for educators.

The two most important things to remember when thinking about cognitive development as it relates to your students are:

1. All people pass through stages of development that correspond roughly with their age. This should serve as a common sense reminder that we should be sensitive to a student's age, as this can determine what they are able to do. At certain ages, say cognitive scientists, the human brain simply hasn't developed to the point where it is able to make certain calculations or engage in certain thought processes. What does this mean for educators? Essentially, it means that we should always have high expectations of our students, but we should not have unrealistic expectations, and that we should take care to make our expectations age-appropriate.
2. People develop at different rates. Even though we all pass through similar cognitive stages, it is important to understand that there are individual differences as to when we pass through these stages. Again, this should serve as a common sense reminder that students may be a bit ahead or behind where they are expected to be for their age. Theories of cognitive development can

tell us in a general sense what we can expect from our students based solely on their age, but this should not be the end-all guideline. We must account for our students' individual life experiences, and as we get to know our students we should ourselves develop a better idea of their individual abilities.

Cognitive development is rooted firmly in the physical development of the brain. Jean Piaget was the first to make this connection, and outlined four broad stages that we pass through in our cognitive development; researchers and educators have since used Piaget's theory to inform the practice of teaching. Piaget's four broad stages of cognitive development are as follows:

Sensorimotor stage (Infancy, 0-2 years). In this period, intelligence is demonstrated through motor activity without the use of symbols. Knowledge of the world is limited (but developing) because it is based on physical interactions / experiences. Children acquire object permanence at about 7 months of age (memory). Physical development (mobility) allows the child to begin developing new intellectual abilities. Some symbolic (language) abilities are developed at the end of this stage.

Pre-operational stage (Toddler and Early Childhood, 2-7 years). In this period, intelligence is demonstrated through the use of symbols, language use matures, and memory and imagination are developed, but thinking is done in a nonlogical, nonreversible manner. Egocentric thinking predominates.

Concrete operational stage (Elementary and early adolescence, 7-11 years). In this stage, intelligence is demonstrated through logical and systematic manipulation of symbols related to concrete objects. Operational thinking develops (mental actions that are reversible). Egocentric thought diminishes.

Formal operational stage (Adolescence and adulthood 11 years and up). In this stage, intelligence is demonstrated through the logical use of symbols related to abstract concepts. Early in the period there is a return to egocentric thought.

*Source: Huitt, W., & Hummel, J. (2003). Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Educational Psychology Interactive. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/coqsys/piaget.html>*

This is a very cursory glimpse at a much more complicated and involved theory of human development. For our purposes, it is less important that the theory is understood as it is important that we can glean something useful from it as educators. The following bullet points give us some concrete examples of how we can use Piaget's theory when we are working with our students:

### Teaching the Preoperational Child (Toddler and Early Childhood)

- Use concrete props and visual aids to illustrate lessons and help children understand what is being presented.
  - Use physical illustrations.
  - Use drawings and illustrations.
- Make instructions relatively short, using actions as well as words, to lessen likelihood that the students will get confused.
  - After giving instructions, ask a student to demonstrate them as a model for the rest of the class.
  - Explain a game by acting out the part of a participant.
- Do not expect the students to find it easy to see the world from someone else's perspective since they are likely to be very egocentric at this point.
  - Avoid lessons about worlds too far removed from the child's experience.
  - Discuss sharing from the child's own experience.
- Give children a great deal of physical practice with the facts and skills that will serve as building blocks for later development.
  - Use cut-out letters to build words.
  - Avoid overuse of workbooks and other paper-and-pencil tasks.
- Encourage the manipulation of physical objects that can change in shape while retaining a constant mass, giving the students a chance to move toward the understanding of conservation and two-way logic needed in the next stage.
  - Provide opportunities to play with clay, water, or sand.
  - Engage students in conversations about the changes the students are experiencing when manipulating objects.
- Provide many opportunities to experience the world in order to build a foundation for concept learning and language.
  - Take field trips.
  - Use and teach words to describe what they are seeing, doing, touching, tasting, etc.
  - Discuss what they are seeing on TV.

### Teaching the Concrete Operational Child (Middle Childhood)

- Continue to use concrete props and visual aids, especially when dealing with sophisticated material.
  - Provide time-lines for history lessons.
  - Provide three-dimensional models in science.
- Continue to give students a chance to manipulate objects and test out their ideas.
  - Demonstrate simple scientific experiments in which the students can participate.

- Show craftwork to illustrate daily occupations of people of an earlier period.
- Make sure that lectures and readings are brief and well organized.
  - Use materials that present a progression of ideas from step to step.
  - Have students read short stories or books with short, logical chapters, moving to longer reading assignments only when the students are ready.
- Ask students to deal with no more than three or four variables at a time.
  - Require readings with a limited number of characters.
  - Demonstrate experiments with a limited number of steps.
- Use familiar examples to help explain more complex ideas so students will have a beginning point for assimilating new information.
  - Compare students' own lives with those of the characters in a story.
  - Use story problems in mathematics.
- Give opportunities to classify and group objects and ideas on increasingly complex levels.
  - Give students separate sentences on slips of paper to be grouped into paragraphs.
  - Use outlines, hierarchies, and analogies to show the relationship of unknown new material to already acquired knowledge.
- Present problems which require logical, analytical thinking to solve.
  - Provide materials such as Mind Twisters, Brain Teasers, and riddles.
  - Focus discussions on open-ended questions which stimulate thinking (e.g., are the mind and the brain the same thing?)

#### Teaching Students Beginning to Use Formal Operations (Adolescence)

- Continue to use many of the teaching strategies and materials appropriate for students at the concrete operational stage.
  - Use visual aids such as charts and illustrations, as well a simple but somewhat more sophisticated graphs and diagrams.
  - Use well-organized materials that offer step by step explanations.
- Give students an opportunity to explore many hypothetical questions.
  - Provide students opportunities to discuss social issues.
  - Provide consideration of hypothetical "other worlds."
- Encourage students to explain how they solve problems.
  - Ask students to work in pairs with one student acting as the problem solver, thinking aloud while tackling a problem, with the other students acting as the listener, checking to see that all steps are mentioned and that everything seems logical.
  - Make sure that at least some of the tests you give ask for more than rote memory or one final answer; essay questions, for example, might ask students to justify two different positions on an issue.

- Whenever possible, teach broad concepts, not just facts, using materials and ideas relevant to the students.
  - While discussing a topic such as the Civil War, consider what other issues have divided the country since then.
  - Use lyrics from popular music to teach poetic devices, to reflect

*Source: Huitt, W. (1997). Cognitive development: Applications. Educational Psychology Interactive. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. from <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/coqsys/piagtuse.html>.*

The take-home point about cognitive development is this: when we are working with students, we always want to be mindful about their abilities so that our lessons are tailored to what our students' brains are able to handle. We then can set expectations that are high, but still realistic.

## ***Understanding Student Motivation***

As educators, we would like to believe that what we have to teach is intrinsically motivating, that is, that the lesson itself is rewarding. Our students rarely see it that way. For a lot of students, tutoring comes at a time of day where their attention is anywhere but on schoolwork: they are hungry, their friends are playing outside, and they have just spent six or seven straight hours in school. In short, your students often do not really want to be in tutoring.

One of your many tasks as a tutor is to maintain their motivation and interest. In some ways and in many cases, this is the most difficult task you will face. And unfortunately, there is no single magic formula that works for all students. Here are some points to consider when you are thinking about how to maintain your students' interest in the lesson:

- Make sure all your students' basic needs are met. If a student is hungry or too cold or feels like they are in physical danger, they will not be able to focus on academics. Our basic take priority in our minds, so we should try to ensure that our students' basic needs are met before moving into the day's lesson.
- Be sure that your students understand the goal or purpose of the lesson. It's all too common for a students to ask why they have to do what they are doing, or how it will help them, and it is your responsibility to have a good answer for them if they ask questions such as this. "Because I'm the teacher and I said so" is not a good answer; your students should see a real connection between what they are learning and how it will help them. This can be as simple as reminding them that success in school generally grants them the ability and freedom to make choices later in life, or it can be more pointed and specific.
- Show enthusiasm for working with your students and for the content. Excitement is infectious. If your students see you come to tutoring sessions every day with a smile on your face, and they feel like you are happy to see them, they will be much more responsive to you. If they see how excited you are about the things you are teaching them, they will grow increasingly excited as well.

- Tap into your students' pre-existing interests. Everyone has things that they are interested in and topics in which they have some sort of expert knowledge. If you can find a way to incorporate your students' interests into the lesson, chances are they will be much more engaged in what is going on. This is particularly useful when working on math problems.
- Do surprising things. We tend to pay more attention to things that are new to us, or things that take us by surprise. If your students are able to predict your every move, their attention will start to wander. Do everything you can to keep them on their toes; if they don't know what's coming next they will be much more likely to pay close attention to what is going on.
- Be sure that the lesson is challenging, but not too challenging. You should design your lessons with the sweet spot between boredom and frustration in mind. This is a difficult thing to do, but once you get to know your students it should become easier. Activities should be achievable, or perhaps just beyond their grasp but achievable with a little bit of help. If activities are too easy your students will be bored, but if they are too difficult they will quickly grow frustrated and give up.

All these factors can influence how intrinsically motivating the tutoring experience can be. But sometimes it is often more effective to use extrinsic motivators, that is, reinforcement and punishment. There is a definite science to properly selecting and administering rewards and/or punishments.

In terms of reinforcement (something that will increase a desired behavior), you want to use something that is motivating to the student. This can either be giving them something they like (such as attention, social approval, food, or something tangible or physical) or getting rid of something they don't like (such as relaxing certain rules). When working with reinforcement, you want to be sure that you can supply rewards or remove undesirable things consistently and easily, and that the reinforcers won't lose their potency or effectiveness for your student. You also want to be sure that your rewards are ethical; some people, for example, consider it unethical to use food as a reinforcer (even though it works really well), especially in situations in which students might not have three square meals every day.

If we choose to use punishments (which simply means anything that will decrease an undesired behavior), we want to select consequences that are fair and ethical, but still strong enough to get the point across. It is usually preferable to take something away that students can earn back (such as certain privileges) than to give something undesirable (such as harsh criticism, bad grades). Additionally, if a punishment is used, it is always a good idea to couple the punishment with alternative appropriate responses, and to provide positive reinforcement when your student chooses those alternative responses. Like giving rewards, you want to make sure that you can give punishments consistently, and that your punishments are appropriate to the situation. Remember that punishment does not have to be – and should not be – punitive!

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Upon reflection, we might realize just how much of all our lives are influenced by external motivators. Even something as simple as money can be considered an external motivator; we have all probably been in the situation where we work for money, and not because the work itself is intrinsically rewarding. Similarly, we all might have found ourselves doing something we wouldn't otherwise do because it

brings us attention of some kind. Our students experience similar reinforcement in their lives. As their tutors, we can use reinforcers to guide their behavior.

According to theories derived from Applied Behavior Analysis, an individual's behavior is maintained by one of four extrinsic reinforcers:

1. Social attention. We should never underestimate the power of attention. Humans are social creatures by nature, and our need to feel accepted and affirmed is very high. Therefore, a well-placed compliment or encouraging word can go a long way towards reinforcing desired behaviors in your students. The benefit of social attention is that it is free, in unlimited supply and easily distributable. Keep in mind, though, that bad attention for negative behaviors is still motivating. Therefore, it is advisable to use as little attention as possible to quell undesirable behavior, and then to quickly turn around and find something that your students is doing that deserves positive attention.
2. Escape from unwanted situations. This is technically known as “negative reinforcement,” which is different from punishment. In order for this to work properly, you will need to identify something that you have some control over that your students does not find enjoyable. You can then allow the student to “escape” from this undesirable thing or condition when they behave appropriately. It may be tempting to use less exciting parts of your lesson in this way, but you should be careful not to undermine any educational activity, or construe learning in an unsavory way.
3. Tangible items. This can range from pencils to stickers to food to money – anything you can physically give to your students counts as a tangible reinforcer. There are certainly things you don't want to use as tangible reinforcers, and you should take care that you don't overdo it or make promises you can't keep. Tangible reinforcers, while powerful in the short term, can easily lose their effectiveness in the long term if they are not administered properly. It is important to keep in mind, also, that we do not want to use certain things as reinforcers, even though they may be very reinforcing! Unhealthy food and cash rewards fall into this category.
4. Sensory experiences. If something feels good or pleases the senses, we will tend to do it more. This is not as applicable in a tutoring situation, but may be used in subtle ways, such as allowing the use of scented markers or using music as a reinforcer. This class of reinforcer will probably not be used as much in a tutoring setting.

The trick in using extrinsic reinforcer is to find which ones work best with your students, but at the same time not to rely too heavily on them. Of all the extrinsic motivators, social attention is the one that you probably will use the most. Tangible items can also be used, but care must be taken to not make the reward the primary focus. In the end, we still want learning to be its own reward.

## ***How to Work with Students with Learning Disabilities***

As a general rule, students who receive tutoring are students that have difficulties in school. Regardless of whether your student has an identified learning disability or not, always use your best intuitions and skills as an educator: be patient, empathetic, and flexible.

Individualized attention, something that is a given when it comes to private tutoring, is itself one of the best and most helpful things we can do for students who are struggling in school. Therefore, the academic support that we provide as tutors is already in line with what struggling students need most! In this sense, all the students with whom we work have special needs, and we are doing precisely the right thing in order to address those needs.

You may have the opportunity to work with a student that has an identified learning disability or other special need. Such students will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan. These are official documents written by the student's teacher, family, and learning specialist that describe the particular area of difficulty or impairment the students has, strategies that are recommended for working with the students, accommodations and modifications that the students is afforded in school, and goals that the students is expected to meet.

There is a legal difference between students that have IEPs and those that do not, even if that difference is not evident. Usually, this means that students with IEPs are legally granted the right and required to have certain special accommodations, which could range from the use of a computer to extended time given for activities. The IEP will specify any special accommodations the student is legally entitled to.

As such, you should be aware whether your students are identified as learning disabled. Asking whether your students have any special learning needs in your initial conversation with parents and teachers is always a good idea. Even if such a question does not reveal a specific learning disability, you will be sure to get helpful hints, pointers, and strategies that you can use when you are working with your students. If you discover that your students are identified as learning disabled, you should request to see a copy of their IEP. While you have access to your students' IEPs, you should be aware that information contained in an IEP or 504 plan is sensitive information and considered to be confidential, much like a medical record would be. Please treat it as confidential as you work with your students.

It is hard to speak generally about how to work with students that have learning disabilities, because the type and degree of the disability varies widely from students to students. In every case, though, the IEP should serve as your most useful guide. Read it thoroughly, and be sure to ask any questions about it if you don't understand something. Teachers are legally bound to adhere to the contents of a student's IEP (for example, to allow for extra time when taking tests, to permit the use of calculators, or to make available certain aids or technologies) and you as their tutor should be consistent with this. Teachers and Lead Tutors are excellent resources if you have questions about your students' IEPs.

In the end, though, you should make every effort to do what is best for your students' learning whether they have an IEP or not. The presence of an IEP makes your job easier in some ways, because you have a document that outlines best practices and courses of action that you can use with your students. IEPs

can inform your teaching strategies in very significant and helpful ways, and such strategies should not be limited to students with identified learning disabilities. Some students may qualify as learning disabled, but because of their age and school experience have never been tested for learning disabilities. Therefore, the best policy is to treat all your students as deserving of the best individualized academic support that you can provide.

If you have identified a specific type of learning disability that you have questions about, there are many resources available to you. You can come to Lead Tutors or other Tutorpedia staff with any specific questions about learning disabilities, and they will help you find the resources you need.

### ***How to Work with Emotional/Behavioral Difficulties***

People, but especially young people, love to test boundaries. This should be expected and should not be looked down upon. It is part of your job as a tutor to create those boundaries for your students, and to let them know when they are being crossed. More often than not, your students will learn what is and is not acceptable quickly and respect the boundaries that you set for your tutoring session. Sometimes, however, you may encounter particularly difficult challenges from your students in terms of behavior.

In the extreme case, you will be informed by either a teacher or parent about certain behavior plans or behavior contracts that have been established with your students. If this is the case, you should follow the plan or contract as outlined. It is much more likely, though, that there will not be a behavior contract or plan that comes with your students, even if they are identified as chronic misbehavers.

Managing a student's behavior is much easier if you think about your management plan as prescriptive as opposed to reactive. The best thing you can do is act before there is even a chance for an inappropriate behavior to arise. Here are some points to help you think about how to approach your tutoring sessions in a way that heads off behavior problems before they have a chance to come up:

- Build a positive relationship with your students. This is the best strategy to establish a smooth and trouble free tutoring experience for you and your students. Do everything you can to ensure that your students knows that you are there to help them succeed, and on their side.
- Set very clear structures, boundaries, and expectations. Even though they would never admit it and act like they don't, children thrive on structure. From the first moment of your tutoring sessions, take extra care to provide that structure. Be organized, prepared, and very clear in what you expect from your students. Schedules and routines are often overlooked by adults when considering behavior management interventions. Knowing what to do and when to do it provides structure, security, and predictability in the lives of students who may not experience such support in other areas of their lives.
- Be consistent. Students are very aware when you enforce boundaries only some of the time. There is no such thing as "consistent some of the time," you either are consistent or you are not.

Make every effort to be consistent with your expectations, regardless of anything else that is going on.

- Do surprising things. Change the tempo or activity, comment on something positive about the student's work, ask the students about something completely nonrelated, or inquire about a known interest if a student shows signs of restlessness. Do this before off-task behavior occurs.
- Limit space and tools. Rather than taking away items that distract or create potential harm after a student is engaged with them, keep them out of sight and reach from the beginning. This is especially important when tantrums might escalate to unnecessarily dangerous or reinforcing proportions, if too many items are available for throwing and breaking.
- Say something funny. Humor can often stop undesirable behavior if it is used in a timely and positive manner. Sarcasm, cynicism, and aggression are usually not appropriate uses of humor.
- Show them how it's done. One common source of misbehavior is out of fear of failure. If a student is presented with a task they think they won't be able to do, they may act out in order to move your attention off that task. Before a student begins to act out, then, assist the students with a difficult section of an assignment or task. You may even go so far as to do an example problem yourself.
- Communicate with parents. You only work with your student one or two hours every week, but parents work with your students multiple hours every single day. Staying in close contact with parents and building a strong relationship with them almost always improves your students' behavior during tutoring sessions.

Of course, behavior difficulties do come up, even when students are working with the most seasoned educator. When they do, consider the following points as you work with your students:

- Address the behavior, not the students. It is vitally important for the students to know that they are not bad, but rather what they did is inappropriate. This distinction cannot be overstated.
- Direct appeal. If a student has a positive relationship with you, it is sometimes effective just to ask that a behavior stop due to the problems that it is creating. No consequence or reward is intended or implied. This is a simple, straightforward request from one person to another.
- Try to discern the underlying cause. If you know what is causing misbehavior, then you should be able to address the misbehavior by changing what causes it. This, of course, only applies to situations in which you are able to impact the cause of a behavior. If a student is upset about things that are happening at home or somewhere else, there is not much you can do to change the cause of their distress. If they are upset about something that is going on in the tutoring session, though, you have the power to affect changes. Prompting the students to talk or write about what is bothering them is a great tactic here.
- Selective attention. We are all motivated by attention. Students, of course, would like to receive positive attention, but if they don't believe that they will receive any positive attention, they will take any attention they can get. Students who frequently misbehave realize that they get attention – and lots of attention – very quickly when they misbehave. Therefore, if you are able to safely moderate the amount of attention you give to misbehaviors, and simultaneously give a lot of positive attention to appropriate behaviors, your students will learn that getting

positive attention is not only possible, it's very easy to do and much more rewarding. Note, though, that this technique should not be used with aggressive behaviors.

- If one tactic isn't working, try something else. We commonly make a mistake to increase the intensity of a solution if it isn't working. Instead of doing more and more of something that isn't working, it's often better to try something different. If an activity is not successful, change it as quickly as possible. It is important to always have a backup plan. Sometimes offering your students a choice might be effective.
- Proximity and touch. Moving closer to a student in distress or placing a hand on their shoulder can be effective in showing support in a nonthreatening way. When using this technique, refrain from pointing out inappropriate behavior. Comment positively on any move toward appropriate behavior. Be aware, though, that there are issues of liability when working with students, and care should be exercised in situations when you are physically touching them.
- Accentuate the positive. Express genuine affection for, or appreciation of, a student to assist the student in regaining self-control.

*Some material adapted from <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/classroom-management/special-education/7242.html>*

If you encounter a recurring problem or a situation that you don't know how to handle, Lead Tutors or other Tutorpedia staff can step in at your request.

## ***Working with Cultural and Socioeconomic Differences***

It is the conviction of Tutorpedia that education, and specifically improvement in public education, is one of the most effective means of achieving social equity in the world. Therefore, in working with a population of students who have been identified as low-achieving and low socio-economic status, you become more than a tutor; you become an agent of social justice.

You might find yourself working with students who have, by most measures, started their lives more socially disadvantaged than other more fortunate members of society. Their academic success is an individual success, but in the bigger picture it is more than that. It is a step towards leveling the playing field for class and race (as race is, unfortunately, still very much tied to class) in this country. Some would say, and we believe, that this is among the most important types work one can do.

Some of us may be tempted to allow ourselves certain preconceptions about the population of students we might find in low-income urban settings. But we cannot – and should not – base our actions and beliefs in sweeping generalizations about the type of students you will encounter as a tutor. This is especially true if the culture found in traditionally underserved urban communities is different from the culture in which you were raised or live.

And yet, the skill set it takes to be successful in a low-income urban setting is slightly different from the skill set required of educators in more affluent suburban communities. Here are some things you can keep in mind as you begin (or continue) to develop your skills as an effective urban educator:

- Listen to your students. This is – by far – the most important thing you can do as an educator if you want to really help your students. They are not there for you; you are there for them. Be sure that everything you do ultimately serves them.
- Remember that this is somebody’s child. As a tutor, you will only spend a few hours of your life with your students. Remember, though, that your students come from, and will return to, a very vibrant and complicated world. Your work should be in harmony with the positives in their lives (even if their positives aren’t quite the same as yours) and gently correct any negatives.
- Do not lower your standards. Working towards equity requires the disadvantaged students to meet – and even exceed – the more advantaged students in terms of academic achievement. You should work under the goal that your students will be competitive with students that are destined for elite prep schools and private colleges.
- Error on the side of structure. It is much easier to impose structures and then remove them if they are not necessary than it is to start with little structure and add it if it’s needed. Your students will typically have a lack of structure in their lives, and despite whatever they might say they do appreciate the comfort of knowing what is expected, what can be counted on, and what they are able to do.
- There is more to education than academic success. We are here to teach our students subject matter so they can grow to be readers, mathematicians, historians, scientists, and the like, but we are also here to teach our students how to be participatory members of society, critical thinkers and problem solvers, effective collaborators, and mindful members of larger communities. In short, we are teaching our students how to be productive, positively contributing citizens of this planet. By giving them the skills and habits of mind they need to be successful in school, you are doing much to empower your students to be good members of their community and citizens of the planet.
- Don’t assume that anything is common sense. We who have been successful at school may take for granted habits of mind, organizational techniques, and study skills that have served us in our time in school. Taking these ‘soft skills’ as a given is often not true of underperforming students. Take time to be explicit about thought process, plan of attack, or organizational technique. Talk through – in painful detail – what goes through your head when you are reading, writing, learning, communicating, organizing, or interacting. Revealing your own “habits of mind” and being transparent about them as will give your students a good model from which to work when they try the same things themselves. You may be surprised that the things you do more or less automatically are not so automatic to some of your students, and being explicit and transparent about these things is what your students need most. Sometimes little things make a big difference.
- Give reasons for everything you do. It is always better to logically reason with your students. Younger students will want to know why things are the way they are, and it is incumbent upon you to have a good answer. “because I’m the tutor and I said so” is not a good answer. Older students may not ask “why” as much, but will appreciate and respond much better to requests and activities that make sense as opposed to imperatives. It is good to be transparent as much as possible here, as your reasoning made explicit will model good habits of mind for your students.

Underlying any specific point here should be a healthy dose of respect and compassion for your students. Making a young person's life better, after all, is why we have made the decision to work in education in the first place!

As always, any specific questions can be directed towards Lead Tutors or other Tutorpedia staff.

## **Important Contact Information**

Tutorpedia, LLC.  
PO Box 170236  
San Francisco, CA, 94117

Tutorpedia's Office is at  
1005 Anza Street (at Arguello)  
San Francisco, CA, 94118

Phone: (415) 948-1585  
Fax: (415) 571-8085

Website: [www.tutorpedia.com](http://www.tutorpedia.com)  
Nonprofit: [www.tutorpediafoundation.org](http://www.tutorpediafoundation.org)

Blog: [www.thethickenvelope.com](http://www.thethickenvelope.com)

Seth Linden – Founding Director  
[seth@tutorpedia.com](mailto:seth@tutorpedia.com)

David Taus – Director of Operations and Education  
[davidtaus@tutorpedia.com](mailto:davidtaus@tutorpedia.com)

## **Additional Resources**

There is a wealth of educational resources out there if you know where to look. We've started to collect and catalog some of those resources in the Tutorpedia office – if you are looking for something just ask Seth, David, or Lead Tutors! They can almost always help you find what you need. Additionally, you can browse the list of our in-house resources online at <http://www.tutorpedia.com>.

At the Tutorpedia office, we have test preparation books and curriculum and content guides for all content areas, but we also have books and readings that address issues related to pedagogy, behavior management, lesson planning, school reform, education and society, teaching “soft” skills, working with students of various racial groups and socioeconomic statuses, educational psychology, and more.

Other relevant and important resources:

- California State Content Standards. These are extremely important when it comes to SES tutoring. We need to be sure that all our work ties back to what the California Department of Education has determined to be essential content knowledge at each grade level. You can find all the state content standards here: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>
  - English standards can be found here:  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/elacontentstnds.pdf>
  - Math standards can be found here:  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/mathstandard.pdf>
- ERIC – The Educational Resource Information Center. A database of scholarly articles about all topics related to education. <http://www.eric.ed.gov/> or access the database through the SFPL ([www.sfpl.org](http://www.sfpl.org))