



Remote Tutoring Sample: Cambridge

Fern Kaplan, Tobin Elementary

After the Cambridge School District's Tobin Montessori School was closed the spring due to the COVID-19 Virus, I continued to remotely tutor with three students of two of the teachers whom I had worked with during the school year. I continued to work with teacher Sumithra Rajagopalan's students, two girls named Maab and Wengel; I also continued working with teacher Leslie Jordan's student, a boy named XXavier. I was more than pleased that the two teachers wanted me to continue after the school had closed and all students were being taught from home via a learning app "Google Meets."

I learned that the teachers, the parents, and I all had a learning curve to get past and "get with the program" quickly so that the off-site tutoring/learning process could get started right away. Of course, it helped that I had been working with these three children starting fall 2019. I had never used "Google Meets" before and had only used "Zoom" one time before (with great difficulty). I had to learn this software app and I had to learn how to communicate with the students remotely. At first, the teachers each set up the "Google Meets" weekly appointments. Soon after, I was using "Zoom" to schedule appointments directly with the parents and students. It was at first a bit of a struggle for the parents and myself. I took tutorials and practiced setting up sessions with friends and family so that each Thursday, I would be able to send the invite and link to parents and we all could see and hear each other properly and move on the tutoring process. In each child's home there were the usual family things happening in the background. Sometimes in the foreground. Siblings were running around, pets were barking and total student concentration was a challenge. After a few sessions, things started to work smoothly on setting up, joining the session, and getting the students to focus.

I did not use any of the school resources, however I was resourceful and used my own books and materials. Since I had worked with each of the students during the school year, I knew exactly what each child found interesting. I had use of both picture books and books that they could read to me. XXavier loved to talk about wild animals (large felines) and insects (creeping, crawling and flying). He asked me about Dragons and Unicorns, both mythical creatures. I explained to him what that meant. The girls liked princesses and young hero characters. What I attempted to do each session was to "engage" each of them in a conversation, asking me questions, listening to my answer and then hopefully asking me questions. At first, both XXavier and Wengel were very shy and reluctant to express themselves. As we worked together each week, they opened up more and showed more of their personalities and opinions. Of course, learning how to read is key to literacy. However, feeling comfortable expressing one's opinions and, in my opinion, having an on-going dialog that continued each week was also important.

Moving ahead to this fall, I will make use of the school materials and curriculum that the teachers use along with a pre-set learning schedule for this new school year. The children have lost some time this year and making sure that all of the tools and resources are made available when I tutor remotely, is very important.

I am looking forward to a new school year, with perhaps some of the same students, or new students, who can benefit from my volunteer help.