

The Stigma of Tutoring

Dr. Brandy R. Daingerfield



Abstract

The following is an opinion piece on the perpetuation of negative associations with tutoring in the educational environment. The author challenges all educators to seek opportunities of exploration to avoid inadvertently perpetuating a negative stigma of tutoring. The author suggests creating an open dialogue between faculty and staff to improve connections and participation rates in tutorial services.

Keywords: tutoring, stigma, holistic learning, faculty and staff cooperation, developmental learning, remediation

The Stigma of Tutoring

In the United States today, tutorial services are often stigmatized as a simple intervention strategy that provides remediation to prevent academic failure (Dadgar, Nodine, Reeves-Bracco, & Venezia, 2014; Daingerfield, 2020; Gordon & Gordon, 1991; Ticknor, Shaw, & Howard, 2014). While trying to improve outreach and increase participation, many educational institutions may inadvertently perpetuate the negative perception of their tutoring services in names and marketing, which could unintentionally brand such services as remedial in nature (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2014). This further propagates the growing stigma attached to the tutorial profession and other academic assistance programs (Daingerfield, 2020).

At its core, a tutor's responsibility is to promote and encourage academic self-confidence, but how can that be done if the culture of the school perpetuates this sense of tutoring as an afterthought for students? When educators only promote tutoring for

the student when they deem it appropriate, that educator is essentially saying that they know more than the student does about the student's own academic efficacy and independence. Additionally, when a faculty member encourages the student to discard suggestions for improvement by the tutor, they unknowingly label tutors as less effective than the instructor, when research suggests that tutors build bridges between classroom instruction and practical application of learning objectives (Daingerfield, 2020; Herrmann, 2014; Linden, Teakel, Van der Ploeg, 2022; Marx, Wolf, & Howard, 2016; National Tutoring Association, 2016; O'Brien, Freund, Jantzi, & Sinanan, 2014; Oswald, 2016; Vick, Robles-Piña, Martirosyanm, & Kite, 2015). "The pedagogical value of tutoring is now well established, and technology has evolved, allowing the ancient practice of one-on-one tuition to become more widely available" (Linden et al., 2022, p. 42). It is imperative that the culture of schools and tutorial programs implement unique perspectives into planning and marketing. Every student that walks through the door brings their own individual circumstances, situations, and solutions into the lives of the staff and faculty with whom they interact. Educational professionals have experience that can assist students with whom they work, but the students also have something to offer that can enhance the educational professionals' learning experiences.

Colleges and tutoring programs need to take full advantage of the circumstances that put students in their path. If a student has taken the initiative to request tutorial support, all educators should do everything in their power to honor that initiative and en-

This article is brought to you for free and open access by the North Carolina Community College Faculty Association @NCCCS. It has been accepted for inclusion in *North Carolina Community College Journal of Teaching Innovation* by an authorized editor of NCCCFCA. For more information, please contact editor@ncccfca.org.

courage the student. This may mean completing a referral for the tutorial program, even if the student has not yet stepped foot in the instructor's classroom. It is not the faculty member's responsibility to decide that the student does or does not "need" tutorial support—that sort of thinking further perpetuates a negative stigma of tutoring that maligns services meant to help improve student retention and completion rates.

It should be every educators' goal to help the student become comfortable with being an independent learner; if the educator prevents the student's opportunity to grow by delaying that, then the educator may be the reason a student decides not to come to tutoring, or, even worse, decides to drop out of school altogether. That student gathered the courage to ask for help and to maximize usage of available campus resources; denying that request off-hand could destroy any chance that educator had of establishing a positive working relationship with that student. To break down barriers, educational institutions must break down their own. Educators must stop perpetuating negativity and encourage positivity; programs need to reach across the discipline, resource, and even faculty/staff differences to remember that every educator's goal is to help the student reach the student's educational goal. How can that be done without all educational professionals supporting one another and encouraging students to use the resources available on campus?

References

- Dadgar, M., Nodine, T., Reeves Bracco, K., & Venezia, A. (2014). Strategies for integrating student supports and academics. *New Directions For Community Colleges, 2014* (167), 41-51. doi: 10.1002.cc.20109.
- Daingerfield, B. R. (2020). *Value in Tutoring: A Phenomenological Investigation of Student Perceptions of Tutoring* (Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University). ProQuest.
- Gordon, E. E. & Gordon, E. H. (1991). *Centuries of tutoring: A history of alternative education in America and Western Europe*. University Press of America.

- Herrmann, K. (2014). Learning from tutorials: a qualitative study of approaches to learning and perceptions of tutorial interaction. *Higher Education, 68*(4), 591-606. doi:10.1007/s10734-014-9731-3
- Linden, K., Teakel, S., & Van der Ploeg, N. (2022). Improving Student Success with Online Embedded Tutor Support in First-Year Subjects. "A Practice Report." *Student Success, 13*(2), 42–50.
- Marx, J., Wolf, M. G., & Howard, K. (2016). A spoonful of success: Undergraduate tutor-tutee interactions and performance. *Learning Assistance Review (TLAR), 21*(2), 85-108.
- National Tutoring Association. (2016). *NTA Training Series Workbook: Basic Level Tutor Training*. Lakeland, FL: National Tutoring Association.
- O'Brien, H. L., Freund, L., Jantzi, L., & Sinanan, S. (2014). Investigating a Peer-to-Peer Community Service-Learning Model for LIS Education. *Journal Of Education For Library And Information Science, 55*(4), 322-335.
- Oswald, B. B. (2016). A SWOT Analysis and Preliminary Outcomes Assessment of a Student-Led Learning Center on a Regional Campus. *AURCO Journal, 22*179-201.
- Ticknor, C. S., Shaw, K.A., & Howard, T. (2014). Assessing the impact of tutorial services. *Journal of College Reading & Learning (College Reading & Learning Association), 45*(1), 52-66. doi: 10.1080/10791095.2014.849552.
- Vick, N., Robles-Piña, R. A., Martirosyan, N. M., & Kite, V. (2015). The Effectiveness of Tutoring on Developmental English Grades. *Community College Enterprise, 21*(1), 11-26.

Author's Note

The author has no known conflicts of interest to disclose. Correspondence concerning this article may be addressed to Dr. Brandy Daingerfield, Wayne Community College, P.O. Box 8002 Goldsboro, NC 27533. Email: brdaingerfield@waynec.cc.edu