

## Lesson Tips for AHeadStart Tutors

### Before a Lesson:

- **Content Revision:**

- a. Before a lesson you will obtain information/notes about your student from Melanie. Read which subject(s) and which achievement standards the student is taking. Revise the content of these so you are familiar with the overall content and structure.
- b. You will need (NCEA) books for revision.
- c. If you do not already have one for the subject you are teaching you can buy StudyPass revision guides at a discounted price through AHeadStart. You may also be able to borrow some. Booklets of NCEA exams are also available for loan, so please ask.
- d. NCEA and Scholarship exams are available <http://www.aheadstart.co.nz/ncea-xidc30636.html>
- e. Wanganui High School has a very good website with a multitude of resources. This includes their school test and answers, which are useful to give students who do all their homework and need more.
- f. Other written resources may also be available on the AHeadStart website, so if you have anything in particular you would like notes about please ask Melanie.
- g. Some practical models are also available for loan, or may be purchased by AHeadStart. If you have any suggestions please tell Melanie.

- **Lesson Planning:**

- a. After the initial lesson, lessons can be planned ahead. Aim to cover at least two concepts in a lesson, using the teaching tips.
- b. Have questions to ask the student prepared in advance. Try to use the student's textbooks and study guides as much as possible (see later).
- c. Lesson planning should take between 5 and 30 mins, depending on any revision you might need to do.
- d. Sometimes lessons do not go as planned. This may happen if you discover that the student needs help in a particular area which is different to the initial plan. The initial plan can be done at the following lesson or possibly for homework.

- Make sure you know where the lesson is to be held so that you can plan to get there on time

### **Initial Lesson:**

- **Topics:**
  - a. Ask what topics they have already covered in class and the topics they are doing currently.
  - b. Find out which topics the student like and dislikes, or finds difficult.
    - i. Ones they like should be checked by giving them homework, and marking the following week.
    - ii. Ones they don't enjoy need to be focussed on during lessons, unless the student is adamant they do not want to sit the paper in their NCEA exam. First though, ask them to give the subject a chance while you re-introduce it to them. They may find they enjoy it!
- **Standards:**
  - a. Make sure you have an accurate list of the Achievement or Unit Standards the student is taking through the year.
  - b. Note down assessment times through the year so you can know in advance what will be worked on in class. This helps in lesson preparation.
  - c. Find out what grades the student is aiming for so you know the level the student needs to be taught at and what to expect from them in terms of homework.
- **Textbooks:**
  - a. Note down the textbooks/study guides the student has from both school and of their own. These may be useful for questions or notes that they can read for homework. Keep these in mind when lesson planning.
  - b. Recommend books which are useful for the student. For some subjects there are particularly good revision guides. If you are unsure about this please ask Melanie.
- **School Week & Notes:**
  - a. Ask the student to show you what they have done at school over the past week, and what they have written in their notes.
  - b. It is a good idea to check their school notes are correct and fully cover everything in enough detail!
  - c. If required, add more explanation in addition to their school notes, as may be very helpful for them.
- **Student's questions:**

Ask the student if they have anything specific they would like to work on, or questions they would like to ask. Listen carefully and try to understand where they are coming from.
- **Test/Check:**
  - a. Use past (NCEA) exam papers (see later) or questions from a study guide on the topic they are currently doing.
  - b. Begin with medium questions and see if they know how to do them.
    - i. If they do move to harder questions, and explain misunderstandings as required.
    - ii. If they do not, move to easier questions.
  - c. Watch them carefully for indications if they are confident or confused. It will be apparent by how much they are concentrating.
  - d. If required, teach them how to understand the concept the way that you do.

## **Weekly Lessons:**

- **Greeting:**
  - a. Ask how the student's day or week was.
  - b. If the student had another event inside or outside of school you discussed the week before, ask how this was.
  - c. Maybe tell the student what you have been doing if it is relevant to something they are learning, or a hobby/sport etc they are interested in.
  - d. The aim is to create an atmosphere of collegiality, so that the student is happy to chat to you, but will also complete work when you ask them to.
  - e. Let the student chat for 5 mins if they want to and stop them at a natural place to start some work, by asking them a question.
- **Check Homework:**
  - a. If you gave them exam or study guide questions, mark these.
  - b. If their homework was to learn something, ask them questions about it, or test them with flashcards (come in the NCEA booklets the students get).
  - c. Help them through anything they found difficult and explain concepts where they need help in understanding.
- **School Week & Notes:**
  - a. Ask the student to show you what they have done at school over the past week, and what they have written in their notes.
  - b. It is a good idea to check their school notes are correct and fully cover everything in enough detail!
  - c. If required, add more explanation in addition to their school notes, as may be very helpful for them.
- **School Tests/Exams, NCEA Internals & Unit Standards:**
  - a. Ask at each lesson if any tests or Internal assessments are coming up soon.
  - b. Focus on NCEA Internals and Unit Standards for the week or two leading up to them. However, do not spend all the time on these to the extent that the External Achievement Standards are neglected.
  - c. If the student had any tests since you last saw the ask how these went, and note down the results.
- **Test/Check:**
  - a. Use past (NCEA) exam papers (see later) or questions from a study guide on the topic they are currently doing.
  - b. Begin with medium questions and see if they know how to do them.
    - i. If they do move to harder questions, and explain misunderstandings as required.
    - ii. If they do not, move to easier questions.
  - c. Watch them carefully for indications if they are confident or confused. It will be apparent by how much they are concentrating.
  - d. If required, teach them how to understand the concept the way that you do.
- **Homework:**
  - a. If the student is on the Platinum Plan definitely give them homework.
  - b. If they are on the Gold Plan give them homework unless they have lots of other school work to do.

- c. Homework should be for revision of previous topics or to enhance something taught in the lesson, usually related to the current topic being taught at school.
  - d. Using past exam questions, or entire papers is particularly effective. Please note: the NCEA Booklets given to the students do not
  - e. Other options include:
    - i. Flashcards
    - ii. Writing notes (if this is how they like to learn)
    - iii. Learning meanings of words
  - f. Memorising facts eg names of atoms and ions in chemistry, remembering coordinated geometry formula etc. It usually helps to give a few questions from a textbook, study guide or past (NCEA) exam paper.
- **Student does not complete homework:**
    - a. If a student doesn't do their homework find out the reason, if possible. Do not tell them off, as this results in a negative attitude to homework. It is better to give positive reinforcement, and remind them why homework is so important for learning. Give them the same homework the following week, with a little more and hopefully they will do it for next week.
    - b. Working through the beginning of the homework during the lesson can help get the student started on it, so they have the confidence to try it in their own time.
    - c. However, if they continually don't do homework, contact Melanie and we can talk to their parents, if necessary.
  - **School Homework:**
    - a. If students would like assistance with school homework, this is fine. Teach them by leading them in small steps through working of questions, or fully explaining all the requirements for longer paragraph and essay style answers. Don't do the homework for them!
  - **Records:**
    - a. Keep accurate records of the lesson on the Lesson Sheets. These will help for writing the Progress Report.
    - b. Think about what they have learnt and what they still need to work on. Use this for your lesson planning.
    - c. If the student is on the Platinum Plan fill in the past NCEA exams completed, and the grades the student attained. Also fill in if they have had school tests and the grades for any Internals or Unit Standards. This helps for lesson planning and the Progress Report.

### **NCEA Exams:**

These are one of the best means of preparation for exams, as students can usually do some questions after two lessons on a topic. The exams give them confidence as they become familiar with what is required to gain Achieved, Merit or Excellence.

- **Exam Structure:**

- a. NCEA exams have a particular structure as you will be aware. Make sure you explain this to the student.
- b. It is important to make the students aware of the particular phrases that are required for answers. These are usually used over and over again. The more past NCEA exams the student practises the more they will realise this. Use the marking schedule as a guide.
- c. Please remember that Physics has marks for "Writing descriptions or explanations" and for "Solving problems". Students need to be good at both types of questions to pass.
- d. Mathematics Exams, including Calculus and Statistics are no longer in order of easy to hard questions. Students who are aiming for achieved need to know the types of questions they can answer, so they don't waste exam time on something they haven't learnt.

- **How to use:**

- a. Make sure lots of exam questions are gone through together during the lesson. Then give some for homework and mark at the following lesson. It does not have to be the whole paper, but maybe selected questions.
- b. Ask students to time themselves doing practise papers, so they can aim to decrease the time required to match that recommended in the exam. This particularly helps students who panic in exam situations.
- c. Encourage students to always take the questions seriously, like it is the real exam. Correct all mistakes, but in an encouraging way to help them improve.

- **Marking:**

- a. Mark exam questions that are completed as they would be marked in the exam, using the marking schedule.
- b. The marking schedule is incredibly important as this tells you what is important for the answer. Follow this when checking through answers so exams can be graded. This gives the student feedback about how they are improving.
- c. Always show students what they could do to improve upon their answer if it is required.
- d. Please remember now that the marking system has changed. Exam papers are made of between three and eight questions. In subjects such as Chemistry and Biology Questions are made of many sub-questions which were previously counted as individual marks. This makes it more difficult to pass.

- **Teaching Tips:**

- a. Approach the teaching experience as a discussion with the student where they are actively involved. You can achieve this by asking them a question or their opinion.
- b. If they give you a thoughtful answer which is incorrect, try to lead them in the right direction by asking smaller questions to lead them towards the key concept.
- c. Never criticise ideas that don't fit with how you understand something and would teach it. Use these as a stepping stone from which to build on.
- d. Ask the student to explain a concept to you to check their understanding. For maths and Physics questions, you could ask the student to explain the steps in solving the problem, and then correct them when they go astray. This will demonstrate the knowledge they have and how confident they are with their knowledge. Sometimes students need their ideas clarified, sometimes a complete rehaul of their knowledge, or sometimes just confirmation that they do know the work and confidence to believe in it.
- e. Try to be concise and accurate.
- f. The simpler the explanation, usually the better. This can always be built on later once the student's understanding grows.
- g. Visual images and pneumonics work very well for memorising. Some students also like to memorise word answers, and like the tutor to read out answers to them so they can listen and write down at the same time.
- h. Analogies often work well eg water flow for electron flow.
- i. Try to link the topic to the student's daily life, or something they are interested in. Relevance helps a student become more interested in a topic.
- j. Go through questions step by step (at the student's own pace) to give the student confidence. Breaking questions down into the component parts (particularly for Maths and Physics) makes them easier for students to understand.