Volunteer Handbook
Welcome to New Haven Reads

We are excited to work alongside you in sharing the joy and power of reading. Our volunteers are a cornerstone in ensuring our programs give every child the opportunity to master reading and increase the odds of becoming a successful adult. Together, we are building a community of readers, one child at a time. Since 2001, we’ve worked with countless volunteers across the Greater New Haven area to transform the lives of children, their families, and the communities they live in due to the incredible power of literacy. We thank you for your dedication to the volunteer program, and promise that we will work diligently with you to support and encourage each and every student.

With gratitude,
NHR Staff

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About New Haven Reads

New Haven Reads, whose mission is to “share the joy and power of reading,” increases the literacy skills of children to empower their academic success by providing individually tailored one-on-one after-school tutoring, educational family support, and a community book bank, all at no cost to participants.

New Haven Reads began in 2001 when our founder, Christine Alexander, ran a yearlong citywide literacy initiative at the request of New Haven’s mayor. Since then, we have supported more than thousands of students and distributed millions of books back into the community, thanks to the help of our devoted volunteers.

Connecticut continues to have the largest achievement gap between its low-income students and their more affluent peers. A significant portion of students in New Haven schools are not at grade level for reading. With our dedicated, professional staff and the commitment of our volunteers, our free literacy programs support families in need and create skilled and confident readers. New Haven Reads transforms the lives of children, their families, and the communities they live in due to the incredible power of literacy.

Programs & Volunteer Opportunities

Weekly tutors commit to at least one hour a week and are paired with the same student consistently. Students range in age from 6-18. Tutoring hours run from:
- Monday-Wednesday 3 - 7PM
- Thursday and Friday 3 - 6PM
- Saturdays 10AM - 2PM

Substitute tutors are active weekly tutors, who volunteer during the periods of tutor decline times throughout the year. They receive periodic emails and sign up based upon individual availability.

Pre-K and Kindergarten Volunteers help preschool and kindergarten age students with early literacy skills in our small group program. Classes are taught by certified teachers and volunteers serve as a teacher’s aid. Tutoring periods run in one-hour intervals from Monday-Thursday 4-5PM and 5-6PM.

Homework Table Volunteers assist elementary school students with their homework at our Willow Street and Dixwell locations. Volunteer hours are Monday-Thursday 2:15-3PM.

Book Bank Volunteers work at the Community Book Bank, primarily sorting and shelving donations and packing book orders. Other tasks include running a field trip program and reading during these trips to children. Volunteer hours run from Mon-Wed 12-4PM and Thu-Fri 12-3PM.

Field Trip Readers help elementary school students choose books to take home and read a story to the group. They work Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays at 10AM.
Tutor Guidelines

1. Be Punctual
   Please arrive early, so you can have your materials prepared & be ready to greet your student. Verbally check in with NHR staff once you arrive.

2. Be Courteous
   You are sharing space with other tutors and students. Clean up your stations and allow the next pair to start their hour on time. Please put away any materials, books, pencils, etc. that you use.

3. Be Proactive
   Ask questions and keep us informed of changes or concerns. Call and email if you are going to be late or absent. Give us as much notice as possible.

4. Be Present
   Refrain from all cellphone use during tutoring hours (including texts, personal email, and calls). If there is an emergency, ask a staff member to cover for you as you take the call away from the tutoring area.

5. Difficult Situations
   Effectively manage your student’s behavior with the support of the NHR staff. You are not responsible for handling any major discipline issues that may arise. If we have not noticed a situation during tutoring time, please bring the student to the NHR site director or send someone to get us.

6. Parental Communication
   You are not responsible for communicating with parents. If anyone should approach you with a question about a child’s progress, the program, scheduling, etc. please direct them to one of the staff.

Important Items to Note

1. Do not leave personal items unattended.
2. Do not give out personal phone numbers or any social media information to students.
3. You may not socialize with students and families outside the New Haven Reads program without NHR and parent consent.
4. Transporting students or family members to and from NHR programs is not allowed.
5. Please keep your email address up to date with us.
6. Dress appropriately—work casual is fine.
Tutor Hour Framework

A Breakdown of the Tutoring Hour

*Note: This is just the recommended framework. You must complete each of the components within the hour, but how long each component takes is up to each tutoring pair.

A. Lexia

15–20 min.

Role of Tutor:
Observational

Helpful Hints:
• NHR is not as concerned about speed during Lexia exercises, as our students are still developing skills. Let your students know that we are not worried about speed, but want to ensure they understand the concepts being presented.
• If you student is randomly clicking with the mouse, feel free to take charge of the mouse and have your student point to the answer

B. Workbook

10–15 min.

Role of Tutor:
Instructional

Activity:
• New students take a paper test (in welcome folder) for placement, also known as the ETC Placement test
• At the end of each ETC workbook, students take an ETC Post Test. Required key can be obtained from NHR staff.
• Additional workbooks in series include: Beyond the Code, Jump Into Reading, Right Into Reading, Reading & Reasoning, Writing Skills, Wordly Wise

C. Oral Reading

10 min.

Role of Tutor:
Guided & Independent Reading

D. Choice Time

~5 min
(up to you!)

Role of Tutor:
Games, Arts & Crafts, Homework, etc.

Folder Notes
Record your student’s progress

Try these motivational strategies:
1. NHR prizes after finished Lexia levels
2. NHR prizes after finished workbooks
3. Choice Time: let student pick game, extra time
4. Stickers to reward good behavior, or completing work quickly

STAFF TIP

Tutor Resource/Game Section:
• Board Games
• Educational Games
• Your child may want to write a story, poem, or a letter. Ask NHR staff to assist with printing if it is to be typed.
• Arts & Crafts
• Seasonal Projects (i.e. holiday cards, bookmarks, ornaments, etc.)
Folder Notes

What are folder notes?
Folder notes are a way for tutors to share their observations about their student’s progress at the end of each tutoring hour. Folder notes are important record-keeping documents and a great means of communication with the staff.

Sample Folder Notes

06/10/14
Today Gael worked on Lexia and the workbook. The exercises on Lexia seemed very easy for him, and I think he could move up a level.

He is still having some problems with “b” and “d” identification. I would like to work on this more with him- can you provide some additional worksheets or other resources? He did do better with the identification as we worked on some examples, so I think we should work on it some more.

Also, we began reading Snow, and we alternated reading. He said he hasn’t read much, but when we took the time to think through a word, he was able to get it! Definitely something to continue practicing.

-NHR Tutor

Tips for folder notes!
» Always add the date and your name.
» Please do not use any diagnostic words with parents or in the folder notes (e.g. dyslexic, ADHD, autistic).
» Notes should be made on each activity and your student’s level of understanding. Any lesson that yields a high number of incorrect responses should be noted so that we can provide you with extra help for your student in that particular area.
» If a student is consistently struggling on Lexia or in their workbooks or if the levels do not seem appropriate for your student, please let the Site Director know so that the student’s levels can be reviewed further.

Important Keys

✓ Be positive! We want all of our students to feel welcome, to experience success, and to enjoy learning. Give them lots of verbal encouragement. We also have stickers, pencils, and erasers to give to your students as a special recognition of a great session.

✓ Be patient! Your student’s progress might not always be visible and it could be a slow process.

✓ Be hopeful and confident! Believe in the potential of your students and remain strong in your conviction that you can and will ensure your student’s success.

✓ Set goals! Set ambitious goals for your students’ academic achievement and pursue those goals relentlessly, creatively, and resourcefully.

✓ Be flexible! Your student may be absent, or you may be asked to cover for an absent tutor.

Getting to know your student is important and letting them get to know you too makes them feel comfortable, safe, and supported. Beyond just being a tutor, take time to talk with your student!

🌟 STAFF TIP
Tips from Tutors

“The thing I wish someone had told me before I started tutoring...”

» It’s probably better to sacrifice a little bit of tutoring time early on to make sure that your student likes and respects you.
» Tutoring is much better when you have a relationship beyond student-teacher.
» Regularly ask for advice from the NHR staff!
» Don’t get discouraged if things don’t go exactly as you planned they would.
» Don’t wear yourself out, or burn out. Prepare for kids’ occasional complete lack of motivation or even verbal response and no-shows.
» Reading with and discussing the reading with students can be thought-provoking.
» It takes time to perfect!

Encourage your student to take home a free book every time he/she comes to NHR! Studies have shown that being read to as a child and having books in the home are the two most important indicators of future academic success.

STAFF TIP

Our Commitment To You

» We are committed to providing you a safe and supportive environment.
» We will provide all the materials and training you need in our tutoring model.
» As a tutor, you’ll have direct communication with site staff- we’re here to answer your questions and concerns.
» We’re here to help you meet your goals for your student’s academic achievement and pursue these goals relentlessly, creatively, and resourcefully.
» We provide continued tutor trainings throughout the year.

Volunteer Perks

Book Club
Join our Book Club by emailing books@newhavenreads.org.

Appreciation Dinner
This is an informal and fun dinner where all volunteers and staff get to spend time together outside of NHR.

Site Social Events
Every year, NHR hosts a fun night of games, food, and socializing with volunteers and staff at each of the tutoring locations.
Testimonials

"Reading is a power and nobody can take your education away from you. It’s about tutoring, but it’s also about giving them life skills to take into their future endeavors.”
- Elise, Intern

"The kids I work with are so imaginative, and it feels great being able to encourage that creativity and be excited for them." 
- Juandiego, Tutor

"NHR is a wonderful asset to the community and I’m forever grateful for the help my child receives here."
- Parent

"You should go here it is the best place and one of my favorite places in the world and you are loved there a lot.”
- NHR Student

"One of my favorite things about working at NHR is watching the kids finally grasp something that has been so difficult for them in the past- the look in their eyes and the excitement written all over their face is something that brings me pure joy.
- Jess, Tutor

"It’s a good community and I can trust people here and I like that when you are done you get to play.”
- NHR Student

Other Resources

New Haven Reads also has various other resources for tutors on hand. If you think that any of these resources would be helpful for you or your student, please ask your site director, and we would be happy to provide it to you.

Substitutions for Tutoring Hour
One or more of the following activities may be used to substitute an element of the tutoring hour depending on your student’s needs:
• Sight word practice
• Educational games
• Reading skill work provided by the Site Director
• Homework- may include math homework

Tutor Trainings
We offer both in-depth general tutor trainings as well as topic-specific tutor trainings.

Interest Inventory for Children
An inventory of questions to help you get to know your student.

Resource Sheet: Fluency
Various tips and resources to help your student develop reading fluency.

Resource Sheet: Comprehension
Various tips and resources to help your student develop reading comprehension.

Resource Sheet: Vocabulary
Various tips and resources to help your student reinforce vocabulary during the read aloud.

Look online at our website for more tutor resources!
Notes
ADDRESS
Bristol
45 Bristol Street,
New Haven, CT 06511

Dixwell
101 Ashmun Street
New Haven, CT 06511

Science Park
5 Science Park
New Haven, CT 06511

Willow Street
85 Willow Street
New Haven, CT 06511

PHONE
Bristol & Saturday: 203-752-1923
Dixwell: 203-466-9863
Science Park: 203-691-1260
Willow Street: 203-691-7390
Pre-K/Kindergarten: 203-671-9806

EMAIL
volunteer@newhavenreads.org
If you have any questions about volunteering.

books@newhavenreads.org
If you have questions about the Book Bank, such as when we’re open or how to donate books.

information@newhavenreads.org
For general questions related to NHR.

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