**A Change to Scheduling Tutoring**

**Sessions between Tutors and**

**Students through a Sign-In System**

For:

Pathways to Education

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION
   1. Importance of student engagement in learning
   2. Methods of online virtual tutoring
   3. Success of online virtual tutoring
   4. Scope of this inquiry
2. DATA SECTION
   1. Effectiveness of virtual learning in a…
      1. Group setting
      2. One on one setting
   2. Scheduling Practices and results
      1. Interview results from Surry branch of Pathways to Education
   3. Results of volunteer and student surveys
      1. Current scheduling vs. survey results
      2. Student and Volunteer satisfaction
      3. Summary of results
   4. Areas for improvement
      1. Suggestions on practices made by Surrey branch staff
3. CONCLUSION
   1. Summary and interpretation of findings
   2. Recommendations
4. REFERENCES

**Abstract**

Pathways to Education is a program that introduces students in high school who are currently in need of aid in the school setting. The program includes a variety of benefits including financial support, educational support and emotional support. With the recent rising of the pandemic, Pathways to Education has decided to maintain tutoring sessions through online sessions. The change to adapt tutoring sessions scheduling time will not only provide students and volunteers with more diverse scheduling times, but also improve the quality of the tutoring sessions for both the students and volunteers. Additionally, the new system for scheduling will offer a predictable time structure for all parties involved (staff, volunteer and student).

**Introduction**

**Important of Student Engagement in Learning**

Student engagement is a vital part of learning, especially for individuals who are currently apart of Pathways to Education. According to Unifyed, student engagement builds better relationships with other students, staff and faculty, which helps to understand the content as a whole. This relationship improves the personality and enhances their skills that are necessary for driving change, and improving learning. With the new sign-in system, students are able to be provided with volunteers geared towards their specific needs. The new system builds important relationships between the tutor and the student to facilitate better learning.

**Methods of Online Virtual Tutoring**

Online tutoring may come in a variety of forms, including non-synchronous and synchronous learning. Non-synchronous learning includes flexible times of learning, based on the student’s availability, while synchronous learning includes coordinating times of availability with all parties involved, including the student, volunteer and staff. The tutoring may be invigilated through various applications including zoom, blackboard, discord, collaborate, etc.

**Success of Online Virtual Tutoring**

Virtual tutoring is a method of education which often comes with its own benefits and cons. According to a report on the value of online tutoring, it proactively creates opportunities to engage students with their community, and gain assistance in learning multiple disciplines. On average, students report that they retain information better and more effectively when obtaining aid from a tutor or a peer. On average, students perform better on their subjects and feel more motivated to learn when in a supportive setting. It is thus imperative to provide not only good service of tutoring, but also to build trust within the student, in order to better their success.

**Scope of this Inquiry**

In the following report, it will focus on how often do students finish their work during the tutoring session, how often are sessions cut short due to a lack of available tutors for the subject choice of the student, what time is preferred for volunteers to sign up for tutoring sessions, what is the most preferred time for students and volunteers to host tutoring sessions, and what is the spread of required subject areas students most require aid in? These questions will be explored through interview questions, survey results and research primarily focused on the “Effective Practices for Online Tutoring” by Bean V. Michelle, et al.

**Data Section**

**Effectiveness of Virtual Learning in a…**

**Group Setting**

Much like group work in a non-virtual setting, group work can be an effective method to motivate students, and encourage active learning. However, due to the introduction of an online medium, communication between students becomes dulled and interrupted. Online discussions require instructors to moderate the discussion activities and this requires time. In a primarily asynchronous learning environment, this can be tedious and time-consuming for instructors. The development of collaborative online discussions requires instructors to include sufficient time for learner discourse and moderation. To ensure learner success, instructors must actively work to ensure discussions are engaging and lead learners to high-quality learning outcomes. Much effort is spent on collaboration between students, and often, softer voiced students may be intimidated to ask for aid. The study found that students are less likely to ask for aid in group environments as oppose to one-on-one sessions, on average.

**One-on-One Setting**

Unlike the group setting, the one-on-one setting allowed students to obtain more specialized help and provided a closer connection compared to students in the group setting. According to the study, students in a one-on-one environment are more likely to ask for aid than students in a group setting of one or more peers. Thus the one-on-one setting is overall more effective in teaching students in a virtual setting.

**Scheduling Practices and Results**

**Interview results form Surry Branch of Pathways to Education**

Based on the interview with GM Melissa Lee, Vice GM Brenda Lao, and scheduling manager Ferrell Docherty, pathways to education is aware of the current improvements that can be made to aid both their students, but also their volunteers and staff. According to interviewees, on average, 5 hrs are spent on scheduling per week, not taking into account additional hours required from spontaneous changes to the schedule. In a similar line, the schedule changes almost daily, whether by the request of the student or volunteer. Although the schedule is able to shift substantially to the needs of both the student and volunteer, it becomes much more worrisome to schedule says one of the interviewees. It can take up to an hour’s time to ensure that a student or volunteer will be coming to a session, which greatly increases the stress involved when managing the schedules and time, says another interviewee. Lastly, all interviewees showed support in the implementation of a sign-in system for virtual tutoring, to aid in alleviating stress of scheduling from both the student, volunteer and staff. Staff also admit the viability for better assigning more appropriate volunteers to the needs of the students’.

**Results of Volunteer and Student Surveys**

**Current Scheduling vs. Surrey results**

According to the interviewers, the current scheduling system in other branches of Pathways to Education, slightly differ from the methods used in the Surry branch. The method used in the other branches include a daily update log of available timeslots for the following day for students and volunteers to apply to, in order to assign their availability for the following session. This greatly differs from the Surry model where sessions are planned months ahead, and adjustments are made based on a case-by-case basis. Such methods make scheduling more finite for the volunteers and students as they are able to expect the date of tutors days in advance; however, this method falls short when students wish to add or change their times of availability, which has been explained to happen frequently in the past. Thus, volunteers, students and staff have showed disagreement to the current methods to scheduling.

**Student and Volunteer Satisfaction**

Similar to the results described above, both students and volunteers showed interest in wanting to change the current methods of scheduling, in order to better accommodate each of their needs. Students often find themselves wanting to book more sessions beyond the listed dates. As a result, more volunteers are required at a moments notice, in order to provide to the students who, require aid. This system has created instances where students report to have less than optimal learning conditions during their tutoring session. Additionally, volunteers have shown to prefer a sign-in system with a day’s advance notice, over a month-advance schedule.

**Summary of Results**

**Approximately, how many times do you attend the tutor session per week?**

a. Once a week (10%)

b. Twice a Week (20%)

c. Three times a week (30%)

d. Four times or more a week (35%)

e. Never (5%)

**2. Approximately, how many times would you like to attend the tutor session per week?**

a. Once or twice (20%)

b. Three or four times. (30%)

c. Five or six times. (34%)

d. Seven or more times. (13%)

e. Never (3%)

**3. How are your experiences at Pathways to Education, during the virtual tutoring session?**

a. Excellent (15%)

b. Good (23%)

c. Satisfactory (17%)

d. Bad (13%)

e. Terrible (2%)

f. Undecided (30%)

**4. How effective are tutoring sessions?**

a. Excellent (17%)

b. Good (13%)

c. Satisfactory (20%)

d. Bad (19%)

e. Terrible (11%)

f. Undecided (20%)

**5. The amount of tutoring sessions per week is?**

a. Too many (20%)

b. Just enough (32%)

c. Too little (58%)

**6. Are you satisfied with the current scheduling for tutoring sessions?**

a. Yes (48%)

b. No (52%)

**Areas for Improvement**

**Suggestions on practices made by Surrey Branch Staff**

According to Surrey branch employees, some suggestions they would like to see implemented include a weekly check-in system that allows volunteers to submit their days of availability and provide opportunities for students who would like a tutoring session based on those times. Additionally, staff would prefer scheduling to be planned on a weekly basis, rather than a month-long schedule as it creates many holes for adjustment, whether from the student or the volunteers. This method is similar to the suggested sign-in system that is proposed in this report. Lastly, staff vocalized their need for a days advance notice for schedule changes as it creates much stress in changing the schedules on the day of the assigned tutoring date.

**Conclusion**

**Summary and Interpretation of Findings**

Online learning can be a very effective alternative to in-person schooling, especially in the recent development of the pandemic; however, it is imperative to create a support system that not only encourages student learning, but also provide staff and volunteers with the flexibility they need in order to provide the best support for the youth. Based on the findings, one-on-one sessions are the most effective learning tool in an online setting as it promotes relationship building, and better youth engagement in their learning, which has shown to improve retention of material and boost enthusiasm in learning. Based on the current system in place, it is clear that staff, student and volunteers wish to see change for a more flexible system that provides all parties with the plasticity they need in order to make the program as successful as possible. Such changes include a week-by-week or day-by-day scheduling system that promotes student and volunteer time flexibility. Additionally, staff wish to lay down ground rules on scheduling and cancellation of tutoring sessions in order to maintain order in the scheduling process.

**Recommendations**

Based on these findings and interpretations, it is suggested that Pathways to Education adopt a sign-in system to facilitate the organization of tutoring sessions. Such would include setting up a website which will create time-blocks which will allow student and volunteers to assign times of availability. This would be open from a certain time during the day, to a certain time in the evening, allowing staff to email the finalized schedule before the start of the following day. This method will not only allow students and volunteers to establish their own schedules with more flexibility, it will also allow students to obtain the appropriate aid that they need in a particular subject. Additionally, the restructured system will ensure that staff will not need to spend extra hours hounding for volunteers or students in order to schedule an impromptu tutoring session. Thus, I believe that this system will not only benefit the needs of the student, staff and volunteers, but it will also showcase Pathways to Education as a flexible organization, willing to make change in order to better provide to the needs of their youth.

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