



TUTORING & MENTORING

*Building Brighter Futures,
One Lesson at a Time*



*Handbook for Tutoring & Mentoring
An Adventist Community Service Publication*

Colette Newer and Gladys S. Guerrero

2nd Edition

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Table of Contents



Foreword by Sung K. Kwon	i
Introduction: Adventist Community Services	
Tutoring and Mentoring Program	1
Section One: Laying the Foundation for a Successful Program	7
Introduction	
Chapter 1: Discover Your Community	
Chapter 2: Purpose and Goals	
Chapter 3: Who, What, Where & When	
Section Two: Building the Team.....	23
Chapter 1: STARS Support System	
Chapter 2: Qualities and Conduct of a Volunteer	
Chapter 3: Recruitment and Screening	
Chapter 4: Team Positions	
Chapter 5: Orientation and Training	
Chapter 6: Partnerships	
Section Three: Running a Program.....	39
Chapter 1: Policies and Procedures	
Chapter 2: Marketing and Communication	
Chapter 3: Logistical Details	
Chapter 4: Evaluation	
Section Four: Resourcing the Vision	51
Chapter 1: Know What You Need	
Chapter 2: Simple Fundraising	

Section Five: Preparing Your Team for Action	61
Chapter 1: Choosing a Curriculum	
Chapter 2: Using the STARS Curriculum	
Chapter 3: Getting Started: Classroom Setup	
Chapter 4: Teaching Techniques	
Section Six: Creating a Learning Environment	85
Chapter 1: Safe Learning Environment	
Chapter 2: Center Policies and Procedures	
Section Seven: Mentoring: Building Relationships	101
Chapter 1: The Art of Mentoring	
Chapter 2: The Mentors Volunteers	
Chapter 3: Parent/Tutor-Mentor Relationships	
Chapter 4: Selection Considerations	
Chapter 5: Youth in Your Program	
Ending Words	
Appendix	119

The Theological Foundations of Holistic Ministry

By Sung K. Kwon



In four sentences Ellen G. White summarized the theological concept of holistic ministry: “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me’” (*Ministry of Healing* p. 143).

Holistic Ministry Defined

Jesus mingled with people, identified their needs, met their needs, and developed a trust relationship. Through the trust relationship He built a bridge, and then He said to the people, “Follow Me.” Jesus dealt with the whole person, not only the spiritual aspect of human life, but also physical, social, and mental aspects of the human being. His ministry was not focused on increasing the membership of organized religious institutions but on making the world a better place to live and preparing for eternal life. He truly was not only the Savior but also a social entrepreneur.

Jesus and His disciples were focusing on holistic ministry. They implemented ministries, and as a by-product of these ministries organized congregations were developed. Therefore, the purpose of the church was not to be a membership social club but a lighthouse to bring people to Jesus and to build the Kingdom of God.

How do we define “holistic?” According to Wikipedia the word holistic comes from a Greek word *holos*, meaning all, entire, and total and implies that all the properties of a given system (biological, chemical, social, economic, mental, spiritual, etc.) cannot be determined or

explained by the sum of its component parts alone. Instead, the system as a whole determines in an important way how the parts behave. The Hebrew/Greek Lexicon points out that the root word is *shalom* (peace, wellbeing, welfare, prosperity, safe, health, perfect, whole, full, just), indicating that God wants us to have a complete, safe, peaceful, perfect, whole, full life. In fact, this is the most important covenant God made with His children. Keeping the covenant relationship is our duty and responsibility as Christians, not only to God but to others.

Therefore, the purpose of holistic ministry is not only to proclaim the Good News, the Word of Salvation, but also to demonstrate the love of God to people who are in need. Glenn Rogers says, “It is balanced outreach that involves a proclamation of the Gospel as well as a demonstration of God’s love and concern for every soul. It is seeing and ministering to the whole persons.”

Why Holistic Ministry?

Especially in the 21st century the Christian experience and holist ministry is more important than ever before. In many traditional evangelism strategies churches argue and confront others over Biblical findings: 1) speaking through the logical mind set to prove the Bible speaks the truth; 2) believing that somehow through the conversion experience behaviors will be changed, and 3) converts will finally be welcomed at their fellowship. However, today most people are committing their lives to religion or church through the ministry of friendship. Through mingling and personal influence their behaviors are transformed, and as a consequence they develop a stronger commitment and accept Jesus as not only Savior but Lord of their lives.

Throughout Jesus’ ministry we bear witness of a genuine holistic approach toward humanity, especially those who are disadvantaged or marginalized – the poor, the sick, the unclean, the prostitutes and tax collectors. Jesus expanded the Kingdom of God to places, people and cultures that the Jews had never considered God to be interested in.

When John the Baptist was being held in prison and began to doubt his convictions that Jesus was the Messiah and sent two of his disciples to Jesus asking, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?” Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me” (Matthew 11:2-6).

Jesus was simply explaining the fulfillment of the Messianic job description in Isaiah 61 in a different way than John the Baptist and his disciples had expected. Rather than through the violent overthrow of the Roman Empire, it was coming person to person as the blind, outcasts, sick and captives experienced for themselves the life-transforming Good News of the Gospel.

Matthew 9:35 states that “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.” Here Jesus mingles with people by visiting the towns and villages where the people are, teaching the Good News and healing people who are in need. He grieves over the multitudes of people who were helpless and brought hope to their lives by ministering according to their needs.

Then Jesus commands the Great Commission in Matthew 28: 20, “Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” What are Jesus’ commands?

First, “Come to Me,” especially all who are heavy laden (Matthew 11:28). As people in need, regardless of whether it’s physical, social, mental or spiritual, we must come to Jesus in daily life devotion. He promises forgiveness, hope and assurance of salvation.

Second, “Learn of Me.” Jesus proclaims that “...I am meek and lowly in heart and you will find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29). The command indicates building a relationship between God and His people: knowing God, being connected with Him,

Four strategies of service:

1. **Relief:** Immediate suffering requires immediate help. Relief offers aid in response to an **urgent need**. Results are immediate, but also short-term, and temporary. Example: providing food and shelter following a disaster event
2. **Individual Development:** These programs empower people to improve his or her circumstances. This may take longer to see results, but the change is longer lasting. Examples: classes for job skills, addiction recovery, or English Language Learning.
3. **Community Development:** Does the community people live in have the resources needed to manage their lives? Affordable medical care, well-equipped schools and living-wage jobs are all part of healthy communities and puts the tools to manage life within the reach of residents. Examples: Low-cost legal help, and community gardens.
4. **Advocacy:** Use your voice on behalf of others. What policies or processes are restricting people from thriving? Speak to those in authority to shine a light and advocate for change.

Find these strategies in Appendix 1

not just worshipping God out of fear of punishment. John Milton said, “The end of all learning is to know God and out of that knowledge, we love and imitate Him.” It is to know God, not just know about God and people.

Third, “Believe in Me.” Jesus states on several occasions that He is God (John 14:1; 11; 17:21 etc.) and we must believe.

People throughout the human era continually seek for God; however, many end up with their own philosophy of life without finding God the creator, redeemer and judge. It is the duty and responsibility of Christians to bring souls to Christ, rejoicing in being part of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Fourth, “Follow Me.” This is the greatest calling. It is an honor and privilege to be part of God’s mission – His purpose. But the cost of discipleship is very great to bear, and many leave Jesus to follow their own will, life ambitions, and desires of self-fulfillment. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “The Christian life is not adding Jesus to one’s own way of life but renouncing that personal way of life for His and being willing to pay whatever cost that may require.” People come to Jesus willing to accept Him as Savior of their lives, but meet challenges in accepting Him as the Lord of their lives – self-denial and self-sacrificing love is not as easy as it seems. 1 John 3:16-19 says, “By this we know love: that Jesus laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our hearts before him.” By following Jesus we will know to whom we belong and whose we are.

Finally, “Abide in Me.” As God lives in us by the Holy Spirit, we must live in Him. As God the creator He is above us, as God the redeemer He is with us as Immanuel, and as God the judge He is in us as the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 2:20 we read, “I have been crucified with Christ, so it is no longer I who am living, but it is Christ who is living in me; and the life I am now living in the flesh, I am living in faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.”

Christ’s Method of Holistic Ministry

Jesus mingled with all types of people but did not become part of their groups in behavior nor share common values or principals of life. Even though Jesus was in the midst of controversial groups of people who had been labeled as outcasts by the norm of society, He chose not to take part in their attitudes, customs and behaviors. Jesus maintained

Christian values and Biblical principles regardless of His encounters and circumstances and demonstrated the love of God while proclaiming the Good News.

There are times when we as 21st century Christians do not want to mingle with people outside the four walls of our church nor outside our comfort zone. Throughout all levels of educational experiences, we have not been inclusive of people who were not within our boundaries (family, school, church, job, etc.). Perhaps we were taught not to mingle with people of the world who are “sinners.”

When we learn to mingle with people as Jesus did, we will truly be able to develop new relationships with our communities. We will break down the spiritual, geographical, cultural, class, race and physical barriers. We will begin to welcome anyone who walks through the doors of our churches. We will begin to develop an efficient network within the community, to cultivate a sense of belonging, to interweave the interests of church and community.

Jesus desired the best for all people. If we love God, it is inevitable that we will love His people and desire to do good for them. To love others (especially those who are suffering) is compassion in action. In fact, the theological concept of holistic ministry is that when we care for others who are in need we are actually caring for our Savior Jesus Christ. In Matthew 25:40, “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me’” (NIV). Caring for the suffering and outcast is the responsibility and duty of Christ’s disciples. Works of compassion do not secure salvation; they simply confirm that we belong to Christ and the kingdom of God.

Jesus showed sympathy for all people, not only family and friends but also enemies who had done injustice to Him. Mercy and sympathy are part of God’s character. Yet Jesus’ teachings created confusion within the conventional culture – they were unaccustomed to mercy, unlimited forgiveness and grace. Neither can we understand God’s values all the time. We want justice; however, we also have experienced grace in our own journeys. We must be irrational for God and His values. Luke 6:35-36 says, “But love your enemies, do well to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your father is merciful” (NIV). It is the Golden Rule of Christianity. It is not common sense, but it is God’s character and His values.

Jesus ministered to people's needs. Christ took the role of a servant leader. So as Christians, we are called to serve the welfare of humanity. We are commissioned by Christ to live a servant leader's life. In order to do this, we must pray for God's vision in our lives so we will see in the faces of all people the image of God.

Holistic Ministry in the 21st Century

In order to implement holistic ministry, first we must pray to God seeking after His will and intervention before we do anything else. It is God's ministry in which we are invited to participate; it is not about self-recognition and/or accomplishment. Second, we should listen to the cries of our communities. We must identify the needs of the people so we can provide relevant services according to reality. We should listen with empathy. Third, we should look for opportunities to serve, connecting people between churches and communities so true fellowship can be experienced.

When God came from heaven to earth, He modeled the mission of the church, which is outreach. Therefore, we ought to proactively reach out to our communities. Each church should provide at least one of the four general types of holistic ministry listed below to meet the needs of the community.

Relief Ministry is simply meeting the immediate physical needs of people. No strings attached; no expectations. Individual development includes transformation ministries that empower a person to improve physical, emotional, intellectual, relational or social status.

Community development improves local jobs, health care, housing and education. Structural change focuses on unfair political, economic, environmental or cultural institutions or systems. For details on developing these ministries see Ronald Sider's book *Churches that Make a Difference*.

In her book *Restorers of Hope: Reaching the Poor in Your Community with Church-based Ministries that Work*, Amy L. Sherman describes three community outreach models for implementing various types of holistic ministry: settlers, gardeners and shepherds. Settlers concentrate on the neighborhoods where their churches are physically located and work for the transformation of these neighborhoods from inside out.

Gardeners develop a ministry that connects with neighborhoods outside their immediate area, which they view as an extension of their own church (spiritual home) in the same way homeowners view their gardens as an extension of their houses. Shepherds primarily serve the specific needs of one targeted population rather than a geographic neighborhood.

This focus prevents churches from attempting the impossible task of providing all the solutions/services for an entire community.

Doubtless, it takes a commitment to provide holistic ministry. All meaningful things require a commitment to invest our time and resources. But as congregations formulate clear goals and continually promote holistic ways to reach out to the community, soon they will begin to have a successful ministry because they were faithful to their calling as a change agent, being the salt and light of the world.

Final Thoughts on Holistic Ministry

People need not only to hear the Gospel but to see Jesus through the life of His disciples. As Bible believing Christians we may have “the truth,” but have we earned the right to share the truth? Have we earned the trust of our fellow humans?

Just as God came down from heaven to the world, we must go out into the world to reach people where they are. We must be instruments of God’s will. That is our calling: it is our mission – the reason for our existence.

Therefore, we should not focus on successful ministry through quantity growth (church membership expansion) but concentrate on the outcome of individual lives — how we can influence our community and make a difference in each person’s life. Is our community a better place to live because we as Christians invested our lives for others?

Holistic ministry is being faithful to our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. When we are faithful, we will have successful outcomes. When we walk with Jesus in a faithful journey, we will grow in His light and His will.

Let us pray for *shalom*!

INTRODUCTION: STARS Tutoring and Mentoring Program



Why Literacy?

You may be wondering how literacy/mentoring presents an opportunity for ministry in your community, when there are scores of existing programs already addressing this need. Is there room for another tutoring or mentoring program? When you are cognizant that a literacy gap continues to be a reality in the United States, especially after COVID 19, and that children are still falling through the cracks, the answer is an unequivocal “Yes!” Let’s consider some startling facts:

- By age four, children from low-income families are hearing 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers... putting them at a disadvantage even before they enter a classroom, and this word gap can lead to disparities not just in vocabulary size, but also in school readiness, long-term educational and health outcomes, earnings, and family stability even decades later.¹
- In the United States, the typical middle-class child enters first grade with 1,000 to 1,700 hours of picture book reading time; a low-income child averages just 25 hours.²

The implications of the growing literacy gap complicate exponentially when we consider the literacy impact of COVID 19 on low-income children. According to The Annie E. Casey Foundation in their 2024 blog article “Pandemic Learning Loss and COVID-19: Education Impacts”, “Unprecedented drops in learning from 2019 to 2022 amounted to decades of lost progress.”³ Imagine the impact on those children who were

1. “Bridging the Word Gap Challenge” Challenge.gov <https://www.challenge.gov/toolkit/case-studies/bridging-the-word-gap-challenge/#:~:text=Summary,than%20their%20more%20affluent%20peers>.

2. McQuillan, J. (1998). *The Literacy Crisis: False Claims, Real Solutions*. Heinemann.

3. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Pandemic Learning Loss and COVID-19: Education Impacts (July 8, 2024) <https://www.aecf.org/blog/pandemic-learning-loss-impacting-young-peoples-futures>

already behind academically. They had to adapt to remote learning which depended on internet access and adequate equipment (i.e. computers, tablets, or Chromebooks). If they were able to access those, then they had to adapt to curriculum adjustments, distractions at home or from other students, getting the teacher's attention if they needed help, as well as the heaviness of isolation, little to non-physical activity, and the anxiety for their own safety and their loved ones.

This gap, if not addressed, impacts not only their future, but the country's. According to The Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Millions of American children get to fourth grade without learning to read proficiently, and that puts them on the high school dropout track. The ability to read by third grade is critical to a child's success in school, life-long earning potential and their ability to contribute to the nation's economy and its security."⁴ In addition, researchers have established the correlation between illiteracy and incarceration rates. "In a study conducted in 2008 and 2009, researchers found that one in every ten male high school dropouts was incarcerated or in juvenile detention, and the rate of incarceration for high school dropouts compared to college graduates was almost 63 times higher."⁵ In other words, if the children learn how to read during their formative years, they are more than likely to remain in school and be successful. Over time, many of these children and youth grow into adults who live with the shame and pain of illiteracy. Their inability to read will impact every facet of daily living including graduation, employment/promotion, health, longevity, and family life.

Consider the following:

- In the 2022-23 academic school year, according to testing scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only 33% of fourth grade students were reading at or above NAEP standards for proficient reading. Only 63% of fourth grade students performed at or above basic standards for reading.

4. The 2010 Kid's Count Special Report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation "Learning to Read: Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters"

5. Packer, JJ (2024), "Access to high-quality literacy support can reduce incarceration rates". <https://readingpartners.org/blog/literacy-support-can-reduce-incarceration-rates/#:~:text=Reading%20proficiency%20and%20recidivism&text=Notably%2C%2078%25%20of%20incarcerated%20individuals,reading%20proficiency%20for%20those%20imprisoned.>

- Prioritizing reading proficiency for elementary school students, especially Black and brown students, is one of the most important ways we can fight for social justice, equality, and equity for future generations.

As you can see, the need is great. While there are many community organizations that offer tutoring and mentoring services, there are church members who have a specific interest in seeing what their church is doing to alleviate illiteracy. Members who want to help their community and want to align their efforts with their own denomination.

Adventist Community Services and Office of Volunteer Ministries in Partnership

Adventist Community Services (ACS) and the Office of Volunteer Ministries (OVM) STARS Tutoring & Mentoring is an early intervention program that impacts the lives of under-served community children and their families. We provide educational services in which volunteer tutors supply the individual attention a child needs to achieve academic excellence. ACS/OVM offers the most common types of tutoring including individual, small classes and study centers or homework help centers. And we provide essential, easy and ready-to-use resources to help you get the job done.

Adventist Community Services is local Seventh-Day Adventist church addressing the needs of their communities, neighborhoods and cities. The Adventist church at the highest level has renewed its commitment to community services and redoubled its efforts to support and encourage this important ministry.

The mission of Adventist Community Services (ACS) can be stated very simply: *To serve communities in Christ's name.* The values which have shaped ACS are traditional Christian values: the potential of each individual to reflect the image of God; the dignity which is inherent in every person; and the importance of quality in human life. ACS approaches the person as an integrated entity comprised of physical, mental, social and spiritual facets. ACS works on behalf of people of all races, religions, genders and social economic levels. ACS strives for excellence in all it undertakes. It accepts accountability for the use of its resources and the implications of its actions. It respects the legal standards that apply in the countries and communities in which it functions and upholds standards of integrity in its activities. ACS upholds the value of a modest lifestyle among its employees and volunteers. ACS also fosters dynamic relationships with other helping organizations.

The bottom-line principle that guides ACS/OVM is that its mission parallels the ministry of Jesus, who came for the purpose of undoing the devil's work (see 1 John 3:18). Jesus focused His ministry on the needs of people. He grieved over the multitudes who were helpless and brought hope to their lives by ministering according to their needs.

Jesus dealt with the whole person – not only spiritual aspects but also the physical, social, and mental aspects. Jesus won their confidence by building trust relationships. It was not intellectual debates over theological issues but compassionate genuine love that touched people's hearts and inspired them to trust in God.

If we love God, it is inevitable that we will love people. To love others is compassion in action, not only toward family and friends, but also for people who are marginalized or disadvantaged. In fact, the theological concept of holistic ministry is that when we care for others we are actually caring for our Savior Jesus Christ. In Matthew 25:40 we read, "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (NIV).

The goals of ACS/OVM Tutoring and Mentoring ministries are to positively impact the lives of children and their families through providing personal guidance and to help students achieve their potential through educational services. Through this holistic ministry, we can give new hope and motivation to people who are struggling, discouraged or afraid. As we seek God's guidance, listen to the challenges of the people in our communities, and look for opportunities to serve and connect we will demonstrate the love of God and experience the genuine fellowship of His kingdom.

History of the Tutoring and Mentoring Program

In the summer of 1997, Adventist Community Services (ACS) and the Office of Volunteer Ministries (OVM), formerly the Adventist Youth Service Network, responded to a national call from the Presidents' Summit on Volunteerism making a commitment on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to our nation's children. The goal of the summit was to mobilize charitable organizations across the nation to meet the needs of America's children and youth, with special attention given to children from low-income households who live in challenging environments (crowded schools, neighborhood violence, drugs, etc.) that make learning difficult.

ACS/OVM pooled resources to create a national initiative to combat illiteracy. The objective was to impact the lives of 10,000 children and youth by mobilizing 3,000 volunteers to start 100 tutoring and mentoring sites in the local communities where volunteers live, study and work. Within four years we met our objective working in close collaboration with ACS affiliate agencies, inner city programs, hundreds of local leaders/volunteers, community and civic groups, and donors and funding organizations. Members of the Seventh-day Adventist church responded in overwhelming numbers. They committed their time, talents, resources and expertise to ensure that children in their communities received the attention necessary to read proficiently by the third grade.

Over the years community needs changed and many sites modified their programs to fit the interests and needs of volunteers and families. However, in 2024, it was recognized that many children's literacy skills were falling behind in the wake of COVID school disruptions and other societal trends. The partnership between the two departments was renewed with new leadership and focus. ***STARS (Sharing the Adventure that Reading Starts) Tutoring and Mentoring Initiative*** was formed.

On behalf of Adventist Community Services and the Office of Volunteer Ministries, we thank the volunteers who are responding to the call. They are making a difference in the life of children!

While the program has undergone some structural changes in how it operates, tutoring and mentoring still remains a viable and relevant ministry. We believe this program is worthwhile and know there is still work to do.

Is This Outreach for You?

Volunteers who are committed to helping children read are needed to operate STARS literacy sites. This manual is one resource to help you. To learn more, or submit an online information request, visit www.communityservices.org/stars

Join the movement and open the world of reading to children in your community!



SECTION ONE:

Laying the Foundation for a Successful Program

Introduction

An effective community program is intentional, consistent, and connected to its community. The following section is designed to help you build a program that will make the most of your efforts and serve your community in ways that they are looking for.

On the next page is a simple planning checklist you can use in setting up a STARS Tutoring and Mentoring site. These considerations, among others, will give shape, definition and structure to your program.

Each step is important to build a strong and effective program. At times it may be tempting to take shortcuts and omit steps in the interest of time or ease. However, you are encouraged to take your time to create a program that will stand the test of time.

Each section includes step-by-step instructions. Each decision should be considered in light of how it will impact the people you serve. Intentionally keeping them at the forefront of your decision-making will give your STARS site greater impact.

Helpful forms are included along the way, but we encourage you to **personalize and reproduce the forms for your STARS site.**

Remember that your site is a representative of Adventist Community Services and should reflect the care and dignity we afford all clients as well as display the Adventist Community Services logo. Even more important, **your program is a representation of God's love and should be run in a manner reflects this: inclusive, safe, welcoming and compassionate.**

Program Planning Checklist

Use this checklist to help you define and set the parameters of your program.

- ☐ Understand your community and children's literacy needs
- ☐ Define what you want to accomplish
- ☐ Decide the:
 - Children you want to serve
 - Programming you will offer
 - Location
- ☐ Build your team
 - Church Board vote to accept this new program
 - Register your site with the North American Division STARS Program
 - Identify key roles needed
 - Develop your application and screening process
 - Schedule training and orientation
- ☐ Identify and meet potential partners
- ☐ Develop policies and procedures
- ☐ Set calendar and schedule
 - Set weekly program schedule
 - Parent Open House date
 - Program beginning date
 - Annual calendar with breaks and holidays
- ☐ Identify key marketing strategies
- ☐ Set up record keeping systems
- ☐ Create a budget

Chapter 1: Discover Your Community

A Community Assessment

All community work begins by exploring the attitudes, priorities and needs of those who live and work there. Even if you already live or work in your community, you should begin with fresh curiosity about what is happening around children's literacy. Sometimes this is referred to as a Community Assessment.

If you have never completed a Community Assessment, there's no need to be daunted by the task. You are simply opening yourself up to new information and seeing your community from a fresh perspective.

You will learn the answer to questions like:

- What are the literacy rates of elementary children in area schools?
- What resources do different schools have for children who are falling behind?
- Who else in the community is concerned about children's literacy?
- What other tutoring options are available to families? Are they affordable?

You will notice a lot of questions in this chapter. That is because this is your turn to listen and learn. What you learn will help you make informed decisions about your program. Following are some different ways you can do this.

Online Research

Begin with simple online research. You can find statistics about what is happening through news articles, census data or other available sites. The webpage for your state or territory's department dedicated to public education is another great resource, often having statistics about each school such as number of students, test scores and languages spoken.

Note: what you are learning about the students at different schools and which schools have students with lower reading scores.

As you learn, additional questions may come to mind. Questions like:

- Why are these children falling behind?
- What is already being done to address the problem?
- Where is help being offered, and is it accessible to those who need help? (financially, geographically and schedule-wise)

Along with the information you are learning, keep note of these questions and see if you can find answers as you continue the process.

Observation Tour

Another way to learn about your community is to simply walk or drive around the neighborhood and observe what you see.

- Who do you see?
- Where are people gathering?
- When are they gathered?
- What forms of transportation are they using?

It is important that you clear your mind of expectations and judgements and see your community for how it is. Simply gather information about **who** you see, **what** you see, **where** you see it and **when** you see it. **You are not looking for why.**

It is too early to make interpretations about what you see. There are history, policies and other influences that you will learn about when you meet and talk with people. Be careful about going into those meetings with your mind already made up.

An Observation Tour is a great exercise to get others involved in. Your church board members, potential volunteers, or others can help. More information about organizing an Observation Tour can be found in Appendix 2 or search online for information about Windshield Surveys or Walking Surveys, other common names for this activity.

And while you and your team are out walking or driving, take the opportunity to pray for those you see. Allow the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see your community with an open perspective.

The Observation Tour will generate more questions to take you to your next step: interviewing community leaders and others working with or interested in the wellbeing of children.

Interviews: Learning through Listening

The next step is to begin **talking to people** who can provide additional information and insight into children's literacy in your community. Begin with a short list of people you feel would care about this issue. Examples include school principals, teachers, parents, after-school program leaders and others who work with children.

Call them or their office and ask if you can have 30 minutes of their time to talk. You might say something like: *"Hi, this is (your name). I am a part of the (your church). I have been learning that some children in my community may be struggling with literacy. I am wondering if I can make an appointment to hear your perspective on the issue."*

Questions will vary depending on whom you are interviewing, but in general it is best to begin with understanding the good things that are happening before asking about the challenges. Appendix 3 has a sample interview that will give you an idea of questions.

Each person you speak with will have a unique perspective. Enjoy learning the insight they offer and continue piecing together a picture of children's literacy in your community.

Don't forget to tap into the network they represent. At the end of each interview, ask: **"Who else would you recommend that I speak to?"** This powerful question will expand your network and give you deeper connections in the community from the outset. Your diligence will let them know you care, build relationships that, and connect you to potential partners, volunteers, and families you seek to serve.

While you listen to your community leaders, keep in mind these upcoming questions and make sure you are getting the information to answer them.

- What children will you want to focus on serving? How will you connect with them?
- What types of programming would be beneficial to the children you want to serve?
- Where would be a good location that they and their guardians can easily access?

- What resources are available to tutoring and mentoring sites in this community? Keep an ear out for both financial as well as material help.
- Who would be a good partner in this initiative?

Begin making a list here of people you will begin with. Do not forget to include your church pastor on the list!

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- _____

Discover Your Church

Remember to take a fresh look at the **in-house resources at your church**. Seventh-day Adventist congregations are filled with talented and gifted individuals along with other vital resources. Consider the physical plant and notice spaces that may serve a program as the fellowship hall, classrooms, parking lot and bathrooms.

Talk to your pastor and members and listen to their thoughts and interests in a tutoring and mentoring program. Remember there are many roles that can be filled, and training is available for ones, like tutors. Volunteers do not need to be expert teachers to be involved.

Commit to the Process of Discovery

You may find it tempting to skip the process to (re)discover your church and community in the rush to get started. **Please don't!** Learning and talking to your community will save you time in the long run and make you more effective. It will help you:

- Understand the issues from different angles.
- Map out the existing services for children.
- Learn what resources are being offered to strengthen children's literacy.
- Evaluate the interest of others in addressing the issue.

The information you learn will not only help you build a solid foundation for your STARS site; it will serve as a reference throughout the program's lifecycle.

Problem Tree

One way to synthesize what you have learned about children's literacy in your area is to create a Problem Tree (see the example on the following page). You'll see that children's literacy has already been placed on the trunk of the tree. Below, **among the roots, list the causes of the problem which you've identified.** What are the issues that are contributing to low literacy rates? This can vary by community, so be sure you are not making assumptions about the people you will be serving.

Now move to the top of the tree – **among the branches – and list the outcomes of this problem.** What is happening in people's lives, families and community because some do not have adequate reading skills. These may be current or future outcomes.

The problem tree can be a tool to communicate with others about the problem. If you run a successful tutoring and mentoring program, you can expect that the outcomes at the top to change for the better.

In addition, you can plan a program to address any of the root causes or branching outcomes and affect the problem in a different way. Move one of the root/branch elements the trunk of the tree and see what happens.

Doing this exercise will help you communicate with your volunteers and donors about the difference your program will be making in the community.

Outcomes

Lower
graduation
rates

Add your own:

Under
employment

Frustration/
depression

More
classroom
disruptions

Social isolation



Children reading below grade level



Interruptions to
education:

- COVID
- Frequent moves/
evictions

Under-
resourced
School

Add your own:

Different
learning
abilities

Language
barriers for
student or
at home

Root Causes

You can download Problem Tree in full color at
www.communityservices.org/acs/tutoring

Chapter 2: Purpose and Goals

Introduction

You won't know if you have reached your destination unless you know where you are heading! Identifying the motivation that drives you and your volunteers to offer tutoring and mentoring services will become your guiding light when making decisions in the future.

While the purpose of a program to increase children's literacy will be similar from site to site, every STARS site is also unique. Your program is situated in a community that is different from other communities. The school systems may be facing different challenges, and families facing different challenges. Even your church and volunteers bring their own experiences and motives that will help shape the program's overall purpose. It is important that each program defines its own purpose and goals.

The purpose and goals will lay the foundation of your work and help others identify who you are and whether they want to be a part of it. Whether a potential participant, donor or volunteer, your purpose will help you connect in a very basic way.

Program Purpose

The purpose is a clear statement of what the program is trying to achieve. It is the "why" you think a tutoring and mentoring site will add value to your community.

Your purpose might emphasize:

- **Reading improvement** for early learners who are behind grade level.
- **Mentoring relationships** that build confidence and motivation.
- **Safe, faith-filled spaces** where children feel loved and supported.
- **Equity and access**, helping children from low-income or underserved backgrounds thrive.

A strong purpose gives your program direction. It helps you choose the right curriculum, recruit the right volunteers, and communicate your goals clearly to families, schools, and community partners.

An example would be: “Our program helps 1st–3rd graders build confidence in reading through weekly tutoring and mentoring in a caring, faith-based environment.”

You can revisit and refine your purpose over time as your program grows and changes. Keep the Purpose Statement simple. One or two sentences is enough and can be built on by setting clear and specific goals that will help you achieve this purpose.

What is your core motivation for beginning a STARS tutoring and mentoring site? What, specifically, would you like to see in the future of the children and families you serve?

Setting Goals

Once you’ve chosen a clear purpose, the next step is setting goals. Goals help you turn your purpose into action. They let you measure your impact and guide your decisions about curriculum, scheduling, partnerships, and volunteer training.

Program goals answer the question: **“How will we know our program is making a difference?”**

Effective goals are SMART:

- **Specific** – Clearly state what you want to achieve.
- **Measurable** – Use numbers or indicators to track progress.
- **Achievable** – Set goals your team and students can realistically meet.
- **Relevant** – Make sure the goal supports your program’s purpose and addresses real needs.
- **Time-sensitive** – Set a timeframe to meet your goals.

SMART goals keep your program focused, organized, and accountable.

An example of a SMART goal is: “By the end of the school year, at least 70% of participating students will improve one reading level, as measured by curriculum assessments.”

You don’t need a long list—just a few clear, meaningful goals to start. Think about:

- **Academic goals:** reading level gains, sight word mastery, improved comprehension
- **Relational goals:** consistent attendance, increased student confidence, strong mentor relationships
- **Faith-based goals:** Some families have strong feelings about the religious ideas their children hear. You will need to be discerning about how you navigate this. Whatever you do, make sure students feel valued and loved by God, and that they understand basic Christian stories and principles through the way you relate to them. No matter what, though, Christian principles and values can always be lived and demonstrated in our lives and ministries. What will this look like on your site?
- **Community goals:** building trusted connections with families or local schools

Revisit your goals periodically as a staff. Celebrate progress and make changes as your program grows.

Tip: Involve your team in both identifying the purpose and setting goals—volunteers are more engaged when they help shape the program.

List 3-5 goals you hope to achieve. Be “SMART” with them!

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Chapter 3: Who, What, Where, & When

Now that you have a sense of what is happening in your community, it is time to make decisions about your program. A careful analysis of the results of your needs assessment will reveal trends and common characteristics about individuals who are struggling to read.

Who Will You Serve?

What did your research tell you about which children are falling behind on their reading levels? Is there a particular grade level that sees a decline? Are there any differences between gender or nationality? It can also be helpful to note if there are any barriers to serving them, such as language, which you should be aware of.

Remember, no child in need of assistance should be turned away regardless of race, color, country of origin, language, gender or religious affiliation. We want all children's God-given potential to shine and that includes the ability to read.

Also note where these children are at. If it is a particular school where these children attend, or a particular apartment complex where they live, that may be a good place to target marketing efforts.

On the next lines, note the children you would like to serve and where they are. (e.g. 2nd graders at XYZ elementary school)

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What Programming Will You Offer?

The core of STARS Tutoring and Mentoring is literacy. However, children who struggle with reading will often have additional academic needs. They may struggle to complete homework in a timely way, lag behind in other subjects or simply dislike learning. Consider the academic context of the child and what programming would support their learning and academic career in a holistic way.

A few options include:

- 1. One-to-one or small group reading curriculum.
- 2. Homework help
- 3. Group activities: storytelling, games, music, or field trips can provide time to build relationships and make learning funService opportunities

Describe the programming that will take place at your tutoring and mentoring site.

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Where Will the STARS Site Be Located?

Tutoring programs may be conducted in a variety of sites including public and church school buildings, neighborhood centers and other venues, depending on local needs and availability. Tutoring should not be conducted in private residences. Recognized, official standards for safety must be met in each location.

When evaluating a potential site consider the following:

1. Convenient location: how will students get to the site for tutoring sessions? Is it convenient for guardians to pick them up following the session, and is it accessible to people with mobility or other special access needs?
2. Conducive to learning: What is the atmosphere of the space you are considering? Is it quiet, attractive and colorful?
3. Safety: You never want to place a child in danger making safety considerations a high priority. This includes safety around:
 - i. **Exterior:** Imagine how students will get to their tutoring sessions. Check for barriers such as the need to cross a busy street, lack of sidewalks or poor parking options if they are driven.
 - ii. **Interior Classroom Space:** An open space with good visibility so adults can see what is happening in all spaces is best. Children have been harmed in discreet corners, and you do not want that possibility in your program. Check if there is enough space for storage and small groups to meet where noise will not become an issue.
 - iii. **Bathroom facilities** that are accessible to children and adults can accompany them safely.
 - iv. **Kitchen:** If you are going to serve snacks consider what kitchen facilities you will need to store and serve them safely.

What location(s) do you feel would be good options for your STARS site?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

When Will the STARS Site Operate?

Weekly one-hour sessions of teaching time is the minimum amount of learning time needed to be effective for connecting with and teaching students. However, more will give your team the opportunity to include a wider variety of activities, identify and address individual challenges and for the children to practice more.

With this in mind, your next challenge is to juggle the different needs of key participants and create a schedule that will allow maximum participation for everyone involved: yourself, tutors, students, parents.

Below is a **sample schedule** that considers the following:

- What time children get out of school
- Adults able to pick up after work
- Volunteer availability
- Children home for dinner and only need a snack when arriving

Days and Hours **Tuesdays and Thursdays:** 3:30pm to 5:30pm

Months of Operation: September – November | February - April

Breaks: Thanksgiving week, Spring Break in March

Will there be a summer session? Yes No

If so, what dates? Two weeks in mid-July

What will the activity focus be? Reading Camp

In addition to the operating schedule, a general calendar should be developed that identifies additional key dates. These include:

- The above months and days of operation.
- **Start date for the program.** Many of us need the accountability of a deadline to get moving. Setting and advertising a start date galvanizes the team's efforts to plan and prepare. Many good programs never get off the ground because a simple date to begin was never set. Choose a reasonable time frame and get busy!
- **Date for an Open House** for potential parents and students to learn about the program and see the learning area. This is a great time to answer any questions and register students.

- **Volunteer schedule.** It is important that each volunteer understands that you and others are relying on them to be present and prepared at particular times. A clear schedule of when each volunteer is “on duty” will help minimize confusion and missed responsibilities.

Use the Schedule Template in Appendix 4 to sketch out an initial **schedule for your STARS site.**