

Librarians Asked to Support Tutor.com for Kansas State Library

by Jeff Hixon, Deputy Director, Statewide Resource Sharing

I haven't worked a reference desk for a long time. Librarians and patrons alike seem happy with this. Nobody misses the faces I used to make when young library visitors would ask for help with homework - especially math. Why I was ever granted a library degree without taking remedial algebra is beyond me.

I know I'm not alone. Librarians all over Kansas have had similar experiences, and so have parents. That's why **Tutor.com** will be such a help to students in the state, and also why the state library has included it in the current request for budget enhancements. Tutor.com is a safe online environment where kids can talk directly to a tutor using chat and whiteboard drawings. You can go to <http://homeworkhelp.tutor.com/> and try it out with a free one day pass.

There are basically two places that kids go to do their homework: home and the library. Kansas libraries rarely have the time or staff needed to give students extensive homework help. Without training or experience, many of us are unsure where to draw the line between "helping" and being an accessory before the fact to homework evasion.

With Tutor.com, library staff will be able to point students to a site that has teachers and tutors available to work with them one-on-one. This wonderful addition to the library services we provide will give visible credence to what we have always said: libraries are a vital part of education.

The Governor has included funding for Tutor.com in her budget; now, our legislators need to know how it can help their constituents. If we're successful in getting funding for this, every child in Kansas can start school next fall knowing that online help is available at the library or at home. Nothing can turn homework into a universally beloved part of going to school. But if we can extend help like this all across the state in this new format, we can change a lot of minds!