

# CASE STUDY: Mid-Continent Public Library



The Mid-Continent Public Library (MCPL) consists of 30 branches serving the Clay, Jackson and Platte counties in Western Missouri. It was established in 1965 and is now one of the largest library systems in the United States. The library serves a population of 760,000.

## The Challenge: Meeting the educational needs of students

According to Amy Caviness, Electronic Resources Manager, branch libraries were experiencing times when students needed more help than library staff could provide. Questions students asked required more time than staff could spend to work through the assignment, whether it was science, math or help writing a paper. In addition to lacking time, in many cases staff also didn't have the expertise. The library recognized that what the students really needed was tutoring, which in-house staff couldn't provide. "We recognized this need," Caviness said, "and we found Tutor.com."

## The Solution: Online help with one-to-one tutors

MCPL launched its Tutor.com service in 2006. Since then, the program has enjoyed remarkable success, with usage growing every year. Caviness says patrons love it and students have great things to say in the comments they leave at the end of every session.

Caviness ties the overwhelming satisfaction with the service to the quality of Tutor.com's tutors. "Tutor.com does an excellent job of recruiting its tutors and providing them with continual evaluation. We trust the company to screen and hire appropriately." She says it's especially important that they are trained in communicating with students via the technology. "It's a real skill to communicate effectively online and to give help without providing answers. The Tutor.com tutors present things in different ways if the student doesn't appear to be getting the concept. Having a back-up plan like that is very important."

## Program Details

Location:	Independence, MO
Partner Since:	2006
Population:	760,000
# of Sites:	30
Tutor.com Service:	Learning Suite
Hours:	Noon-Midnight, daily

"What we hear from students is that parents can't always help them and that teachers don't have time to explain things well enough. Students tell us that once they work with a Tutor.com tutor, they get it."

— Amy Caviness, Electronic Resources Manager, Mid-Continent Public Library

## Online Tutoring a Success for Mid-Continent Patrons\*

**98%**

are glad Mid-Continent Public Library offers this service

**97%**

would recommend this service to a friend

**96%**

say Tutor.com helps them complete their homework assignments

**95%**

say Tutor.com helps them improve their grades

**95%**

say Tutor.com helps them be more confident about their school work



## What Mid-Continent Public Library Patrons Are Saying About Tutor.com\*

“I really like the help. Once the tutor got me started it was like a light bulb went off. I will now be able to do the rest of my homework and get a better grade. The solution was so common sense but so difficult to see. Couldn’t have done it without the tutor. Thanks for providing the service”

- 9th Grade Student, MCPL

“If it wasn’t for this I wouldn’t get tutoring help. I do wrestling after school and have practice when the teachers usually stay late to help. Thank you so very much!”

- 12th Grade Student, MCPL

“I’m so glad MCPL offers this. It is the single best resource I’ve ever used on the internet to improve my understanding of my school work.”

- College Student, MCPL

“I love this service and I hope that you can spread the word about it more. The tutors are always very helpful and make sure you understand everything. :)”

- 8th Grade Student, MCPL

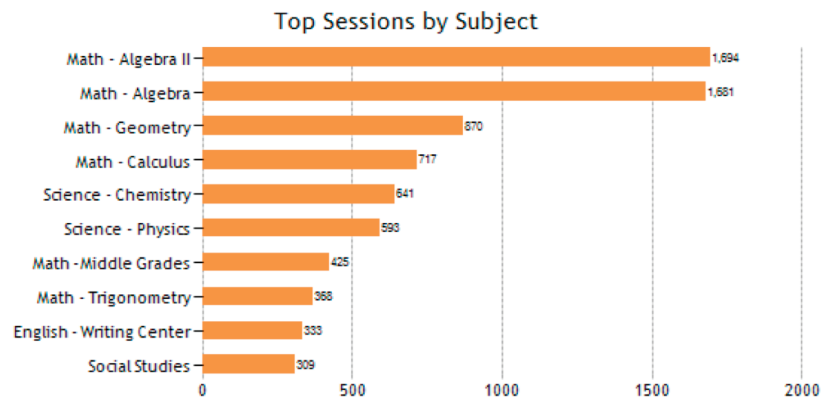
“I have never had a job before other than baby sitting. tutor.com has provided a lot of help where others could not help me or were not willing. Thank you for all your help and support! I hope that your service continues on for years and years to come! God bless you!”

- Job-Seeker, MCPL

From the perspective of the staff, Caviness points to the reliability of the system and the excellent technical support Tutor.com provides. “I don’t ever remember a time where Tutor.com has gone down,” she says. “We have issues with other databases and every time a database goes down it takes time to notify everyone that it’s down and more time to notify them when it’s back up. So I really appreciate that we’ve never had an issue with Tutor.com.”

## The Results: Growth year after year

Caviness says the monthly statistics and verbatim comments are a testament to the success of the MCPL Tutor.com program. Usage has grown every year as students recognize the value of getting help when they need it. “We get comments all the time from students telling us to never get rid of this program! They tell us Tutor.com definitely makes a difference in their grades. For some students, it helps them raise their grade to an A. For others, it helps them advance to the next grade level.” And, she adds, for students who are ill and have to miss more than a day of classes, being able to connect easily to a tutor helps them keep up with their learning and not fall behind in their class work.



Students and parents aren’t alone in their enthusiasm for Tutor.com. At the beginning of each school year, branch library staff meet with teachers and school librarians. They do heavy promotion for Tutor.com, especially the Live Homework Help® one-to-one tutoring. “Our staff love to go out to the schools to talk about Tutor.com,” says Caviness. “They know what a great service it is, so it makes it easy to promote.”